

“How’s the wife?”: Pragmatic reasoning in spousal reference

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Abstract

In the vein of recent research at the intersection of semantics, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics (Eckert, 2019; Beltrama, 2020), the current study illuminates the complex interrelations between encoded meaning, pragmatic reasoning, and the social matrix within which language is used and interpreted. Our empirical focus is spousal reference: specifically, the use and interpretation of the form *the wife/husband*, where use of a possessive pronoun (POSS) instead of *the* is possible. We show that pragmatic reasoning over the relevant expressions’ form and semantics offers a principled set of core motivations for choosing *the* over POSS in spousal reference. At the same time, we present an analysis of attested examples, meta-linguistic commentary on *the wife/husband*, and a matched-guise perception experiment that together show that how the expressions and the people who use them are ultimately evaluated depends crucially on multiple contextual factors, including whose spouse is being referred to, and—as research on language and gender would lead one to expect—whether the spousal term is *wife* or *husband*. Taken together, this study underscores the need for careful consideration of the role of both cultural and discourse context in social perception studies and, more generally, for a holistic approach to language use, variation, and interpretation.

Keywords: *pragmatics, sociolinguistics, semantics, definite article, perception*

1 Introduction

Sociolinguistic research has long concerned itself with social meaning in language—roughly, with information gleaned from the forms a speaker uses concerning their social history, traits, and attitudes. Labov (1963), for instance, made the case that the social meaning of a form can play an important role in language change and vice versa. Recent years have seen a great deal of research built on bringing insights from semantics and pragmatics to understanding a given form’s social meaning and its relation to patterns of variation in its use (as anticipated by e.g. Romaine, 1984).

Examples include work on demonstratives (Author, 2014), the definite article (Author, 2014, 2019), modals (Glass, 2015), grammatical gender (Burnett & Bonami, 2019), intensification (Beltrama & Staum Casasanto, 2017) and precision (Beltrama, 2018) (see Beltrama, 2020 for a review).¹ Author (2019), for instance, examines the distribution of the phrase *the Xs* (e.g. *the Americans*) versus the bare plural *Xs* (e.g. *Americans*) and the tendency of the former to depict the individuals of interest as a monolith separate from the speaker, tying this effect to pragmatic reasoning over the form and semantics of *the Xs*, *Xs*, and related forms like *we (Xs)*.

Our empirical focus is the use of the expressions *the wife* and *the husband* (collectively, *the SPOUSE*) where a possessive pronoun might be expected instead of *the*, as in (1).

- (1) [Referring to the addressee’s spouse]
How’s **the wife/husband**?

We will discuss two crucial effects of opting for *the* over a possessive pronoun in spousal reference—effects with important consequences for the expressions’ social meaning. First, by opting for *the*, the speaker may be seen as downplaying any special link between the ‘possessor’ and the referent. Second, *the* provides fewer semantic cues than a possessive pronoun as to the referent’s identity, requiring greater reliance on common ground for securing ref-

¹While the recent swell in this area is significant, it must be noted that several other scholars have explored the interaction of semantic/pragmatic and sociolinguistic perspectives on language variation. Examples include Traugott, 1988 and Cotter, 1996.

erence and potentially downplaying the referent's individuality. These core effects can in turn give rise to a pragmatically principled set of related social meanings, from suggesting antagonism between a spouses to an attempt at solidarity between speaker and addressee (see also Henzl, 1989 on using *the* over *your* in doctor-patient interaction; e.g. 'So, how's the knee?').

While an account of pragmatic reasoning over semantic meanings and forms is informative, it does not explain how the constructions' core social meanings will be exploited and interpreted in particular contexts or what socio-indexical character the forms will take on over time. For example, such an account does not predict that *the* is used in place of a possessive pronoun more frequently in references to a wife than a husband, nor does it predict different patterns of interpretation for *the wife* and *the husband*, respectively. As Lakoff (1973) suggests, to understand asymmetries in meaning and distribution between ostensibly parallel expressions for women and men, we must also take a sociolinguistic approach, one that involves considering socio-cultural perspectives on gender and marriage and the resulting socio-indexical baggage that comes with these expressions (see also Cameron, 1998 and Lakoff, 2004). Moreover, methodologies from sociolinguistics for studying how various forms are perceived provide a useful tool for understanding situated social meanings of *the wife* and *the husband* more generally. Our account of *the* SPOUSE expressions - which combines pragmatic theory, analysis of situated use and a controlled perception experiment - therefore provides a useful example of the limits of semantics, pragmatics and sociolinguistics as separate disciplines, as well as furthering our understanding of how all three can be incorporated into a larger system for understanding social meaning and sociolinguistic variation (Eckert, 2011, 2019; Author, 2014).

Before continuing, it is worth noting that we are restricting our focus to the alternation between the definite article and possessive pronouns within the realm of spousal reference exclusively. There is much more to be said about this alternation more broadly. For example, while we will later discuss differences between the connotations of *the wife* and *the husband*, it may be that things look different for other gendered relational terms like *girlfriend* and *boyfriend*. Similarly, other factors such as animacy affect preferences for *the* or

a possessive pronoun (Gardner & Tagliamonte, 2020). While certainly worthy of further study, a thorough examination of how these additional factors affect social evaluation is beyond the scope of this paper.

2 The semantics of *the* and possessives

The obvious alternative to the construction *the* SPOUSE, in the absence of the referent’s name, is a construction containing a possessive pronoun (e.g. *my, your, her/his/their*); we will henceforth refer to such expressions collectively as POSS SPOUSE. The contrast between *the* SPOUSE and POSS SPOUSE thus concerns differences in the semantic properties of the definite article and possessive pronouns. We will not provide a full semantics of the two options here (see Elbourne, 2013 and Barker, 2019, among others). Rather, we will briefly describe their key similarities and differences.

First, we restrict ourselves to determinate uses of both *the* and possessive pronouns, where, following Coppock and Beaver (2015), determinacy is “the property a description has when it picks out an individual in a given context” (163). For our purposes, in the spirit of Frege (1892) and Lewis (1973), we assume that an expression of the form *the X* picks out the most salient individual in the particular contextually relevant situation that satisfies the predicate encoded by *X* (see also Elbourne, 2013). If there is no such individual, the expression is undefined. Thus, for an expression like *the wife*, the only semantic cue concerning the identity of the referent is the meaning denoted by *wife*. Resolving the meaning of such expressions crucially requires coordination on behalf of the listener concerning salience and the situation with respect to which the expression is to be evaluated.

Possessive pronouns share properties with *the* on their determinate readings, but differ in that they include additional semantic features. Firstly, and most central for present purposes, possessives encode a relation between a possessor and a possessee, broadly construed (Partee, 1983/1997; see also Langacker, 1995). The nature of this possession relation is often determined by context, as proposed by Partee (1983/1997) for examples such as ‘John’s team’, where John’s relationship to the team must be inferred from the context.

Some nouns, however, are inherently relational, such as those denoting kinship relations. For such nouns, the nature of the ‘possession’ relation is typically rather clear, being based by default in the type of kinship encoded by the relevant noun. *My husband*, for instance, almost always refers to the individual the speaker is married to (*modulo* definedness and assuming monogamy); and in cases where the speaker is not married, *my husband* then generally suggests an intimate partner.

Secondly, possessives mark grammatical person; that is, they indicate that the referent relates to the speaker (1st person), the addressee (2nd person), or some contextually-relevant third person. In (2)-(4), the utterances with the definite article are vague with respect to person; that is, it is semantically unclear to whose wife the speaker is referring. By contrast, the utterances with possessive pronouns help make this clear. In this way, possessive pronouns provide more semantic cues as to the identity of the referent and require less reliance on shared context for resolution of reference.

- (2) a. The wife is coming to dinner.
b. My wife is coming to dinner.
- (3) a. Is the wife coming to dinner?
b. Is your wife coming to dinner?
- (4) a. Mark is on the phone with the wife.
b. Mark is on the phone with his wife.

In brief, in our contexts, the determinateness of the readings is clear. It is only possessives that have additional features of possession relation and grammatical person. Where both the definite article and the possessive pronoun are available, the latter is more informative in terms of the identity of the referent and semantically links that referent to another discourse referent or participant.

3 Pragmatic reasoning over semantic alternatives

Our next concern is one of motivation: what would motivate a speaker to choose *the* SPOUSE over POSS SPOUSE when they know to whom the spouse is married? A great deal of pragmatic research argues, in one way or another, that a speaker’s choice of expression and the interpretation it receives depend heavily on two key factors: informativity and markedness. More specifically, in contexts where sharing information and facilitating reference is desired, there is pressure to favor informative forms over less informative ones (e.g. Grice, 1975) and to avoid marked forms—that is, forms that are relatively formally complex, infrequent, unusual, etc. (see Levinson, 2000). It follows, then, that where there are two forms such that one is more informative than the other without being considerably more marked, there is reason to question why the less informative form was chosen (see e.g. Grice, 1975, Horn, 1984, Levinson, 2000, Sperber & Wilson, 2004, Katzir, 2007, Author, 2019).

Turning to spousal reference, POSS SPOUSE has a clear informativity advantage over *the* SPOUSE in the relevant contexts. And POSS SPOUSE has advantages concerning markedness as well, being far more frequent and usual than *the* SPOUSE. In the British National Corpus (2014), for instance, strings of the form POSS *wife/husband* are 5.9 and 6.1 times more frequent than *the wife/husband*, respectively, and in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) (Davies, 2008), the corresponding values are even greater, at 14.4 and 17.7.² Further evidence of the relative abnormality of *the* SPOUSE in the relevant contexts comes from the abundance of meta-linguistic commentary about it, discussed further in Section 4. Moreover, concerning formal markedness, *the* and possessive pronouns are all monosyllabic and from the same general grammatical class.

A hearer of *the* SPOUSE in the relevant contexts therefore has reason to question why the speaker may have chosen the form over POSS SPOUSE, given that the former is less informative without being considerably more attractive in terms of markedness—at least in terms of frequency, normality, or surface structure. Why opt for a relatively atypical form

²These values were calculated using only grammatical singular personal pronouns just in case some tokens of *their* SPOUSE involved polygamy. Including tokens of *their* SPOUSE would only increase these values, as would removing the dozens of examples of *the* SPOUSE where the expression was part of a larger string of the form *the* SPOUSE of *X*.

that is less informative than the readily available POSS SPOUSE?

We identify two key moves enacted by a speaker's using *the* SPOUSE where POSS SPOUSE is possible, each of which can engender social meanings. First, whereas POSS places the relevant spouse in a particular possessor's space via the possessive relation it encodes, *the* places the spouse in unspecified ground; that is, the semantics of *the* places the referent no closer to the speaker, addressee, or any third party. Second, using *the* rather than POSS removes some semantic information about the relevant individual—that is, it removes information that differentiates that individual from other wives/husbands.

