Gender Communication: Barriers to Women in Business Management Positions

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Gender Communication:
Barriers to Women in Business Management Positions
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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the various aspects of gender communication through social, cultural, and linguistic viewpoints to reach an awareness of the present-day communication barriers facing women in business management positions. By researching the historical background in gender relationships through culture and language, a foundation of expected societal sex-roles is established. Also considered is the development of the differences in gender communication and the gender divergence in verbal and nonverbal communication.
Part I

Preface:

All men are created equal—but not all men are one hundred percent masculine just as not all women are one hundred percent feminine. This distinction becomes critical when discussing gender-related problems. Defense for one's sex is natural, just as is viewing with "rose-colored glasses" a person's own behavioral problems. Human behavior and communication problems may result from past experience; other persons, other times, and other places leave emotional imprints. But isn't that what experience teaches; if the experience happened once, it may happen again? For example, if the stove is hot and the child touches it, the child pulls back her/his hand in pain and learns an agonizing lesson: "The stove burned my hand, the stove is hot, therefore I will not touch this or any other hot stove again." People carry with them memories of adverse reactions from communicating with members of the opposite sex and these communications color all their subsequent attitudes.

If a person has a gender-related problem, that does not indicate all men or all women are repressive and domineering or that they are all fair and sensitive. It does say each person is complex and nothing is one hundred percent. So when speaking of gender-related problems, a person must keep in mind that we speak in generalities of the word when men or man is used and/or when women or woman is mentioned. To focus on improving communication between the sexes, such generalizing becomes necessary.

The approach to this limited study regarding gender communication, comes first from a personal interest in understanding the differences in communication between women and men, and second, from the wider
perspective of the advantages in comprehension the business community can receive from gender variations.
CHAPTER I

Among the recent studies in communication research, several have explored the relation between gender and communication and especially how the differences between the ways men and women communicate affect the degree of success they experience in the business world. As greater numbers of women enter business careers, difficulties caused by communication differences become more apparent, and the need for gender communication studies becomes a vital field for research. This thesis will examine those studies and explore various issues in gender communication through social, cultural, and linguistic viewpoints. It will then discuss the existence of gender-related barriers to success for women in business that can be traced to the differences in communication between members of the opposite sex.
Justification of Method

To justify the importance of the proposed study, it will be necessary to examine historical viewpoints which will be analyzed, interpreted and evaluated. The existence of problems in communication based on gender differences has been posited by Littlejohn (1989); Bate (1988); Morrison, White, & Van Velsor (1987); Eisler (1987); Henley (1977); De Vito (1985); and Lakoff (1985). More specific studies of the problem have been made by Hoar (1988); Johnson (1986); Smeltzer & Werbel (1986); Isenhart (1980); Scott (1980); Bormann, Pratt, & Putnam (1978); and Kramer (1977). All these researchers believe that the nature of gender differences are at the root of the ways men and women communicate within their groups and across gender lines. They also consider these differences cause particular problems in cross-gender communications.

These problems in communication based on gender differences inhibit women when they enter fields of work previously dominated by men. Studies showing the nature of these problems have been done by Morrison et al. (1987); Smeltzer & Werbel (1986); Wheeless & Duran (1982); Wiley & Eskilson (1982); Bormann et al. (1978); and Harragan (1977).

To examine the development of gender communication barriers, this study will use a historical/critical approach to analyze the factors of difference involved in male-female communication, including cultural, attitudinal, and linguistic aspects. Then it will discuss the social conditions leading to communication barriers to women in the business world, including organization structure and types of communication used in business firms. It will trace historical trends discussed by anthropologists, sociologists, and historians that have led to a masculine-oriented model within the business
community. The study will point out gender differences observed in both verbal and nonverbal communication patterns as well as metalinguistic factors that contribute to difficulties in cross-gender communication. Finally, it will evaluate these gender studies in an attempt to discover their validity and their relevance to men and women in promoting their effectiveness.

To grasp the full impact of the present situation for women in business, gender communication research must be prefaced with an understanding of the conditions of the sexes from as early a time as possible. Writers about the early period of man's development, such as Briffault (1927), Newmann (1955), and Eisler (1987), give a more complete accounting of history by including women and their contributions. With a background of information on how communication developed between the sexes, insight on today's barriers to women becomes clearer.
Part II
CHAPTER 2

Historical Development of Communication Barriers

Factors

Cultural

Patterns in primitive society show that the mind has been molded, not by the hunters and fighters as thought in research by anthropologists previously reported (Haviland, 1987), but by the instincts of mothers (Briffault, 1927). Each human being held for warmth and for feeding knows that such functions are vital to living and that the primary giver of life who fulfills these needs is the mother. Briffault (1927) saw the mother-child relationship as the foundation of social life and human culture. Although Briffault's (1927) work was not immediately accepted by anthropologists, it had great influence and increased the awareness of anthropologists to the variations in acculturation based on sex differences.