Before discussing these moves in depth, we note that one could argue that despite being less frequent and no less complex in surface form, *the* SPOUSE could be argued to be less marked semantically (and perhaps syntactically, depending on one's theory) than POSS SPOUSE because the latter involves additional presuppositional content. One could further argue, then, that speakers might appeal to *the* SPOUSE as a semantically simple way of referring to the relevant spouse, relying in effect on Horn's (1984) R-principle (or Levinson's (2000) I-principle).³ Indeed, it may be that for some hearers on some uses *the* SPOUSE signals only a desire to reduce semantic markedness. And, of course, speakers of *the* SPOUSE rely on something like Horn's R for the hearer to resolve reference in any case. Nonetheless, it is clear that *the* SPOUSE is less informative and in some ways the more marked form and, as we will show below, that it in turn attracts meta-linguistic attention and frequently engenders pragmatically principled social interpretations.

3.1 Positioning the spouse

We begin with the move of shifting the spouse in question from the relevant possessor's space (as POSS SPOUSE would have it) to unspecified ground (as *the* SPOUSE would have it). Here, we adopt Hanks et al.'s (2005) notion of the *deictic field* as a framework for conceptualising the relations between discourse participants. This notion employs Bourdieu's conceptualisation of a field, in which 'specific beliefs, positions, modes of engagement, and relations of force and conflict are played out' (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 163, in Hanks et al., 2005). Deviating

³We thank Marina Terkourafi for recommending that we address Horn's R-principle explicitly.

slightly from Hanks et al. (2005), we take the deictic field to consist of 1) the positions of the communicative agents 2) the positions occupied by referents, and 3) the multiple dimensions within which these individuals can stand in relation to each other. We can thus think of a speaker's chosen term of spousal reference (e.g. *the* SPOUSE, POSS SPOUSE, etc.) as, among other things, expressing something about where the discourse participants and referents stand in relation to each other in the deictic field. The speaker's expression, in effect, places the spouse in question in a position with respect to others and potentially suggests something about how the speaker views the relations between the relevant individuals. We consider two classes of salient motivations for placing the relevant spouse in unspecified ground.

3.1.1 Orientations to the relevant spouse

Firstly, placing the spouse in neutral space rather than the space of a particular person may be taken to as saying something about that individual's (whether the speaker's, addressee's, or a third party's) relation to that spouse. In the 1st-person case, where one refers to one's own spouse as *the* SPOUSE, the move may be interpreted as suggesting that the readily available and structurally parallel *my* SPOUSE would have indicated a closeness or intimacy between the speaker and their spouse that does not obtain. From this message, further sub-messages may be inferred: that the speaker does not like their spouse or finds their spouse to be overbearing, that the spouse keeps the speaker at arms length, etc.

Examples of speakers using *the* SPOUSE to suggest distance or a desire for distance are easy to find. (5), for instance, comes from an online forum about hunting. One poster suggests to another that he ought to take a road trip to go bow-hunting, and another responds as in (5). Here, the content of the carrier sentence paired with the spousal reference term clearly expresses a desire for distance from his wife.

- (5) [...] I think the road trip sounds perfect, **the Wife** [sic] is on my case lately and I need a breather! [...]⁴

⁴<https://www.michigan-sportsman.com/threads/tension-style-releases.613088/page-2>. Last accessed 17 August 2021.

In a similar example from a video-gaming forum, a poster complains about the ‘quality time’ with his wife that has resulted from a video game being broken.

- (6) **The wife** is driving me crazy, please fix this game!! All this “quality time” is really getting old since I haven’t been playing. [...] ⁵

Importantly, as we will discuss further in Section 4, not every distancing use of *the* SPOUSE suggests annoyance or antagonism between spouses—indeed, some speakers self-report using the expression to show respect. It is a short conceptual jump from distance to derogation (Author, 2019), however, and the negative tone evident in (5) and (6) is frequently present.

In 2nd-person cases, *the* SPOUSE could also be taken as suggesting distance—in this case, between the addressee and their spouse—and the same goes for 3rd-person cases, *mutatis mutandis*. In referring to the addressee’s spouse as ‘the SPOUSE’, the speaker may also be interpreted as temporarily embodying the perspective of the addressee through what Bakhtin (1984) refers to as ‘double-voicing’—whereby one temporarily speaks as someone else. In this case, use of *the* SPOUSE may be taken as the speaker in essence saying, ‘I’m talking about your spouse the way you talk/think about your spouse (or how I would if I were in your shoes)’; the same goes for 3rd-person cases. Example (7), from Twitter, provides an illustrative case in the 2nd person. Here, @realssullivan tweets a photo of an owl annoyed by the affection of a second owl with the caption provided in (7-a). @smittydove responds as in (7-b), both inferring and implying that the original poster could use some distance from her husband. (7-b) is further noteworthy for its gesture at shared perspective, where the poster affirms the original tweet as being ‘so true’.

- (7) a. @realssullivan: In close quarters with your beloved? Don’t be surprised if you want to give a smack rather than a kiss on occasion. Only human...
- b. @smittydove: Ha ha ha **the husband** driving you crazy, huh? And yes... so true⁶

⁵<https://www.bungie.net/pt/Forums/Post/236724059>. Last accessed 17 August 2021.

⁶<https://twitter.com/realssullivan/status/1242255990570926080>. Last accessed 19 August 2021.

Finally, the use of *the* in 2nd- and 3rd-person cases might index affinity or fondness for the relevant spouse by drawing the spouse away from the possessor toward the speaker. This comes with a caveat, however. If the speaker and spouse are sufficiently close for this tactic to be employed, using the spouse’s name seems more fitting. Doing so would not only indicate first-name-basis familiarity, but would also cast the referent as an individual in their own right rather than as someone’s spouse. Similarly, if the speaker is not close enough to the spouse to use their first name, attempting to mark affinity for them via *the* SPOUSE may appear contrived.

3.1.2 Relations between individuals other than the relevant spouse

A second, related class of motivations involves positioning the spouse to suggest something about two other parties’ (e.g. the speaker and the addressee’s) relation not (only) to the spouse but to each other. More specifically, positioning the spouse in neutral ground rather than in the possessor’s space could be interpreted as an attempt to signal solidarity between two parties.

We see two main paths to signaling solidarity by (re-)positioning the spouse. First, it may suggest that the speaker and addressee have a similar orientation to the spouse in question. While *my* SPOUSE and *your* SPOUSE place the spouse semantically closer to one of the discourse participants in particular, *the* SPOUSE involves no such asymmetry. This is consistent with the research of Gardner and Tagliamonte (2020) who find across speech communities in Toronto, Canada and York, England that the rate of use of *the* rather than POSS in picking out a referent correlates with how *communal* the referent is—that is, the extent to which multiple individuals are likely to share a relation toward that referent. For example, using *the X* rather than POSS *X* is more common with communal entities like yards, vehicles, and homes than romantic partners.

The second mechanism depends on downplaying closeness between spouses, thereby depicting the interlocutors as close. In referring to one’s own spouse with *my*, one presents oneself and one’s spouse as having a closeness in the deictic field that one does not have with one’s addressee. Using *the*, however, de-emphasises that relation, shifting the spouse out of

the speaker's space and, in turn, decreasing the relative distance between interlocutors. In principle, the same goes with 2nd-person cases, only here it is the addressee's spouse whose position is manipulated.

We can observe gestures toward solidarity in actual usage. The example in (8) suggests a link between using *the* SPOUSE and gesturing at camaraderie or solidarity (see also (7) on the addressee's tweet being 'so true'). Here, a blogger responds to a comment on one of his blog posts, simultaneously using *the wife* and referring to his addressee (presumably whom he has never met) as 'mate'.

(8) **Comment:** [...] How the hell do you respond to all your blog comments and have time to take a piss in a day?

Response: I tend to leave most until the evening now, mate, when **the wife** and son are sleeping. It's the only real time I get to myself these days.⁷

Before moving on, we note that using *the* SPOUSE to refer to the addressee's spouse is more negative-face-threatening (Brown & Levinson, 1987) for the addressee than the 1st-person (or 3rd-person cases). Only in the 2nd-person case has the speaker entered the addressee's space and manipulated the position of their spouse in the deictic field—a move that may be regarded as particularly presumptuous, especially if the speaker and addressee are not close.

3.2 Removing semantic information

The second, related class of motivations for using *the* SPOUSE over POSS SPOUSE revolves around relative lack of presuppositional content in the former: in determinate uses of these expressions, *the* SPOUSE offers strictly less information that differentiates the individual being picked out from other individuals, because unlike possessive pronouns it says nothing about to whom the spouse stands in relation. This has at least two potential effects.

First, using *the* requires the addressee to rely more heavily on common ground to secure

⁷2011. The Weird Thing I Want You To Do On My Blog — Danny Brown. <http://dannybrown.me/2011/06/20/the-weird-thing-i-want-you-to-do-on-my-blog/>. As found on COCA (Davies, 2008).

reference, since *the* offers fewer clues than POSS as to whose spouse is being picked out. This move again relates to solidarity, potentially signalling shared common ground between the interlocutors, i.e., “We are sufficiently in sync that I don’t need to offer further information regarding the identity of the referent.” Again, however, the availability of the spouse’s name undermine this move.

Second, we find that by stripping the expression of all information about the referent, other than that referent’s being a contextually relevant spouse, *the* SPOUSE can indicate that the relevant spouse’s identity is immaterial—that is, what’s relevant is not the individual’s traits but merely that they are a wife or husband. *the* SPOUSE can therefore be depersonalising and deindividualising, depicting the relevant individuals primarily as instantiations of stereotypical marital roles.

Such examples abound in fictional crime dramas, where characters often make reference to a victim’s spouse as a possible witness or suspect. In such cases, the utterances generally suggest that the relevant spouse should be interviewed or suspected precisely because they are the spouse of the victim, not because of any unique properties they possess as individuals. The examples (9) and (10) illustrate this.

(9) When a wife is killed... the primary suspect is always **the husband**.⁸

(10) She was in really bad shape that night. Anything about **the husband** make you suspicious?⁹

(9) involves a bound use of *the husband* and evokes the stereotype of husbands being the default suspect when a woman is murdered. Using *the* here underscores the point that it is the relevant individual’s being the husband of the victim and not some other property that makes him a potential suspect. But not all such examples involve bound definite descriptions. In (10), and other examples like it, *the* SPOUSE—rather than *her* SPOUSE—is used to pick out as a potential suspect a single, particular individual. As before, the use of *the* over *her* contributes to the sense that it is the individual’s being the victim’s husband

⁸2004. *A Killer Within*. (movie). As found on COCA (Davies, 2008).

⁹2004. ‘Legacy.’ *Without a trace*. As found on COCA (Davies, 2008).

that makes him a potential suspect.

The constructed minimal pair in (11) further illustrates the point. Imagine A tells B that A is going to the ballet and B responds either as in (11-a) or (11-b).

- (11) a. Let me guess, **the wife's** idea?
b. Let me guess, **your wife's** idea?

The interpretations of interest here are that B intends to suggest that the A's weekend plans were probably A's wife's idea because: (i) it's the kind of idea that a wife would have; or (ii) it's the kind of idea that A's wife in particular would have. We find the former interpretation to be more salient for *the* than *your*. Again, the idea is that with *the*, all properties borne by the referent of the referring expression have been stripped away except that the referent is a wife; whereas with *your*, there is some semantic suggestion that this wife's being A's wife in particular—along with any special properties she may be known to hold—may be relevant.

Countless other attested examples of *the* SPOUSE being used to this depersonalising, stereotype-evoking effect are readily found, many drawing on stereotypical traits and behaviors of wives and husbands, as in (12)–(14).

- (12) Title of a thread on a car-enthusiast forum:
Are you tired of the listening to **the wife** nagging you to mow the lawn, i [sic] have the answer for you!¹⁰
- (13) Exchange on the fictional television show *In Plain Sight*:
A: You leaving?
B: Back to **the husband**. Helpless as a baby and running out of frozen dinners.¹¹
- (14) Tweet from *The Apprentice* host Alan Sugar:
WORLD CUP CONSCIENCE - send a personalised gift of sweets to **the wife/ girlfriend** for ignoring her during the World Cup, only £14.99 [...]

¹⁰<https://www.trifive.com/threads/are-you-tired-of-listening-to-the-wife-nagging-you-to-mow-the-lawn-i-have-the-answer-for-you.90735/>. Last accessed 21 August 2021.

¹¹2010. Coma chameleon. *In Plain Sight*. As found on COCA (Davies, 2008).

Each example evokes gendered marital stereotypes (wives as nagging, uninterested in sports, and requiring placation; husbands as sports-oriented, domestically incompetent, and responsible for yard work). In each case, the use of *the* SPOUSE contributes to a sense that any differentiating particularities of the relevant individuals are immaterial; they are reduced to their roles qua wives and husbands. Again, we tie this stereotyping, deindividualising effect to the fact that relative to POSS SPOUSE, *the* SPOUSE offers less individualising semantic content. Notably, this ties in with Epstein’s (1999) observation concerning non-uniquely-referring, role-related uses of *the*, such as *take the (vs. an) elevator, read the (vs. a) newspaper* and *came in through the (vs. a) window*—use of *the* rather than *a* in these contexts, he says, ‘is a strategy which focuses on the conventionalised and highly stereotypical aspects of the situation rather than the specific details’ (see also Reed, 2016).

We see this effect as yet another potential route to attempting to foster solidarity with one’s interlocutor. That is, it may be a way for the speaker to suggest that the situation they are describing is one that would be familiar to the addressee—as if to say, ‘you know how husbands/wives are’. This is evident in (12), for instance, where the rhetorical question suggests that the author knows his addressees well enough to guess what kinds of things might trouble them. This route is also not without social risk however, as depersonalising and stereotyping a spouse for one’s social ends may be perceived as crude and reductive.

3.3 Summarising

We have presented what we take to be core motivations for the use of the phrase *the* SPOUSE in the relevant contexts, on the basis of pragmatic reasoning over the semantic differences between *the* and POSS. The move of forgoing an option that would have made explicit a relation between the speaker, the addressee or third party, and the referent could be seen as saying something about the position that the referent is seen to occupy in the deictic field (Hanks et al., 2005). In addition, POSS offers greater information than *the* about the individual being picked out. Consequently, the latter requires the listener to rely more on context to secure reference, and it also depersonalises and departicularises the expression, which may emphasise marital roles and their associated stereotypes over the properties of

particular individuals.

Precisely how these core motivations are exploited and interpreted may vary widely however, and will depend on multiple contextual factors. Furthermore, as Author (2014, 2019) points out, people do not reason over semantic content alone; connotations matter, too.

Usage and interpretation of these expressions are both variable and closely tied to the pragmatic motivations outlined in this section. Moreover, despite their apparent parallelism and in keeping with previous research on gender and language more broadly, *the wife* and *the husband* are asymmetrical in use and interpretation.

4 Variation in usage and interpretation

4.1 Meta-linguistic commentary

One source of clear evidence for both the variability and pragmatically principled nature of *the SPOUSE* comes from online discussions of this construction, such as those found on websites devoted to usage or general question-and-answer threads, such as WordReference.com, ell.StackExchange.com, and Quora.com. Thread topics include, ‘Should I use “the wife” or “my wife”?’ and ‘When a man refers to his wife as “the wife” . . . what does that symbolize?’, among others. Notably, while both *the wife* and *the husband* received attention on multiple threads, the former was featured far more frequently.

Here, we present and discuss a sample of comments from the relevant threads found through Google and forum searches. We note first that many commenters cited a distancing (or ‘separating’ (15-b) or ‘detaching’ (15-c)) effect associated with *the SPOUSE*, consistent with the discussion of *the SPOUSE* as (re-)positioning the relevant spouse in Section 3.1. Examples are provided in (15).

- (15) a. Using *the* instead of *my* **puts a bit of social distance** between the speaker and their wife. [. . . T]he use of *the* **decouples the couple** [. . . S]omeone uses *the* in place of *my* when they [. . .] don’t like, or are pretending not to like, the

person in question.¹²

- b. I have a married friend who never calls his wife, ‘my wife’ when talking about her. [...] I was wondering if it’s a way of **separating yourself** from your spouse, depersonalizing the relationship.¹³
- c. I use each “the” and “my”. When using the term “the wife” it is indeed **a way to detach myself** sometimes [...]¹⁴

Notably, some examples go beyond simply assessing *the* SPOUSE as distancing and suggest that the distancing effect correlates with negativity. (15-a), for instance, suggests that *the* SPOUSE is indicative of the speaker not liking the spouse. Indeed, numerous comments call *the* SPOUSE derogatory, disrespectful, and the like (whether they explicitly link the negative evaluation to a distancing effect or not) as in (16).

- (16) a. I promise you that many, many women that I know find “the wife” **extremely disrespectful**.¹⁵
- b. **Passive-aggressive** [sic] language **showing contempt** for either the person or at the relationship dynamics in some degree. Absolutely **depersonalization** [sic] of the female spouse. Also an attempt to look “macho” in the company of other men.¹⁶

(17) likewise suggests that *the* SPOUSE is ‘depersonalizing’. Here however, the author links the effect not to distancing but to *the* SPOUSE ‘reduc[ing] the person to [...] a “generic idea”, a role, a stereotype’—recalling the claim in Section 3.2 that *the* SPOUSE can suggest that the particular spouse’s identity is immaterial.

¹²<https://ell.stackexchange.com/questions/1369/the-wife-instead-of-my-wife-are-there-any-other-contexts-where-a-possessive>. Last accessed 26 August 2021.

¹³<https://www.city-data.com/forum/relationships/1077721-wife.html>. Last accessed 26 August 2021.

¹⁴<https://www.city-data.com/forum/relationships/1077721-wife.html>. Last accessed 26 August 2021.

¹⁵<https://forum.wordreference.com/threads/male-equivalent-of-missus.891503/>. Last accessed 26 August 2021.

¹⁶<https://www.city-data.com/forum/relationships/1077721-wife.html>. Last accessed 26 August 2021.

- (17) [...] although not necessarily ‘impolite or derogatory’, ‘the wife’ (or husband, girlfriend, &c) is always depersonalizing: it reduces the person to [...] a ‘generic idea’, a role, a stereotype.¹⁷

Some comments explicitly deny negative associations with *the* SPOUSE however, locating its motivations in attempts at solidarity (see (18-b)-(18-c)). (18) presents a sample. (18-a) could be an example of a hearer who perceives *the wife* as rather unmarked and views its use as driven, in effect, by Horn’s (1984) R-principle (see the beginning of Section 3).

- (18) a. My husband calls me “the wife” and it **doesn’t offend me**. I think you are over thinking [sic] it.¹⁸
- b. I don’t think of it as facetious or derogatory at all, [...] quite the opposite, in fact! ~ **it’s ‘intimate’ and ‘friendly’** :)¹⁹
- c. Saying *the wife* rather than *your wife* (or even *my wife*) is a kind of ‘intimacy marker’, a way of **signalling to the person you’re talking to that you’re good friends**. [...]²⁰

Another class of examples suggest that *the* SPOUSE actually depicts the relevant spouse as having high status. Explicitly relating *the wife* to *the boss*, for instance, comes up several times.

- (19) a. Using the phrase “the wife” in the Caribbean is very common and often is said in [...] tones of **affection and respect**. In fact most times [...] its [sic] done very **respectfully** and we would **often associate “the wife” with “the boss”**.²¹

¹⁷<https://english.stackexchange.com/questions/77935/should-i-use-the-wife-or-my-wife>. Last accessed 27 August 2021.

¹⁸<https://www.city-data.com/forum/relationships/1077721-wife-3.html>. Last accessed 26 August 2021.

¹⁹<https://forum.wordreference.com/threads/hows-the-wife-girlfriend-hows-the-husband-boyfriend.1884299/>. Last accessed 26 August 2021.

²⁰<https://forum.wordreference.com/threads/hows-the-wife-girlfriend-hows-the-husband-boyfriend.1884299/>. Last accessed 26 August 2021.

²¹<https://www.city-data.com/forum/relationships/1077721-wife-4.html>. Last accessed 26 August 2021.

- b. Where I come from, that is a **teasing term of endearment**. Kind of also acknowledging that **“the wife” is really “the boss”** [...] Basically, whenever my dad referred to my mother as “the wife” it was a kind of self-deprecating way of deflecting anything he didn’t want to do, on to HER [...]²²

Both authors here suggest that in their home communities *the wife* is indicative of endearment or affection and of the relevant wife having authority or status in her marriage, at least in some domains. We note that depicting a wife as ‘the boss’ still produces a hierarchy and designated roles for wives and husbands. Such interpretations relate to both the distancing and stereotyping effects of *the SPOUSE*. Invoking a hierarchy indicates distance between individuals on some dimension, as hierarchies involve placing individuals on separate planes. Thus, indicating deference can go hand in hand with distance in the deictic field. We see this reflected in ‘T/V’ 2nd-person distinctions, where the ‘V’ forms can index power differentials and, at the same time, unfamiliarity (Morford, 1997). Regarding stereotyping, the wife-as-boss role referenced in (19) draws on a popular trope, often with jocular overtones, of wives being the ones who are ‘really in charge’ in a marriage—a trope which depends on a default assumption that husbands are ‘in charge’ in a marriage. In sum, uses and interpretations of the type discussed in (19) could still reflect and reinforce an inegalitarian²³ view of marriage.