The image of the feminine archetype found in symbols, such as pottery, paintings, sculptures, carvings, and other art forms, led Neumann (1955) to conclude that there was a "Great Mother". Neumann (1955) explains that 'Mother'... does not refer merely to a relationship of filiation but also to a complex psychic situation of the ego, and similarly, the term 'Great' expresses the symbolic character of superiority that the archetypal figure possesses in comparison with everything human and with created nature in general (p.11).

Symbols, similar to those found in cave walls, are the beginnings of language. The archetypes depicted by early mankind provide the means of expressing
important concepts that become a part of the consciousness. Thus, the many representations of women in primitive art give evidence of the importance of the female principle in the unconscious mind in early societies.

In many animal and insect worlds, the process of natural selection demonstrates its choice of the matriarchal system. Briffault (1927) finds in his research that matriarchy is the natural pattern of social living and when that pattern is disturbed and/or replaced, the result is repression of the female. The shift from matriarchal to patriarchal society foretells the decline of women's rights and stature.

Conventional history has transmitted the deeds of men but has largely ignored the contributions of women. When both women and men are included in the pattern, history details cycles of matriarchy and patriarchy. Fluctuations from one end of the continuum, matriarchy, to the other end, patriarchy, form a model that shows times of war as times of greater authoritarianism, with an accompanying loss of individualism and liberty. Eisler (1987) says:

Looking at the surface, we may . . . observe fluctuations throughout history from warlike to more peaceful times, from authoritarian to freer and more creative times, from periods when women are more repressed to times when, at least for some women, there is a broadening of educational and life opportunities (p. 135).

The history of the last 80 years would suggest a cause and effect relationship supporting Eisler's (1987) theory.

Finding food and caring for the young were fundamental elements in the life of early women and men. Primitive women and men began to group together to meet the basic needs: food gathering and hunting, safety, and companionship. The social role for each person was assigned by biological
factors, the physical strength of men and the dependence of children on women. For example, hunters developed muscle power and cunning, while those who did child-rearing had to cultivate patience, gentleness, and human sensitivity. Lakoff (1975) describes job division and sex roles as a form of natural selection. Each gender group became identified by their tasks and became further separated from the other group.

The hunters bonded to each other as a unit to increase their hunting successes while the women were left in charge of the children with no need for bonding with other women. Consequently, women developed as individuals, forming intuitive knowledge within themselves but not relating that knowledge to each other—until much later. For men, bonding continues to be particularly important, as it was in primitive times, to establish perimeters in territories and status positions. Even today, such placement in status roles is found in organizational charts and rosters in businesses that have authoritarian styles of management. Because of the isolated conditions of tradition-bound sex-roles set by society for them, women still have not developed the same need as men for bonding. Women’s orientation, the importance of the relationships of the people they work with, is imbedded in the tasks assigned to them rather than titles or symbols as required for men.

Attitude

Generally throughout history, published literature has been written by men who have shaped cultural opinions toward women and stereotyped the societal values and norms for all females. In the 1700s, a few male writers began to champion women’s rights for full personhood by declaring that
women were not properly educated relative to men, and therefore, were being unjustly subjugated. The impact of the industrial revolution of the 1800s and the advent of the machine brought virtual equality of strength to both sexes. Suddenly human physical assets were not the determining factor for task assignments; both sexes were equal before the machine (de Beauvoir, 1953). This development helped to change the work force from mainly male employment to a larger percentage of women working in factories and fields.

Socialism, which developed as a result of the abuses to both male and female workers in the industrial system, promised emancipation for women: an end to slavery by biological fact, as private property, and by subjugation. According to de Beauvoir (1949), women had champions of a sort in Marx, as translated by Moore (1955) in which Marx claimed all workers were merely slaves to the capitalist system. Socialism moved society from viewing the acceptance of women's oppression to a revolution against the oppression of an entire working class, the proletariat which includes both women and men. But just as capitalism developed into a patriarchal model of domination, so too, socialism and communism, although they promised equality of the sexes, have continued the same pattern of domination by males (de Beauvoir, 1953).

Women have been molded into a certain character by men as they know that the world is masculine; men fashion it, rule it, and continue to dominate it. The traits of women as defined by de Beauvoir (1953):

... they are capable of stoical courage when circumstances demand it; lacking the male's aggressive audacity, many women distinguish themselves by their calm tenacity in passive resistance. They face crises, poverty, misfortune, more energetically than their husbands;
respecting duration, which no haste can overcome, they do not ration their time. When they apply their quiet persistence to an enterprise, they are sometimes startlingly successful (pp. 566-567).