Finally, many comments suggest an important role for context in interpreting uses of *the SPOUSE*, as in (20).

- (20) a. [...] my wife would prefer that I call her “my wife,” as opposed to “the wife,” especially in a context like:

He: Can you go to the baseball game with me on Friday?

Me: I don’t know; I’ll have to ask the wife about that.

However, there are instances where the words could be used in an almost com-

²²<https://www.quora.com/When-a-man-refers-to-his-wife-as-the-wife-what-does-that-symbolize>. Last accessed 26 August 2021.

²³We thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this label. The same reviewer also notes that both *wife* and *boss* frequently fill in the blank in the frame: ‘I’ll have to check with the .’

plimentary fashion [...]²⁴

- b. I doubt my wife would have a problem with one of my friends posing the rather informal question, “How’s the wife?”, but I don’t imagine she’d be particularly thrilled if, while talking about a spur-of-the-moment change of plans, I announced, “Let me check with the wife first.”²⁵

Here, both commenters indicate that the accompanying utterance is crucial to interpretation. Notably, the commenters’ negative examples involve using *the wife* in saying one needs one’s wife’s permission to do something, potentially depicting them as overbearing. The comment in (20-b) adds that whose wife is being talked about may be relevant, too.

According several commenters, a given use of *the wife* may be intended ironically, based on ties to ‘old school sexism’:

(21) [Referring to one’s own wife as ‘the wife’ is]

- a. [...] really old school sexism. But he’s probably doing it as a joke or at least being intentionally old school.²⁶
- b. [...] one of those cases where it’s more or less impossible to tell whether the usage is ironic or not without knowing the person [...] (“hark at me, using this archaic form even though really you know I’m progressive as anything”).²⁷

Taking all of this together, the picture here is one where pragmatic reasoning over the form and semantics of *the SPOUSE* and *POSS SPOUSE* yields insights into the range of interpretations the former receives, such as distancing, stereotyping and attempts at solidarity; and yet, simultaneously, one that shows that the exact interpretation *the SPOUSE* receives is variable and context dependent in ways that pragmatic reasoning cannot precisely pre-

²⁴<https://english.stackexchange.com/questions/77935/should-i-use-the-wife-or-my-wife>. Last accessed 26 August 2021.

²⁵<https://ell.stackexchange.com/questions/1369/the-wife-instead-of-my-wife-are-there-any-other-contexts-where-a-possessive>. Last accessed 26 August 2021.

²⁶<https://www.quora.com/Why-does-my-husband-refer-to-me-in-conversations-with-other-men-as-the-wife>. Last accessed 26 August 2021.

²⁷<https://ell.stackexchange.com/questions/1369/the-wife-instead-of-my-wife-are-there-any-other-contexts-where-a-possessive>. Last accessed 26 August 2021.

dict. Without additional contextual information, for instance, one cannot tell whether a particular use will be read as motivated by distancing or some other effect. And even if one effect appears to be the primary motivator, determining the speaker’s more specific purpose in evoking that effect (e.g. elevating or demeaning the relevant spouse) and the degree sincerity with which the effect was evoked may also require a great deal of contextual information. This point is reinforced in the results of the controlled experiment presented in Section 5, where we find pragmatically predictable effects, variability, and context-sensitivity in individuals’ perceptions of *the* SPOUSE.

Before turning to the experiment, we discuss one additional piece of the picture which pragmatic analysis of semantics and form alone fails to explain, but which sociolinguistic research leads one to expect: namely that one source of variability in interpretation of *the* SPOUSE expressions is whether the value of SPOUSE is *husband* or *wife*.

4.2 Asymmetries between *the wife* and *the husband*

Much linguistic research has already shown that extensive asymmetries exist in language for terms about and referring to men and women, including Schulz (1975), Cameron (1998), Miller and Swift (2000), Lakoff (2004), Wright, Hay, and Bent (2005), Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013) and Manne (2017). As just one example, as Schulz (1975) discusses in reference to words such as *spinster*, *mistress* and *hussy*, female-referring terms have often started out with neutral or positive connotations before undergoing pejoration, acquiring “debased or obscene reference” (83), whereas the same is not true for male counterparts such as *bachelor* or *master*. Elsewhere, Manne (2017) finds more men than women have felt entitled to feel and express resentment towards their spouses and familial responsibilities and to *other* their spouses. Previous gender and sociolinguistic research leads one to expect asymmetries in use and associations of *the wife* and *the husband*, too, despite their formal and semantic parallels. Our own research suggests that this is indeed the case.

We begin with some quantitative usage patterns. We do not claim here to provide a comprehensive picture. Indeed, we expect some degree of variation in usage across speech communities and various social groups therein. Still, every metric we have looked at suggests

an asymmetry between the relative prevalence of *the wife* and *the husband*.

More specifically, the evidence suggests that *the wife* is relatively more likely to be used in reference to a speaker or addressee’s wife than *the husband* is in reference to a speaker or addressee’s husband. In the BNC, for instance, *the wife* is 1.17 times as prevalent as *my wife* and 3.04 times as prevalent as *your wife*, whereas the relevant values for DET *husband* are 0.82 and 1.77, respectively. Similarly, in COCA, *the wife* is 0.22 times as prevalent as *my wife* and 0.57 times as prevalent as *your wife*, versus 0.15 and 0.43, respectively, for DET *husband*.

These differences are considerable. But because they are based on raw counts of unanalysed tokens, some other confounding factors may be in play. For instance, without checking each example, one cannot know how many tokens of *the SPOUSE* were in contexts where *my/your SPOUSE* was available. To address this, we examined the prevalence of expressions of the form *How’s/How is* DET SPOUSE? in reference to an addressee’s spouse in COCA, checking each individual example. There, we find a stark asymmetry between references to wives and husbands, with 34 hits for *How’s/How is the wife?*, 32 of which clearly refer to the addressee’s wife, and another 57 of *How’s/How is your wife?*, for a ratio of 0.56. In contrast, there is only one hit for *How’s/How is the husband?*, which turns out not to be a relevant token. We then find 24 hits of *How’s/How is your husband?*.²⁸ The story is similar for expressions of the form *I’ll/I will* v (P) DET SPOUSE, where v is a verb and P is an optional preposition. Here we find 4 relevant tokens of *the wife* relative to 67 tokens of *my wife*, as compared with 0 and 43 of *the husband* and *my husband*, respectively.

Further evidence for asymmetry between uses of *the wife* and *the husband* comes from the previously discussed threads on *the SPOUSE*. While several threads centered on the expression *the wife*, only one centred on *the husband*. Titled ‘male equivalent of “missus”’, this thread suggests that the original poster, aware of the phrase *the missus*, is not aware of a parallel expression for husbands. While many threads mentioned *the husband*, *the wife*

²⁸An anonymous reviewer points out that *hubby* may be relevant here. Indeed we do find two bona fide examples of *How’s/How is the hubby?* and one of *How’s your hubby?* bringing the relevant ratio up to 0.08—still far smaller than 0.56 for *wife*. There are a total of 123 tokens of *the hubby* in COCA, compared with 5,313 of *the husband*. Further examination of the term *hubby* is warranted but beyond the scope of this paper.

received far greater attention. It may be that parallel threads do exist for *the husband*, but the relative abundance of threads on *the wife* is telling.

Thus far in this section we have focused on differences in the frequency and salience of *the wife* versus *the husband*, but there is also the matter of the kinds of utterances in which they figure. As noted above, numerous scholars have identified differences in how people talk about women and how they talk about men. Insofar as wives and husbands, as women and men, are talked about differently, we should expect *the wife* and *the husband* to be used to say different kinds of things and, in turn, accumulate different indexical baggage. This is perhaps especially true for these expressions because they often figure in statements that involve depicting wives and husbands as having particular roles (see e.g., examples (12)–(14)).

In uses of *the SPOUSE* in depicting spouses as nags, *the wife* is more prevalent in such examples. We find several examples of *the wife is on my case* through a Google search, but none of *the husband is on my case*. Likewise, we find several distinct hits for *the wife is nagging me*, but only one for *the husband is nagging me*.

Further examples involving gender and marital stereotypes have drawn significant media attention. One example comes from former England women’s football manager Phil Neville in (22).

(22) Relax I’m back chilled - just battered the wife!!! Feel better now!

In 2018, this and other sexist tweets emerged in the media (Sky News, 2018), with Neville claiming that the ‘battering’ in question was of a sporting nature, rather than a violent one. Even if we take Neville’s response at face value his tweet nonetheless re-enforces hegemonic gender power relations. Patriarchal gender ideology is enacted and renewed by ‘social practices’ (Lazar, 2007) such as these. Through the additional choice to use ‘the wife’ rather than ‘my wife’, Neville may be trying to index informality or camaraderie to his Twitter audience. Neville also opted for ‘the wife’ rather than his wife’s name which, given his fame, is likely to be widely known.

Another example comes from Prince William in (23), in response to a question from

Gary Lineker about taking his son to watch football. This example refers to a ‘missus’, a more casual term for *wife* in the UK. Here the sexist trope relates to the stereotype that women make decisions that pertain to children. Furthermore, Prince William is positioning his wife as a potential obstacle to the masculine activity of football, suggesting that, but for her, he obviously would take his son to a game, thus evaluating her as overbearing. Again, Prince William choosing ‘the missus’ over his wife’s name is particularly salient here given her fame (notably, *missus* is likely also doing some socio-indexical work here that *wife* does not, over and above the use of *the* instead of *my*.)

(23) I don’t know, I’ll have to pass that by the missus, see how I can get away with it!

Implicit in these examples is the ‘relationality’ of gender (Lazar, 2000). Gender relationality focuses on “discursive co-constructions of ways of doing and being a woman and a man in particular communities of practice” (Lazar, 2007, p. 150). In each example, the male speaker (re)produces a relation of power between men and women by positioning the female spousal referent as a *characterological figure* (Agha, 2003) of femininity through stereotypical activities such as losing to a man or being an overbearing mother.

Neville and Prince William, like Alan Sugar in (14), appear to be enacting images of what they imagine women to be like in order to present themselves as particular types of men. Through their portrayal of women they are perhaps trying to portray themselves; herein lies the relationality of gender. For Prince William in particular, this attempted portrayal was the subject of significant meta-commentary. In a Daily Mail article covering the incident (Godden, 2015), several comments make reference to Prince William trying to sound like a “normal bloke” and “like the rest of us”. Such cases suggest that the intended characterological figure that Prince William is attempting to perform conflicts with his usual upper-class persona; this perhaps speaks to a working-class masculinity indexed by *the missus*. More generally, it is clear that *the* SPOUSE is bound up with gendering and stereotyping wives and husbands in asymmetrical ways.

Reactions to use of *the* SPOUSE clearly vary, with a range of possible social meanings rooted in pragmatics but associated with different context-specific uses and opinions. In

addition, we presented evidence that *the husband* and *the wife* are asymmetric in usage and associations. We propose that uses of *the* SPOUSE can reflect of the relationality of gender and the considerably different socio-indexical baggage that comes with *wife* as compared to *husband*. We now present a controlled experiment aimed at identifying general tendencies towards particular meanings associated with *the* SPOUSE expressions, while also testing to see how factors like referent gender influence perceptions of the expressions.

5 The experiment

This study employs a matched guise task (MGT), a task developed by Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, and Fillenbaum (1960) aimed at uncovering the attitudes that listeners hold about particular speech styles. MGTs involve presenting participants with recorded passages from multiple speakers for them to evaluate on a set of Likert scales; in reality, these are the same speaker, but with particular aspects of their speech artificially manipulated to test for the effects of particular linguistic variables on evaluations. By holding all other factors constant—including content—changes in evaluation can be solely attributed to manipulations of the test variable. While MGTs often include auditory stimuli, written stimuli removes further indicators to a speaker’s social identity such as accent; examples include Buchstaller (2006) and Beltrama and Staum Casasanto (2017).

Following the analyses and findings in Sections 3–4, we employ an MGT to investigate the social traits British English speakers attribute to users of *the* SPOUSE compared to POSS SPOUSE, examining the effects of determiner type (*the* or POSS), referent gender (*wife* or *husband*), and grammatical person (i.e., whose spouse is being referred to) on participants’ judgments.

It is important to acknowledge at the outset that this experiment cannot in itself provide a comprehensive picture of how the relevant spousal expressions are perceived. While MGTs give researchers a degree of control, participants’ process of evaluation is something of a black box. The details of the imagined contexts that participants construct to guide their evaluations is likely to vary considerably, even if they ultimately lead to similar responses. In

addition, participants responded on pre-selected Likert scales (see Section 5.1), rather than with open text responses, providing less room for insight into participants' thoughts about their judgments. Finally, the contexts provided to participants for evaluating the target utterances present only a subset of the myriad contexts in which the relevant expressions occur in the wild.

That said, this experiment allows us to see whether particular social evaluations consistently shine through for any of the relevant expressions in the tested contexts, and, if so, how such evaluations depend on potentially crucial factors such as the referent's gender, the determiner, and grammatical person.

5.1 Selecting the Scales

To generate Likert scales, a preliminary study was conducted. A short task was constructed on Qualtrics (2013) and distributed on Prolific Academic (2019). 80 speakers of British English completed two short trials. Each participant saw one sentence containing the phrase *my wife* and another containing *the wife*, in a range of syntactic positions. For each, participants provided four adjectives they would use to describe the speaker.

Four scales were chosen based on the adjectives most frequently occurring for one construction but not the other. In addition, the scale 'isn't close to their spouse' was included to explicitly test the predicted pragmatic distancing effects. The final five scales are listed below.

- *kind - unkind*
- *rude - polite*
- *sexist - not sexist*
- *introvert - extrovert*
- *is close to their spouse - isn't close to their spouse*

5.2 Stimuli

A 2x2x3 research design was used in stimuli construction. The first 2-level factor was *Determiner* (*the* vs *POSS*). DPs with possessive determiners varied between *my*, *your*, *her* and *his*, depending on context. The second 2-level factor was *Referent Gender* (*husband* vs *wife*). The 3-level factor was *Grammatical Person*—that is, whether the referent was the spouse of the speaker (1st), the addressee (2nd) or a third party (3rd).

DPs were embedded in four different carrier sentences to provide a mix of discourse contexts. All carrier sentences were presented as answers to the same question: *Shall we all go for drinks with Alex and Sam this Friday?*. All carrier sentences began with the same phrase: *Sounds good*, thus keeping a consistent tone across trials. The four carrier sentences, including manipulations, are presented in Table 1.

Sentence	
Sounds good, but I bet the / <i>my</i> / <i>your</i> / <i>her</i> / <i>his</i> husband/wife will want <i>me</i> / <i>you</i> / <i>her</i> / <i>him</i> to be home that night	A
Sounds good, <i>I</i> / <i>you</i> / <i>she</i> / <i>he</i> should ask the / <i>my</i> / <i>your</i> / <i>her</i> / <i>his</i> husband/wife if he/she wants to come	B
Sounds good, especially since <i>I</i> / <i>you</i> / <i>Alex</i> have/has been so busy with the / <i>my</i> / <i>your</i> / <i>her</i> / <i>his</i> husband/wife lately	C
Sounds good, I haven't spent much time with Sam since <i>me</i> / <i>you</i> / <i>she</i> / <i>he</i> and the / <i>my</i> / <i>your</i> / <i>her</i> / <i>his</i> husband/wife had <i>our</i> / <i>your</i> / <i>their</i> New Year's party	D

Table 1: Test stimuli. **Red** = 1st person, **Green** = 2nd person, **Blue** = 3rd person, **Bold** = definite article

The four carrier sentences vary significantly in the context provided. In carriers A and C, the spouse could be seen as being evaluated negatively. Using Dubois's stance triangle (Du Bois, 2007), the speaker in carrier A aligns themselves with the addressee by indicating a desire to spend time together, but suggests their spouse is a likely barrier. A similar situation occurs in carrier C, in which the spouse is positioned as the reason the speaker, addressee or third party has been busy recently. As another example, in carrier B the speaker takes an affiliative stance toward the spouse by suggesting that the spouse join in the social activity. The carrier sentences therefore provide distinct social frames within which to evaluate the test expressions.

Speakers were labelled as Speaker A and Speaker B. The gender-neutral names Sam and Alex were used for other discourse referents. For 3rd-person sentences, *his* or *her* were used in the possessive condition, thus revealing the gender of the possessor. This approach thus presents only heteronormative marriages for the 3rd-person, possessive determiner stimuli. Conclusions drawn from the 3rd-person results are thus best restricted to cases of heterosexual spousal reference. The use and interpretation of *the husband* and *the wife* in non-heteronormative contexts certainly merits future research. Because of the shorter history of same-sex marriage in the UK and different cultural beliefs surrounding same-sex and mixed-sex marriage, we expect the dynamics around *the SPOUSE* would likewise differ across the two contexts. We nonetheless expect that some of the socio-indexical baggage accumulated from the use of *the SPOUSE* in heteronormative contexts would be active in non-heteronormative contexts, too, as expressions carry their histories with them.²⁹ Space limitations preclude a proper treatment, however.

Stimuli were divided into 12 different sets to account for all independent effects. Each set contained four carrier sentences with test DPs and four distractor sentences. Each set contained exactly one test sentence for *the wife*, POSS *wife*, *the husband* and POSS *husband*. An example set is included in Appendix A.

5.3 Participants

199 native British English speakers (88 men and 111 women) based in the UK were recruited via Prolific (2019). Age ranged from 18 to 72 (mean: 36.7; median: 34). 169 participants identified as heterosexual, with the remaining participants identifying as gay (4), lesbian (3), asexual (3), bisexual (12) or preferred not to say (8). The largest portion of participants lived in the South of England (89), followed by the North of England (49), the Midlands (33), Scotland (11), Wales (9) and Northern Ireland (3). Participants were paid £0.60 each

²⁹Indeed, *the wife* bears such socio-indexical weight that it appears it can be used knowingly to subvert heteronormative hegemony. An interaction between gay-marriage opponent Brian Brown and proponent Dan Savage illustrates. Brown challenged Savage to a debate on gay marriage, and Savage responded by offering to hold the debate at his home, adding, ‘Bring the wife. My husband will be there’. While Savage’s intention in alternating between *the SPOUSE* and POSS *SPOUSE* is not certain, one plausible interpretation is that he used *the wife* to evoke stereotypes of heteronormative marriage as inegalitarian to contrast it with the intimacy suggested by *my husband*.

for their time.

5.4 Procedure

Participants were assigned to one of the 12 stimuli sets. Trial order was randomised between participants. On each trial, participants were presented with a written dialogue. They were then asked to rate the speaker of the test sentence from 1 to 6 on the 5 different semantic differential scales. Scales were presented in 2 different orders, randomised between participants. Participants were also asked to estimate the age of the speaker. Each participant completed 8 trials.

6 Results

Results were analysed in R using linear mixed-effect regression models using the *lme4* package (Bates, Mächler, Bolker, & Walker, 2015). All 5 scales, as well as Estimated Age, were tested as dependent variables in separate models. We present planned pairwise comparisons for each Grammatical Person factor level; this was done by subsetting the data by Grammatical Person. This provides more legible results than models with three-way interactions; this is motivated by the discussion in Section 3, where we noted our expectation that the relevant expressions may have different effects depending on whose spouse is being referred to. It is a different thing, for instance, to re-position oneself relative to one’s own spouse than to someone else’s.

Each model included the predictors Referent Gender (*husband*, *wife*) and Determiner Type (*POSS*, *the*), including an interaction term, and the demographic variables Participant Age, Gender, Income, Region and Sexuality. Variables and interaction terms that did not significantly improve model fit based on chi-square comparisons of the sums of the squares of the residuals were removed. The scales ‘extrovert’ and ‘close.to.their.spouse’ are excluded from the 2nd- and 3rd-person models respectively, due to singular fit of the models. All effects reported as ‘significant’ reached the standard threshold of $p < 0.05$.

In the 1st-Person models (see Table 2), there were significant main effects for Gender:

Wife for *rude* ($\beta = 0.27$), *kind* ($\beta = -0.46$) and *extrovert* ($\beta = 0.30$) and for Determiner: The for *rude* ($\beta = 0.30$), *kind* ($\beta = -0.44$), *close.to.their.spouse* ($\beta = -0.38$), *sexist* ($\beta = 0.34$) and *estimatedage* ($\beta = 1.67$). There was a significant interaction effect between Gender: Wife and Determiner: The for *kind* ($\beta = 0.56$).