Montagu (1953) further supports de Beauvoir's (1953) definition of character traits of women by saying that they have developed survival techniques beneficial to the person and the group (Montagu, 1953, p. 32). These traits of endurance and courage are a product of eons of care-giving and flexibility necessary for their very existence. As the attitudes of culture have moved from equality for all to hierarchical rankings of status, women's position in society has moved steadily downward. Also, Boas (1911) saw differences in status as being attributable to historic cultural factors rather than genetic or biological factors.

Carr-Ruffino (1985) contends women have historically been rewarded for acts of nurturing, being dependent on men for financial support, and maintenance and care of the family and home. That women have been the "handmaidens for men" in the professions they choose is shown by the traditional delineation according to sex of socially accepted careers for women until recently: classroom teachers, nurses, librarians, social workers, and journalists (Greer, 1970). These ancillary positions have usually not been considered "prime" or "important" areas of work. Millet (1970) coined the term "interior colonization" to explain how every avenue of power within the society is in male hands. She says, "The effect of male ascendancy upon human society in general and the masculine character (which governs society) in particular is such that it fosters notions of superiority and satisfaction over differential or prejudicial treatment from earliest youth" (p.103).
The product in a society where "important" roles were assumed by men became the anomaly of educated women being "infantized" into mindless housewives. Advertisers, aided by social science research (Packard, 1957) offered sex-role models in the endlessly televised situation comedies featuring "ideal" family life. Marriage manuals of the 1950s extolled the mediated sex-role for women by the implications that a career might jeopardize her opportunities to lead a "normal" life (Friedan, 1963). Social scientists such as Mead (1928) operated on rigid assumptions about the female's role in the scheme of life. Mead (1928) believed that women inherited certain accepted roles in society: marriage and motherhood. Women who were not married and had no children were not "whole" women nor were they normal.

While the social scientists such as Mead (1928) began to change their biological viewpoint of women's role in life, a branch of social science labeled functionalism believed women and men could not be truly equal functionally and could only exist in the social structure by maintaining the status quo of lower status for the female. She was to be the wife and mother first, then a homemaker, with a job perhaps, but not a career. As Friedan (1963) explains:

Functionalism was an easy out for American sociologists. There can be no doubt that they were describing things 'as they were', but in so doing, they were relieved of the responsibility of building theory from facts, of probing for deeper truth. They assumed an endless present, and based their reasoning on denying the possibility of a future different from the past (p. 125.)

American functionalistic sociologists, such as Parsons (1954) and Barry, Bacon and Child (1962), want to maintain life in a bubble of what they
consider to be "normal" and any deviation from the prescribed role of "normal" is deemed conflictual. Functionalism is devoted to adjustment to an inevitable system. Thus, in functionalism, women and all of mankind are held prisoner in a time lock.

Tracing historical trends as these must be the foundation for understanding the organizational framework which society has inherited from the past. The relative roles of men and women and the conflict that occurs when changes are made in those role patterns are witnesses to today's diversity in gender communication.

Language

In the field of linguistics and communication, certain scholars (Sapir, 1949) and Whorf, 1956) have pointed out that not only vocabulary, syntax, diction, occasion of verbal discourse, social standing, and function, but also nonverbal communication plays a great role in establishing hierarchy among people. According to Sapir (1949), how man (mankind) perceives the world is mainly through language:

Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group... (quoted in Whorf, 1956, p.134).

The relationship of language and behavior is a world view of the culture, a certain way of perceiving reality. According to the Whorf hypothesis
(Whorf, 1956), the structure of a language tends to condition the ways in which a speaker of that language thinks; therefore, language shapes culture. Whorf (1956) explored the circular link of culture to language to behavior of the Hopi Indians, then claimed each culture develops its own language to accommodate its particular world view. The needs of the culture are seen in its language and the language of a culture is created by the dominant subcultures, thus forming a continuous relationship. For example, language assumes the word *men* are all of the human race, so who are *women*? The thought, that women are less than men, prevails and taints the actions and behaviors of everyone. What one person thinks of another will influence the attitude and behavior of the other to the point that, if it is important enough, the other person will become that thought.