Table 2: 1st-person model summaries

Predictors	rude			kind			close.to.their.spouse			extrovert			sexist			estimatedage		
	Estimates	std. Error	p	Estimates	std. Error	p	Estimates	std. Error	p	Estimates	std. Error	p	Estimates	std. Error	p	Estimates	std. Error	p
Intercept	2.23	0.19	<0.001	4.69	0.27	<0.001	4.57	0.35	<0.001	3.68	0.18	<0.001	2.35	0.28	<0.001	36.01	0.74	<0.001
Gender: Wife	0.27	0.13	0.037	-0.46	0.18	0.013	-0.01	0.16	0.939	0.30	0.12	0.015	0.09	0.16	0.545	0.67	0.82	0.417
Determiner: The	0.30	0.11	0.008	-0.44	0.18	0.016	-0.38	0.15	0.012	0.02	0.12	0.891	0.34	0.14	0.015	1.67	0.77	0.029
Wife * The				0.56	0.26	0.033												
Random Effects																		
σ^2	0.68			0.83			1.34			0.76			1.08			33.74		
τ_{00}	0.59 ParticipantID			0.41 ParticipantID			0.56 ParticipantID			0.35 ParticipantID			0.77 ParticipantID			13.54 ParticipantID		
	0.09 Carrier			0.22 Carrier			0.42 Carrier			0.08 Carrier			0.23 Carrier			0.13 Carrier		
N	199 ParticipantID			199 ParticipantID			199 ParticipantID			199 ParticipantID			199 ParticipantID			197 ParticipantID		
	4 Carrier			4 Carrier			4 Carrier			4 Carrier			4 Carrier			4 Carrier		
Observations	269			269			269			269			269			267		
Marginal R ² / Conditional R ²	0.030 / 0.511			0.023 / 0.445			0.016 / 0.433			0.019 / 0.374			0.015 / 0.489			0.017 / 0.300		

In the 2nd-person models (see Table 2), there were significant main effects for Determiner: The for *close.to.their.spouse* ($\beta = -0.42$) and *sexist* ($\beta = 0.39$). There were significant interaction effects between Gender: Wife and Determiner: The for *rude* ($\beta = 0.85$) and *kind* ($\beta = -0.59$).

Table 3: 2nd-person model summaries

Predictors	rude			kind			close.to.their.spouse			sexist			estimatedage		
	Estimates	std. Error	p	Estimates	std. Error	p	Estimates	std. Error	p	Estimates	std. Error	p	Estimates	std. Error	p
Intercept	3.22	0.57	<0.001	3.89	0.48	<0.001	3.95	0.33	<0.001	2.79	0.43	<0.001	34.67	0.89	<0.001
Gender: Wife	-0.32	0.17	0.061	0.25	0.17	0.144	-0.18	0.16	0.242	0.06	0.14	0.662	0.40	0.80	0.618
Determiner: The	-0.15	0.21	0.480	0.01	0.20	0.972	-0.42	0.17	0.012	0.39	0.19	0.036	2.10	1.10	0.057
Wife * The	0.85	0.24	<0.001	-0.59	0.24	0.015									
Random Effects															
σ^2	0.60			0.67			1.42			0.93			27.37		
T00	0.86 ParticipantID			0.63 ParticipantID			0.23 ParticipantID			0.98 ParticipantID			37.42 ParticipantID		
	1.22 Carrier			0.84 Carrier			0.35 Carrier			0.63 Carrier			0.02 Carrier		
N	199 ParticipantID			199 ParticipantID			199 ParticipantID			199 ParticipantID			199 ParticipantID		
	4 Carrier			4 Carrier			4 Carrier			4 Carrier			4 Carrier		
Observations	256			256			256			256			255		
Marginal R ² / Conditional R ²	0.025 / 0.783			0.020 / 0.693			0.025 / 0.309			0.015 / 0.639			0.017 / 0.585		

For 3rd-person cases (see Table 4), there were significant main effects for Gender: Wife for *extrovert* ($\beta = -0.40$) and *sexist* ($\beta = 0.37$) and for Determiner: The for *extrovert* ($\beta = -0.37$) and *estimatedage* ($\beta = 1.97$). There was a significant interaction effect between Gender: Wife and Determiner: The for *extrovert* ($\beta = 0.75$, $p = 0.001$).

Table 4: 3rd-person model summaries

Predictors	rude			kind			extrovert			sexist			estimatedage		
	Estimates	std. Error	p	Estimates	std. Error	p	Estimates	std. Error	p	Estimates	std. Error	p	Estimates	std. Error	p
Intercept	2.78	0.30	<0.001	4.21	0.33	<0.001	4.35	0.19	<0.001	2.56	0.40	<0.001	32.95	0.89	<0.001
Gender: Wife	0.13	0.14	0.374	-0.21	0.13	0.098	-0.40	0.15	0.009	0.37	0.17	0.032	1.02	0.90	0.257
Determiner: The	0.17	0.14	0.212	-0.19	0.12	0.129	-0.37	0.14	0.009	0.29	0.16	0.076	1.97	0.83	0.017
Wife * The							0.76	0.22	0.001						
Random Effects															
σ^2	1.23			0.98			0.45			1.63			39.35		
T00	0.14 ParticipantID			0.17 ParticipantID			0.49 ParticipantID			0.39 ParticipantID			18.77 ParticipantID		
	0.30 Carrier			0.37 Carrier			0.09 Carrier			0.54 Carrier			0.72 Carrier		
N	199 ParticipantID			199 ParticipantID			199 ParticipantID			199 ParticipantID			199 ParticipantID		
	4 Carrier			4 Carrier			4 Carrier			4 Carrier			4 Carrier		
Observations	271			271			271			271			270		
Marginal R ² / Conditional R ²	0.007 / 0.269			0.013 / 0.365			0.034 / 0.575			0.021 / 0.377			0.020 / 0.345		

Figure 1 includes plots of the significant two-way interaction effects from each Person model created using *emmip* in the *emmeans* package (Lenth, 2019).

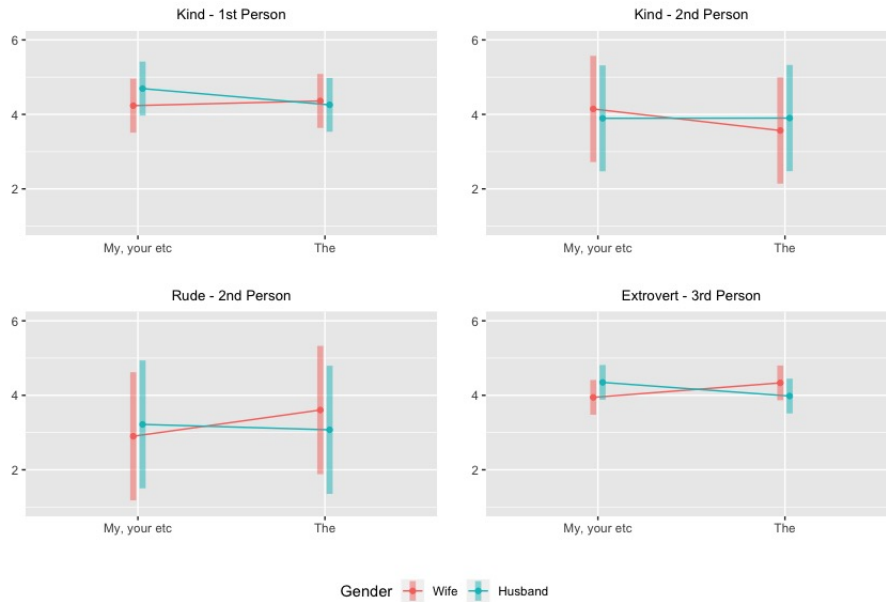


Figure 1: Plots of significant Referent Gender * Determiner Type effects

We can summarise these core results as follows. *The*, relative to POSS, correlates with the speaker sounding ruder, less kind, less close to their spouse, more sexist, and older—but only in certain cases and depending on whose spouse is being referred to and their gender. In 1st-person cases, speakers were perceived as significantly ruder (0.30 points), less close to their spouse (-0.38 points), more sexist (0.34 points), and older (1.67 years) for saying *the* rather than *my* with both *husband* and *wife*. They were also considered less kind for saying *the*, but only in reference to husbands (-0.44 points; the model predicts a small +0.12 difference between *the wife* and *my wife* on this scale).

In 2nd-person cases, speakers were again judged to sound less close to their spouse and more sexist for saying *the* than POSS (in this case, *your*) for both *wife* and *husband*. Speakers were also penalised on the *rude* and *kind* scales for using *the* rather than POSS again, but, in this case, only for reference to wives, with *the wife* sounding 0.70 points ruder and 0.58 points less kind than *your wife*. (2nd-person references to husbands were insensitive to determiner choice).

Finally, in the 3rd-person cases, *the* was again associated with older speakers (1.97 years),

and had its only significant effect on extroversion ratings. Here *the wife* was perceived as more extroverted than *his wife* (0.39 points), while the opposite was true for *the husband* compared to *her husband* (-0.37 points).

Importantly, all of our participants were speakers of British English; we cannot say whether these effects would hold across other dialects. Interestingly, none of the observed effects was modulated by the participants' gender, sexuality, age, etc., suggesting that the source of variability in perceptions of *the* SPOUSE is something other than common macro demographic categories.

7 Discussion

7.1 General findings

This experiment was designed to explore how speakers using *the* SPOUSE versus POSS SPOUSE would be perceived socially by British English speakers. As spelled out in Section 3, pragmatic reasoning over the semantics of *the* and possessive pronouns suggests that the two would be interpreted as communicating different things, such as information about the speaker's relation to the referent and the addressee. It stands to reason, then, that a speaker employing one of these expressions over the other would be perceived differently. Furthermore, speakers may have different motivations and be differentially licensed to use *the* SPOUSE depending on whose spouse the referent is. Accordingly, we expected that social perceptions of *the* SPOUSE would vary depending on whose spouse is being referred to. Lastly, we noted in Section 4 that while pragmatic reasoning over semantic content and form alone does not predict that *the wife* and *the husband* would be interpreted differently (aside from entailments about the referent's gender), sociolinguistic theory and research on language and gender lead us to expect to find differences in interpretation between them.

All of these expectations were fulfilled in the results of the experiment. We will now discuss the specific differences in social perception we observed, before discussing the broader theoretical implications of this work.

7.2 Specific effects

We had one prediction about our scales: that a speaker using *the* SPOUSE would, on average, be thought to be less close to their spouse than a speaker using POSS SPOUSE. The primary rationale here was that a speaker who frames people as removed from their spouses by opting for *the* over POSS might, especially in 1st-person uses, be read as being distant from their own spouse. The results of our study provide support for this hypothesis in 1st- and 2nd-person cases, regardless of the referent’s gender, but not in 3rd-person cases.