The reality of a person's existence is created largely by others through their interpretation of that person (Schutz, 1970). The idea of the social construction of reality says that (1) how a person experiences something will depend on what is available to describe it in the language, (2) society decides what and how is real at that moment and that place, (3) what society knows is subjective, and (4) based on societal reality, other areas (behavior) are influenced. These conditions describe how people process reality and their experiences within that reality. If, for example, a woman has never been president of a large corporation, her image in that position conflicts with societal reality, and people find it difficult to accept the possibility of accepting a woman in such a position. The "social constructionist movement" defines the processes by which a person understands her/his world and the experiences within the reality of that world (Gergen, 1985). According to that process, the *status quo* regarding women's roles follows the traditional perception of those roles.
The world of mass communication opens a proverbial Pandora's box; the images of expected sex-roles are projected from the audience through the mediated medium of mass media back to the audience, thereby, reinforcing those images. McLuhan's (1967) hypothesis, that the medium is the message, explains how differences in people are not in the "what" or content, but rather in "how" these differences are perceived by people who are conditioned not only by previous cultures, but also by the new culture introduced by mass media. The image of the perfect family, for instance, created in the television series "The Bill Cosby Show", offers to the audience "created" sex-role models that order attitudes to be formed from that creation. The visual message of some accepted sex-roles from older television series (i.e. "The Brady Brunch", "The Donna Reed Show", "Father Know Best") strengthens the pervasiveness of the "other-directed" influence (Riesman, Glazer, & Denney, 1950). Thus, by means of television, roles for women become standardized and tend to perpetuate roles in which women are subservient. This pervasive influence makes acceptance of change toward sex roles in the workplace even more difficult.

Just as visual images can direct attitudes, language controls verbal behavior through the reinforcement frequency theory of Skinner (1957). If a message is received well, the sender will repeat the message. Therefore, language becomes the repetition of positively received messages. Since language influences the forms of culture, so language shapes self-images. The reality a person creates is from the expectations of her/his culture; hence her/his language will reflect those expectations. Consequently, when a woman speaks at a meeting, she will more often fulfill society's expectations and say what she knows will be accepted, accompanying her speech with a smile and the appropriate gestures to gain approval, rather than advance
some new thought or method of work that would upset male colleagues and risk rejection.

Conditions of Communication Barriers

One of the communication barriers, inherent to women in business, is the business structure itself. The very nature of the organization can form the attitudes of the employees and determine their behavior. For example, if women are perceived by the organization as a threat to the status quo, sexist language and sexual advances may prevail as veiled forms of harassment. Individuals in management set the tone of the organization and the levels of acceptance of conduct. Sexist language emerges from individual attitudes and cultural structure. Henley (1987) explains sexist language by separating it into three forms: language that ignores, defines, and deprecates women. Psychologically and materially, women suffer from the usage of sexist language as it tends to "place" them in an inferior position. Henley (1987) describes the term "place"

Whereas men are often referred to in occupational terms, women are more often referred to in relational terms, for example as wife or mother, or by titles which denote the presence or absence of an authorized relation to a male (Miss, Mrs.) (pp. 3-4).

Montagu (1953) also explains woman's "place" by referencing the origin. He says that chivalry and etiquette were intended to show visibly that men were patronizing women by offering assistance to a less capable and therefore dependent person with the condition of the extreme politeness to
be the continued submissiveness by women. Sexual harassment through the language preserves the status quo of male dominance in organizations (Neugarten and Shafritz, 1980). Sex-biased language is found in tasteless jokes, slurs, and comments made to discover boundaries and establish territories (Harragan, 1977).

Organizational Structure

The structure of the organization is generally a hierarchy depicted as a one-dimensional pyramid. At the top of the pyramid is the ultimate decision maker with levels upon levels of subordinates. The power in a hierarchy flows from top down by delegation of tasks. In Table 1, the pyramid structure is shown with the workers at the bottom being commanded by successive levels to the top. This ancient formula is similar to classic military commands with a general, colonels, and supporting troops. Harragan (1977) describes the levels:

With each descending level, the power, responsibility, authority, and status diminish in a prescribed ratio. So do the importance, difficulty, and prominence of the assigned tasks as they are consistently subdivided down the levels. The rationale behind subdivision is to insure that no task exceeds the ability of its performer. In practice, the principle turns into an idiot's nightmare as both military and business tasks are broken down into dehumanizing fragments (p. 49).
Table 1

THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chief executive officer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>president</td>
<td>four-star general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>executive vice presidents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>senior vice presidents</td>
<td>lt. generals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vice presidents</td>
<td>major generals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>department managers</td>
<td>colonels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>managerial supervisors</td>
<td>majors, captains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supervisors</td>
<td>lieutenants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>workers</td>
<td>lieutenants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Harragan, 1977, p.46)

Being authoritarian, the pyramid hierarchy is military in nature. Harragan (1977) says that military terms, such as “attacking the competition” and “invading the marketplace,” are part of a language men use to display male
bonding. The use of overt army titles, reveals the total masculine tone to its management style. Harragan (1977) explains

The top man is a five-star general (chief executive officer); one level below is the four-star general (president); on the next level reside lieutenant generals (executive vice-president); below them the major generals (senior vice-presidents); and progressively down the levels through brigadiers, colonels, lieutenant colonels (assorted degrees of vice-presidents), down to majors, captains, first lieutenants (various regional and departmental manager) and finally second lieutenants (junior executives just "graduated" from management cadet training) (p.47).

The chief executive officer is the key to the success of the hierarchical system and usually referred to as the "general"(Harragan, 1977). Job titles replace rank but are given the same status in respect, deference, and obedience, such as officers of a corporation. Harragan (1977) says that the pyramid structure is impersonal and concerned primarily with the mission of the organization: "This objective quality indigenous to hierarchical structures is an early stumbling block for many women entering this foreign environment"(p. 50).

Types of Communication

Most people experience six different levels of communication: (1) intrapersonal communication, (2) interpersonal communication, (3) small group communication, (4) public communication, (5) mass communication, and (6) social movement communication. Each level has gender-related problems which women in business must learn to cope with.
For women, intrapersonal communication is the self-talk that shapes her self-concept and self-esteem. From their infancy, women internalize certain roles to follow, with little to no variance for the socially acceptable limit. Bate (1988) says, "... it is clear that a close link exists between external communication in daily life and inner evaluations of the self"(p.18). Self-talk can convince a person that she/he may be of less worth than she/he truly is and that may become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Interpersonal communication, communication between two persons or a small group of persons, affects each communicator through the alternating transmission. When a message is received, it becomes a part of the receiver. Just as mothers are affected by their infant's cries and smiles, so the actions and messages sent by society to women concerning their position and status is received and becomes a part of the woman. The importance of interpersonal communication is found in the confirmation of the other person. Wilmot (1987) says, "Confirmation involves more than just noticing the other; it entails responsiveness, 'tuning in' to them, and enacting appropriate conversational and relational skills"(p.230). In other words, reacting to the other person as a person is recognizing the other's existence and being involved in the relationship. According to Wilmot (1987), "... each person influences and is influenced by the other"(p.13). Harragan (1977) points out that women in the business world are frequently ignored by male colleagues who actively do not acknowledge their presence and do not consider them part of the primarily male organization(p.33).

Working in a group of people on any given task may entail conflicts and/or barriers to task completion. In the last decade, society has seen more women in decision-making groups in large organizations. When men and women are in group situations together, generally they both tend to
stereotype women in submissive roles while men fall into rigid stereotyped roles of dominance. Bate (1988) extends the idea of sex-role communication, "Whatever flexibility women and men may have in their contributions to group communication, they tend to become more restricted and less flexible when in the presence of the other sex" (p.154). Speaking at a conference or a boardroom is a variation of public communication. The reception of women speakers is rather unclear as there is very little research information available. However, as more women enter this area of public speaking, the fact that they are women will be less unusual and more readily accepted as just another speaker.

Social movement communication deals with feminism. How women are perceived in the latest feminist movement has a great impact on women's jobs as a whole. In the 1970s, affirmative action legislation moved women into the limelight and literally shoved them into non-traditional jobs. They were not always hired for their qualifications but rather to fulfill the minority quota assigned by law. Affirmative action legislation threatened men and cost them jobs. These perceived threats have set up barriers that have longer range effects, in some cases, than the affirmative action itself.
CHAPTER 3
GENDER DIFFERENCES IN VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Aspects of Language and the Sexes

The reference system of symbolic language is formed by the content of the messages and each culture defines that content through its own particular world view. Just as each culture is as uniquely different as its people, so each culture’s language reflects that difference. The needs of the people of a culture will be visible in the range of ideas and the type of ideas available to describe and relate experiences and concepts through their language. In Western societies, a negative concept of the sexes, “opposite sexes,” tries to explain sexual differences as a gender ideal, such as “boys don’t cry” and “only girls play with dolls”. Role expectations based upon such linguistic habits keep both sexes from developing according to certain inner-directed tendencies.

A rigid attitude about how language works could create assumptions about meaning and message evaluation in language that would explain the misunderstandings that occur between people. According to Bate (1988), some assumptions might be similar to the following list:

1. Words have single, reliable meanings known or commonly understood by everyone.
2. Language describes how things are; it is not biased.
3. Language is a solid, unchanging structure to be protected.
4. Words cannot harm us; believing that they can shows that one is ill informed or paranoid (p. 80).

These assumptions are incorrect and cause a great deal of concern. Most words have more than one meaning as the word *man* has the ability to be one individual or all of mankind. Some words change meanings from one
person to another, such as the word, *lady*, which can refer to a woman of
great refinement commanding much respect or it might mean a stereotype of
an image of a woman with excesses of gentility, pretentiousness, and
idleness. Overt and covert prejudices are inherent within language in all
cultures. The word *nigger* carries the point of view of the speaker. But
language is not stable, nor is it unchanging. It fits the needs of people who
are changing constantly. As the culture of people fills their needs, so their
language, the tool of that culture, also changes. Words have a power beyond
the sound they make. Language can ignore persons and deprecate them.
Sexual biases in language speak louder, longer, and hurt more than most
physical activity; the word *girlie*, spoken to an employee for instance,
screams the speaker's world view in one short moment.