The SPOUSE was also associated with higher sexism scores than POSS SPOUSE regardless of referent gender—significantly so in 1st- and 2nd-person uses, and approaching significance ($p = 0.076$) in 3rd-person uses. This effect accords with the pragmatically-rooted distancing and depersonalising effects of opting for *the* over POSS. As discussed in Sections 3 and 4, these effects portray wives and husbands as having distinct positions and stereotypical roles—providing a clear link to sexism.

We also find a general trend toward *the* SPOUSE making speakers sound slightly older than POSS SPOUSE did, regardless of referent gender. This pattern recalls the meta-linguistic commentary of some online comments, such as (21), which links *the* SPOUSE not just to sexism but to ‘old school sexism’.

Concerning rudeness and kindness, we saw in Section 4 that, though opinions vary, many English speakers feel strongly that *the* SPOUSE is derogatory—an effect we again tie to its distancing and stereotyping effects. Our participants, despite variability among them, also lean towards viewing the expression as rude and unkind, but in context-sensitive ways. In the 1st person, *the* SPOUSE was considered ruder than *my* SPOUSE regardless of referent gender. It was also considered less kind, but only for reference to wives.

In the 2nd person, *the* SPOUSE was also considered ruder and less kind than POSS SPOUSE. In this case, however, penalties were only for references to wives. In the 3rd-person, determiner had no effect on kindness and rudeness judgments.

Given the discussion in Sections 3 and 4, it is unsurprising that *the* SPOUSE trends towards sounding rude and unkind and that the referent’s gender matters. On the other hand, given the complexity of gender and social perception, we had no specific expectations

about exactly what asymmetries would emerge between perceptions of *the wife* and *the husband*, nor can we offer a definitive explanation for those that have. Instead we offer a tentative hypothesis about a possible source of each—hastening to emphasise that there are multiple possible explanations here, and deciding among them could be a study in itself.

On *the* seeming less kind than *my* for references to husbands but not wives, this asymmetry may stem in part from women having less license than men to take a distancing or resentful stance towards their spouse, as suggested in Section 4 (e.g. Manne, 2017). While men may be relatively easily forgiven for such a stance, women may be sooner regarded as disagreeable and uncharitable for doing so. Evidence of such an asymmetry can be found in the lexicon, where resentful wife-referring terms are not fully counterbalanced by similar husband-referring terms (Schulz, 1975).

In the 2nd-person, *the wife* sounded ruder and less kind than *your wife*, with no parallel effect for *the/your husband*. This asymmetry may be linked to people being generally more protective and possessive of women than of men (Glick & Fiske, 2001). That is, manipulating one’s addressee’s wife in deictic space may be deemed more transgressive and hence ruder than doing so with an addressee’s husband.

Turning to grammatical person, we noted in Section 3 that using *the* SPOUSE in 2nd-person cases can seem especially risky, as it involves depersonalising or deictically manipulating your interlocutor’s spouse. This plays out in our experiment, with the largest effects seen in the 2nd-person, though only in reference to wives. That we also observed similar effects in the 1st-person but not in the 3rd suggests that something about interlocutors’ spouses sets them apart from others’ spouses as stance objects—perhaps they are presumed to be more important to the speaker or addressee than third parties’ spouses.

The results for the *extrovert* scale are puzzling. Here we find significant effects of determiner choice only in references to 3rd persons’ spouses, where, using *the* rather than POSS yielded lower extroversion scores for *husband* and higher scores for *wife*. We offer the following possible explanations of this result. Firstly, given the rather unspecified contexts of the stimuli, participants may have often assumed that users of *the wife* and *the husband* were men and women respectively. This is almost certainly true in 1st-person cases, assum-

ing a heteronormative bias, and, more generally, our intuition is that *the* SPOUSE expressions are most frequently employed in homosocial contexts in reference to members of a different gender category. If so, participants encountering *the wife/husband* may be predisposed to imagining a male/female speaker, and in turn, may form gendered judgments about their social traits as a result.

Secondly, participants may have different beliefs about what extroverted men versus extroverted women are like. In psychological studies of personality, men and women on the aggregate tend to score differently on different aspects of extroversion. For instance, while women typically score higher on Warmth and Gregariousness, men typically score higher on Assertiveness and Excitement Seeking (Weisberg, DeYoung, & Hirsh, 2011). Accordingly, participants may have held different stereotypes of female and male extroverts, leading to different appraisals of a speaker’s extroversion despite parallel linguistic behavior. Perhaps using *the* SPOUSE in the 3rd-person was read as indicating a domineering and arrogant style, leading to higher extroversion scores for speakers assumed to be men and lower scores for speakers assumed to be women.

This account is admittedly speculative. Nevertheless, we hold the general theoretical point to be important—namely, that participants may have tended toward different perceptions of the speakers’ genders based on the referring expression used, which in turn may have influenced what traits they ascribed to those speakers.

One key aspect of the social meaning of *the* SPOUSE that our experiment does not directly address is the matter of solidarity. The scales included in the experiment were the result of a pre-experiment task which predominantly elicited characteristics of the speaker, rather than characteristics of the interlocutors’ relationship. Experimental research into the interpersonal effects of *the* SPOUSE would further enrich the affective picture of the expressions.

7.3 Further exploring context

As a final point of discussion, we will examine carrier sentence as a modulating factor. While we had no specific hypotheses about variation across different carrier sentences, it stands to

reason that *the* SPOUSE may have prompted different reactions depending on the utterances' content. Space limitations preclude a full analysis, although a model with carrier sentence as a fixed effect and four-way interactions is included in Appendix B. The following example involving the *rude* scale, however, provides an example of how carrier sentences can affect how spousal reference terms are interpreted.

The example involves the 2nd-person context, where the speaker is referring to a wife; the relevant sentences are included in (24). Here we see contrasting effects for carrier sentences A and C in (24-a) and (24-c) on the one hand and B and D in (24-b) and (24-d) on the other. The estimated difference between the rudeness rating for *the wife* and *your wife* in carriers A and C was only -0.03 and 0.07 respectively. In contrast, the same difference in carriers B and D was 0.92 and 1.21 respectively.

- (24)
- a. Sounds good, but I bet **the/your** wife will want you to be home that night.
 - b. Sounds good, you should ask **the/your** wife if she wants to come.
 - c. Sounds good, especially since you have been busy with **the/your** wife lately.
 - d. Sounds good, I haven't spent much time with Sam since you and **the/your** wife had your New Year's Party.

We hypothesise that, when confronted with carrier A or C, in which the speaker positions a spouse as a potential obstacle to socialising, participants already perceived the speaker to be very rude due to the carrier alone, leaving little room for determiner choice to influence the *rude* scale. In contrast, in carriers B and D where the speakers were not considered rude due to the carrier alone, the use of *the* could be a source of rudeness.

This example demonstrates the complexity of our effects. On the one hand, the models with carrier sentence as a random effect indicate that choice of spousal reference term can have a robust effect on how a speaker is perceived. On the other hand, there is clearly a multiplicity of context-specific conditions that may affect the activation of particular social meanings, and in at least some cases the carrier sentences' content appears to be among the relevant factors.

8 Conclusion and theoretical implications

Building on prior research on semantically derived social meaning (Davis & Potts, 2010, Author, 2014, 2019, Glass, 2015; Beltrama & Staum Casasanto, 2017, *inter alia*), we showed that using *the* SPOUSE in reference to someone’s spouse when POSS SPOUSE is available has pragmatically principled effects, tied to depersonalising the relevant spouse, re-positioning them in the deictic field and requiring extra reliance on coordination and common ground to resolve reference. As noted in Section 3, the possible particular motivations, though principled, are many, from attempts at solidarity to sending signals about one’s attitude towards the referent. As to be expected with pragmatic inference, an observer’s conclusions about the speaker’s specific motivation depend on contextual factors, like the richness of their common ground.

We find gender to be a crucial factor here, too, such that *the wife* and *the husband* are used and evaluated differently. This does not follow from semantic content alone, but, consonant with the work of Lakoff (1973, 2004) among many others, is rooted in broader cultural asymmetries in gender and gendered discourse. Moreover, evaluations of *the* SPOUSE depend on whose spouse is being referred to—a finding that stands to reason since re-positioning or depersonalising a referent is a different kind of social move depending on the referent’s relation to the discourse participants. In turn, how *the* SPOUSE expressions are interpreted will depend on culture-specific ideologies about gender and spousal relationships.

That grammatical person and the value of SPOUSE significantly impact differences in evaluations of *the* SPOUSE versus POSS SPOUSE not only underscores that interpretation depends heavily on socio-cultural context; it also bears important implications for matched-guise research into sociolinguistic perception more broadly. In order to develop a rich understanding of the social significance of a particular form, it is worth considering embedding the form in sentences with a variety of content. Had we only had a single pair of test sentences to be evaluated, where the only difference was whether the relevant determiner is *the* or *my*, we would have missed a much more complex picture of how *the* SPOUSE is evaluated. The present study highlights the clear potential for interaction between sociolinguistic variables,

semantic content, and particular interactional moves. Interpreting the results of a sociolinguistic perception study must be done with this in mind, lest results based on a narrow range of utterances be mistaken for providing near comprehensive information about the social meaning of the relevant forms. We contend that this holds not only for studies of morpho-syntactic variables, but phonological variables too, unless the facts are demonstrated to be otherwise.

As a final note, this study highlights the complexity of the interpretation of utterances and its link to evaluations of those utterances' speakers. As noted at multiple points, though constrained in a principled way, there are many possible motivations for using *the* SPOUSE, and settling on a particular motivation depends on numerous factors. But even if one confidently settles on a core motivation, there is tremendous indeterminacy concerning how an observer will translate their estimation of that motivation into a judgment about the speaker's social traits. For instance, whereas many online commenters find the distancing effect of *the* SPOUSE to be disrespectful, some view it as, in one commenter's words, 'a teasing term of endearment'—two interpretations that presumably lead to very different evaluations of the speaker.

Such matters come to the foreground in a study like ours. Controlled experiments of sociolinguistic perception tend to involve highly indeterminate contexts, requiring participants to fill in crucial contextual details in ways that are far from fully predictable. We submit two thoughts on this state of affairs. First, while such experiments offer important insights into the interpretations of a form, systematic examinations of more specific and situated uses are equally crucial for developing a comprehensive understanding of the interpretations and their underlying dynamics. Second, understanding how the use of a particular expression relates both to its core interpretation and to social evaluations of the speaker who uses it, we need not only semantic and pragmatic theory, but also rich theories of how particular actions are ideologically linked to particular social traits.

It is a great challenge to illuminate the connections from semantics to particularised use and interpretation to perceptions of speakers. But we agree with Eckert (2019, p. 769): “[L]anguage exists to articulate social practice, and social practice is change. This is not

to say that we should not separate out elements of language for study, but in the end we should hope to reunite these elements in a broader theory of social practice”. The better we understand how these elements relate, the richer our theories of meaning and social practice will be.