One of the sources of sex bias in language may be the lack of contact of
males and females in a work environment. The opportunity for men to
understand women on an equal basis has occurred only in the last century as
women entered male exclusive occupations. Whereas women hear and read
about the male-directed world, males have only recently begun to
understand women's language.

**Women's Language, Men's Language**

Women have a language that speaks of adjustment to conditions for
survival. Just as men have developed a language to fit their masculine world
and its needs, women have shaped their own language to accommodate the
way things are. Men's domination of women can be seen in the specific uses
of diction and syntax. For example, women do not use men's type of humor
but they do tend to speak in italics to make a point.
Kramer's (1977) study shows that characteristics differentiating female and male speakers can be identified. Female characteristics demonstrate language patterns of the oppressed and male characteristics display a dominating style. Table 2 below points out these different characteristics.

Table 2
Characteristics differentiating female and male speakers for both women and men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female Stereotypic Language Characteristics</th>
<th>Male Stereotypic Language Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enunciate clearly</td>
<td>Demanding voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High pitch</td>
<td>Deep voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use hands and face to express ideas</td>
<td>Boastful speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gossip</td>
<td>Use swear words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for listener</td>
<td>Dominating speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentle speech</td>
<td>Loud Speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast speech</td>
<td>Show anger rather than concealing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk about trivial topics</td>
<td>Straight to the point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wide range in rate and pitch</td>
<td>Militant speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly speech</td>
<td>Use slang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk a lot</td>
<td>Authoritarian speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional speech</td>
<td>Forceful speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use many details</td>
<td>Blunt speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smooth speech</td>
<td>Sense of humor in speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open, self-revealing speech</td>
<td>Lounge, lean back while talking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic speech</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smile a lot when talking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good grammar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite speech</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jibberish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Kramer, 1977, p. 156)
The most competent adult communicator skills are found in the female-stereotyped traits, while the more socially practical communicator skills are generally found in the male-stereotyped traits. In Table 3, the attributes of an ideal speaker, considered desirable by both men and women, are more evident in the communication skills of women.

**Table 3**  
Socially Desirable Stereotypic Language Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female-linked traits</th>
<th>Male-linked traits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very smooth speech</td>
<td>Very deep voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very wide range in rate and pitch</td>
<td>Very straight to the point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very open, self-revealing speech</td>
<td>Sense of humor in speech very much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses hands and face to express ideas a lot</td>
<td>Uses slang a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smiles a lot when talking</td>
<td>Very forceful speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very polite speech</td>
<td>Not at all high pitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good grammar</td>
<td>Not at all jibberish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enunciates clearly a lot</td>
<td>Does not gossip at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses many details</td>
<td>Doesn't talk about trivial topics at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very concerned for listener</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very enthusiastic speech</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very gentle speech</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very friendly speech</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talks a lot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not use swear words at all</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all demanding voice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all militant speech</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all boastful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all dominating speech</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceals anger rather than showing it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Scott, 1980, p. 203)

To have the best communicator skills but not be admired or rewarded for those skills sets up a negative feedback situation. Scott (1980) says, "The
value attached to positive affiliative characteristics linked with female language may be too often ignored in a society more concerned with competition and individual achievement than with co-operative endeavors" (p.207).

The "double bind" of gender speech patterns is one of many dilemmas for women. If they use "masculine" speech characteristics, they will be viewed as unfeminine but they will be more effective communicators. If women use "feminine" speech characteristics, they will be using socially competent communication skills that are not socially powerful. According to Lakoff (1975):

Little girls are indeed taught to talk like little ladies, in that their speech is in many ways more polite than that of boys or men, and the reason for this is that politeness involves an absence of a strong statement, and women's speech is devised to prevent the expression of strong statements (p.19).
CHAPTER 4
GENDER DIFFERENCES IN NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Categories

Nonverbal communication "gives off" additional data when verbal messages are sent. Gender-related nonverbal communication is seen by the "roles" people play and the expectations of those roles. For example, women are not expected to speak with a loud brisk manner nor to act in a physically aggressive mode. A man, however, is expected to project power and control through his demeanor. These sex-roles expectations influence the message through the spoken language but, more importantly, through body language and paralanguage or vocal usage.

The relative effect of the elements of a message is illustrated by Mehrabian's (1972) study: "Total Impact = .07 verbal + .38 vocal + .55 visual" (p.122). Nonverbal communication, at the very least, carries the larger portion (93%) of the message. In Table 4, nonverbal behavior expectations are shown as related to sex-role ideals. Women have certain voice actions, movements by body and face, and use of their personal space which differs from men. As the table illustrates, each nonverbal location (voice, body, face, and environment) exemplifies the divergence of the gender ideals in areas of status position and power.

Table 4
Nonverbal Behavior Expectations Related to Gender Ideals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nonverbal Location</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
<th>Gender Ideal</th>
<th>Masculine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voice</strong></td>
<td>Higher pitch</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower pitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Varied intonation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes monotone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Softer on average</td>
<td></td>
<td>Louder on average</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What and how a person projects nonverbally delivers a louder message about her/his self-concept than any spoken message. The mental picture formed by the receiver of a message relies on the nonverbal cues that help to form an impression. Getting a "first impression" of a person includes the gathering of all the nonverbal cues being sent and matching them to existing categories or stereotypes.

One of the nonverbal behavior expectations is vocal cues within messages, found in the pitch of the speaker's voice. The subtle characteristic of a soft, breathy, high-pitched voice is the positive gender identification of a woman. If a woman has a deep "masculine" voice, however, the paralinguistic message may be confused. Another nonverbal transmission of great impression is the stance of the body. For Donald Trump, hooking the thumbs in the belt has a triumphant and conquering warrior look, strictly masculine.
Besides the voice and the body, the face offers many cues to the intention of the true message from the sender. The social expectation for women to look pleasant and receptive is found in the smile. Bate (1988) says, "...women smile more often than men... making them appear more submissive and lacking power" (p.63).

The size of personal space or the lack of it indicates the dimensions of power. Women generally have less personal space and have that space invaded more often than men do (Bate, 1988). The control of a woman's environment is a sign; if she can control her environment, she can control her life.

The functions of nonverbal communication fulfill several vital links for the complete message transmission: to reinforce, to qualify, to replace and to contradict. DeVito (1985) finds, "Regardless of what one does or does not do, regardless of whether it is intentional or unintentional, one's nonverbal behavior communicates something to someone" (p.118). Even a subconscious transmission of nonverbal communication can be sending messages as the receiver need not be consciously aware of the message to be affected by it. Nonverbal communication is always communicating.

What kind of weight is given to nonverbal communication depends on the meaning attached to that communication. Levels of dominance, liking and general responsiveness, all convey certain qualities to the perception process regarding the intent of the message. The procedure will differ from women to men. A smile by a woman, which is considered "normal" according to Bate's (1988) study (see Table 4), is not the norm for a man, and therefore, when a man smiles, he is sending a sharp signal that something is different. Reading nonverbal communication properly is critical; sending nonverbal communication properly is vital.
Cues

Being able to decipher nonverbal communication cues is an ability more females possess than do males. Isenhart (1980) reports that, because of socially expected sex roles, females appear to be more sensitive to nonverbal cues than are males. Reading people is sometimes essential to survival. In traditional feminine occupations, women nurses have learned to recognize surface symptoms of distress in their patients, teachers have become aware of potential behavior problems of the students, and office workers "feel" the tension from their bosses, and mothers are extremely aware of feelings in their children. This greater sensitivity by women to emotions in others may be based on acculturation.

The training a young girl receives to "act like a lady" assumes a compression of her limbs into as small an area as possible. Crossing her legs at the ankles and holding her arms close to her body would seem to suggest that a woman is displaying a submissive posture that could be perceived also to be a subtle message about her attitude and self-concept.

Contemporary American culture emphasizes the feminine role to be more emotionally sensitive to others (Isenhart, 1980). Submissiveness and expressiveness, two traits commonly associated with femininity, enable women to decode nonverbal messages better than men (Isenhart, 1980, p. 311-312).

Intuition

The ability to see, categorize, and interpret nonverbal communication cues and use them effectively is a form of intuition. "Women's intuitiveness" may be mainly the keener perception gained from astutely gathering the nonverbal communication cues and grasping their intent.
Harragan (1977) says, "Women often exhibit uncanny sensitivity to what's going on in their immediate surroundings. They 'sense' subtle differences in behavior or responses, even though men's surface attitudes remain the same" (p.136). Being the receivers of messages more often than the sender, women have had more experience in decoding and correlating all the input from nonverbal communication (Lakoff, 1975; Scott, 1980). Montagu (1968) explains women's intuition as the development by girls at their earliest years of recognizing the nuances and subliminal signs in life not generally noticed by males(p.43).