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A Example test set

Sentence	Det	Gender	Person	Set	Test
Sounds good, but I bet the wife will want me to be home that night	the	female	1st	A	test
Sounds good, you should ask my wife if she wants to come	POSS	female	2nd	B	test
Sounds good, especially since Alex has been spending all of her time with the husband lately	the	male	3rd	C	test
Sounds good. I haven't spent much time with Alex since me and my husband had our New Year's party	POSS	male	1st	D	test
Sounds good, hopefully it won't be too packed with football fans	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	distractor
Sounds good, it's been ages since we went for a drink together	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	distractor
Sounds good, but I'm heading up to see my parents for the weekend	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	distractor
Sounds good, though I think Alex is going on a work trip this weekend	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	distractor

B Full statistical model

Table 5: Model summary - Response \sim Referent Gender * Determiner Type * Person * Carrier + (1|Participant)

Predictors	nude		kind		close.to.their.spouse		extrovert		sexist						
	Estimate	std. Error	Estimate	std. Error	Estimate	std. Error	Estimate	std. Error	Estimate	std. Error					
(Intercept)	2.29	0.28	-0.001	4.29	0.27	-0.001	3.94	0.31	-0.001	2.88	0.25	-0.001	2.94	0.34	-0.001
Gender:Wife	0.58	0.40	0.148	-0.86	0.38	0.026	-0.69	0.44	0.115	0.99	0.36	0.006	0.31	0.48	0.522
Determiner: The	0.32	0.39	0.416	-0.57	0.37	0.125	-0.22	0.43	0.607	0.28	0.35	0.414	0.23	0.47	0.631
Person:2nd	2.04	0.41	-0.601	-0.89	0.39	0.022	-0.87	0.45	0.050	1.12	0.36	0.002	0.93	0.49	0.960
Person:3rd	1.44	0.38	-0.001	-0.66	0.37	0.072	-0.47	0.42	0.266	1.43	0.34	-0.001	0.80	0.46	0.686
Carrier:B	-0.29	0.42	0.479	0.42	0.40	0.290	0.92	0.46	0.044	1.05	0.37	0.005	-0.80	0.50	0.111
Carrier:C	-0.03	0.38	0.936	0.44	0.37	0.229	0.85	0.42	0.043	0.85	0.34	0.013	-0.94	0.46	0.042
Carrier:D	-0.08	0.38	0.828	0.60	0.37	0.102	0.53	0.42	0.205	1.28	0.34	-0.001	-0.68	0.46	0.143
Wife * The	0.18	0.55	0.749	0.61	0.53	0.249	-0.03	0.60	0.959	-0.48	0.49	0.335	0.21	0.66	0.753
Wife * Person:2nd	-0.50	0.60	0.407	0.37	0.57	0.515	0.71	0.66	0.280	-0.58	0.54	0.282	-0.34	0.72	0.636
Wife * Person:3rd	-0.84	0.55	0.124	0.75	0.52	0.152	0.27	0.60	0.652	-1.41	0.49	0.004	-0.26	0.66	0.698
The * Person:2nd	-0.79	0.58	0.171	0.31	0.55	0.569	0.51	0.63	0.420	-0.71	0.52	0.168	-0.09	0.70	0.895
The * Person:3rd	-0.95	0.54	0.079	0.68	0.52	0.190	-0.10	0.59	0.870	-0.81	0.48	0.093	-0.54	0.65	0.405
Wife * Carrier:B	-0.46	0.58	0.434	0.83	0.56	0.136	1.08	0.64	0.088	-0.92	0.52	0.076	-0.76	0.70	0.275
Wife * Carrier:C	-0.00	0.55	0.997	0.17	0.52	0.742	0.53	0.60	0.373	-0.36	0.49	0.461	0.53	0.66	0.419
Wife * Carrier:D	-0.79	0.55	0.152	0.74	0.53	0.161	1.44	0.60	0.017	-1.37	0.49	0.005	-0.57	0.66	0.389
The * Carrier:B	0.60	0.60	0.316	0.36	0.57	0.531	0.28	0.65	0.670	-0.38	0.53	0.477	0.30	0.72	0.678
The * Carrier:C	0.29	0.56	0.607	0.04	0.53	0.948	-0.64	0.61	0.295	-0.15	0.50	0.756	0.84	0.67	0.209
The * Carrier:D	-0.65	0.58	0.267	0.38	0.55	0.489	0.16	0.62	0.799	-0.68	0.52	0.194	-0.37	0.71	0.602
Person:2nd * Carrier:B	-1.59	0.58	0.006	0.79	0.55	0.153	0.85	0.63	0.178	-1.05	0.50	0.043	-0.24	0.70	0.736
Person:2nd * Carrier:C	-1.65	0.56	0.003	1.26	0.53	0.018	-0.02	0.61	0.972	-0.41	0.50	0.406	-0.99	0.67	0.141
Person:2nd * Carrier:C	0.45	0.59	0.447	-1.26	0.56	0.025	0.09	0.64	0.895	-0.69	0.53	0.191	0.07	0.71	0.916
Person:2nd * Carrier:D	-0.52	0.55	0.345	-0.45	0.52	0.391	-1.38	0.60	0.021	-1.11	0.49	0.024	0.27	0.66	0.686
Person:2nd * Carrier:D	-2.52	0.57	-0.001	0.67	0.54	0.222	-0.20	0.62	0.749	-1.28	0.51	0.012	-1.39	0.69	0.043
Person:3rd * Carrier:D	-1.09	0.56	0.047	-0.17	0.52	0.746	-0.26	0.60	0.669	-1.78	0.49	-0.001	-1.25	0.66	0.059
Wife * The * Person:2nd	0.26	0.83	0.755	-0.77	0.79	0.331	-0.78	0.90	0.387	0.74	0.74	0.317	0.32	0.59	0.744
Wife * The * Person:3rd	0.91	0.78	0.239	-1.44	0.74	0.052	-0.31	0.85	0.718	1.51	0.69	0.030	0.65	0.93	0.486
Wife * The * Carrier:B	-0.42	0.83	0.613	-0.08	0.79	0.918	-0.01	0.90	0.990	0.37	0.74	0.615	-0.02	0.99	0.984
Wife * The * Carrier:C	-0.78	0.78	0.315	0.14	0.74	0.851	0.20	0.85	0.811	0.29	0.69	0.673	-1.54	0.93	0.100
Wife * The * Carrier:D	0.46	0.79	0.555	-0.51	0.75	0.498	-0.82	0.86	0.340	1.40	0.70	0.046	0.50	0.95	0.598
Wife * Person:2nd * Carrier:B	-0.28	0.83	0.732	0.25	0.79	0.749	-1.14	0.90	0.204	0.50	0.74	0.494	0.02	0.99	0.986
Wife * Person:2nd * Carrier:C	0.66	0.80	0.406	-0.91	0.76	0.234	-1.03	0.87	0.236	0.73	0.71	0.307	0.36	0.96	0.705
Wife * Person:2nd * Carrier:C	-0.76	0.89	0.391	1.06	0.85	0.212	-1.28	0.95	0.175	-0.49	0.80	0.542	-0.10	1.09	0.927
Wife * Person:3rd * Carrier:C	0.25	0.67	0.706	-0.28	0.65	0.666	-0.11	0.79	0.891	0.66	0.59	0.264	-0.30	0.77	0.701
Wife * Person:3rd * Carrier:D	0.71	0.81	0.382	0.08	0.78	0.921	-0.70	0.89	0.432	1.89	0.73	0.020	0.75	0.98	0.442
Wife * Person:3rd * Carrier:D	1.71	0.79	0.031	-0.77	0.75	0.308	-1.05	0.86	0.221	1.70	0.70	0.016	1.49	0.95	0.116
The * Person:2nd * Carrier:B	-0.32	0.78	0.685	-0.34	0.75	0.654	-1.40	0.88	0.112	0.56	0.70	0.422	-0.39	0.92	0.673
The * Person:3rd * Carrier:B	1.19	0.82	0.146	-1.46	0.78	0.061	-0.54	0.88	0.540	0.38	0.73	0.605	0.96	0.99	0.331
The * Person:3rd * Carrier:C	-0.87	0.83	0.292	0.95	0.79	0.230	-0.34	0.90	0.706	0.67	0.74	0.368	-0.54	1.00	0.590
The * Person:3rd * Carrier:C	0.21	0.78	0.787	0.08	0.74	0.918	1.65	0.85	0.052	0.67	0.69	0.333	-0.80	0.93	0.393
The * Person:3rd * Carrier:D	1.60	0.82	0.052	-0.06	0.79	0.944	-0.01	0.89	0.995	0.84	0.74	0.254	0.70	1.00	0.484
The * Person:3rd * Carrier:D	1.18	0.81	0.143	-0.08	0.77	0.913	0.28	0.87	0.751	1.26	0.72	0.081	0.74	0.98	0.449
Wife * The * Person:2nd * Carrier:B	1.09	1.18	0.352	-0.26	1.12	0.815	1.10	1.28	0.389	-0.03	1.05	0.978	0.64	1.42	0.978
Wife * The * Person:3rd * Carrier:B	-0.99	1.13	0.385	1.31	1.08	0.228	1.09	1.24	0.380	-0.47	1.01	0.641	-0.44	1.37	0.748
Wife * The * Person:3rd * Carrier:C	1.48	1.24	0.232	-0.90	1.18	0.447	1.39	1.32	0.292	-0.30	1.12	0.788	0.38	1.52	0.802
Wife * The * Person:3rd * Carrier:C	0.09	0.96	0.924	0.51	0.92	0.581	-0.33	1.12	0.765	-1.20	0.84	0.152	1.15	1.09	0.289
Wife * The * Person:3rd * Carrier:D	-0.17	1.14	0.884	-0.09	1.09	0.937	-0.02	1.24	0.984	-2.51	1.02	0.014	-0.76	1.37	0.579
Wife * The * Person:3rd * Carrier:D	-2.26	1.14	0.047	1.43	1.09	0.190	0.74	1.24	0.551	-2.04	1.02	0.045	-2.03	1.37	0.138
Random Effects															
sd	1.00		0.93		1.38		0.77		1.31						
τ^2	0.32 ParticipantID		0.28 ParticipantID		0.20 ParticipantID		0.29 ParticipantID		0.62 ParticipantID						
N	199 ParticipantID		199 ParticipantID		199 ParticipantID		199 ParticipantID		199 ParticipantID						
Observations	795		795		795		795		795						
Marginal R ²	0.310 / 0.478		0.289 / 0.454		0.245 / 0.342		0.118 / 0.356		0.211 / 0.484						
Conditional R ²															