Mixed Cues

If the verbal message is a positive one, and the nonverbal message is negative, a mixed message results. Mixed messages are received all the time, but in cases of great import, a person can trust only what works for her/him best--nonverbals. Women managers sometimes receive mixed messages from upper management levels that declare "equal opportunity is company policy," but those messages may not be reliable. Reading the company as a whole from nonverbal cues as well as written company policy gives a better awareness of the true situation.
SUMMARY

In searching for the communication barriers confronting women in business, the historical background of primitive people, forming groups for survival, uncovers the foundation of sex-role expectations and gender differences in attitudes and perceptions. The division of tasks in daily life segregates women from men into statutory sex roles. Status is given by the importance of the job and the label given by the person performing the action. The hierarchy of the group is formed by the decision of who has the most important positions: men by natural selection and physical prowess become the hunters and also the leaders. By using the hierarchical system of power, men turned women into lesser forms of man. The first communication barrier sees culturally expected sex-roles defining positions by a person's gender. Women do women's work, and men have careers.

Just as literature portrayed women and more fully defined their status and position, writers of women's rights exposed this unequal situation and increased social awareness. Functionalism deadlocked women into an endless present with no future prospect for emancipation. Mead (1928) saw women as confined to a specific sex role, that of mother and wife. In the 1950s, society demanded that the determined role for women was as an "other" while men had the "prime" or "important" work (Friedan, 1963). A biased societal attitude is the second communication barrier for women.

The use of and the content of the language is shaped by culture. Perception of "how things are" for a culture is embedded within the language. What a speaker thinks, in what spirit the message is conveyed, and the concepts which the speaker uses are all inside the language. If the culture has a sexual bias, then the language will also have sexist words and
sentiments. The third communication barrier, then, is found within in the
language itself with the use of biased words and predetermined meanings.

The hierarchical structure of an organization is the fourth communication barrier for women in business as the authoritarian form of management is made by and for men. Before women advance in business careers under any form of authoritarian management, they must carefully examine the sports and military terminology used by men in the business community.

In each one of the areas in communication, society reinforces the prevailing view of women. Intrapersonal communication, self-talk, is the strongest barrier for women to overcome. Society and culture shape people by stereotypes and prejudices that sometimes become self-fulfilling prophecies. The negative communication from others feeds into the self and molds the self-concept. The propensity of insecurity propagates the feeling of less to little worth in self-talk. Intrapersonal communication is the sum total of what a person believes is that person's self worth. Interpersonal communication, the reflection and influence of others, confirms a person's very existence and drives that person to change, modify, and/or transform in the desire to please and gain approval. If interpersonal communication is unequal or biased in some way, it colors the transmission and negates the opportunity for trust. Women fall into the expected sex-role designated for them when associating with men in small groups situations. Public address still needs more research to increase everyone's awareness of the difference of women and men as speakers. One of the conditions in social movement communication is the backlash of radical feminism that women must address. Each form of communication contributes to the formation of barriers facing women in business. When women give credence to the
stereotypes and prejudices that are integrated into business communication, there arises problems in self-concepts.

The gender differences discussed in verbal communication begins with the aspects of language and the sexes: the reference system and incorrect assumptions about meanings. Parents and educators explain language usage differently to children by their sex. Girls are taught to use certain symbols or usages of language, and boys are taught to use other forms (Withers, 1987; Miller & Swift, 1988). This education enculturizes children to see variances according to who uses the language, thus the pre-determined connotation. False and incorrect assumptions concerning meanings demonstrate how attitudes mold and shape language use. The essence of a word or term assigned to the language changes the usage as different genders use the same words. The historic barrier to women has been prevailing attitudes of encultization and double-standards of language meanings.

The existence of a women's language and the differences between it and men's language clearly indicates the characteristics of female and male speakers (see Tables 3 & 4). To possess the right communication skills, as women do, and not be recognized for those skills, sets up strong barriers to women in business. The premise of Withers' (1987) study and Miller & Swift's (1988) study says just as women are taught to speak differently by educators and peers, they are expected to produce the same quality and quantity of labor with the "wrong" tools. Therefore, the seventh communication barrier for women in business is the effectiveness of the characteristics of their speech.

Nonverbal communication visually displays messages both intended and unintended. The projection of authority and power by women in business counters the nonverbal cues normally sent by men and perceived
as correct. In Table 4, women are viewed as open, soft, or submissive. These perceptions are interpreted by men as a person lacking the right qualities for leadership. Even if women speak in masculine-correct words, the leakage from their nonverbal communication betrays their femininity. The last communication barrier to women in business discussed in this paper concerns the nonverbal messages women send to men that are received as weak-willed or incorrect.
CONCLUSIONS

From the "play their game" suggestions (Harragan, 1977) to "power plays" (Henley, 1977), women have been trying to find methods of communication that can be understood and accepted by men. Androgynous management styles is not the solution nor is a blending of management styles (Morrison et al., 1987, p.55) as that would only cause further confusion and gender disorientation.

Women have risen in management positions within the business world but have found in the system an ingrained stubbornness to change in the one-sided management practices of the past (Whyte, 1956; Packard, 1962; and Drucker, 1967) The phantom walls and ceilings that are the product of centuries of learned behavior by both women and men can be dissolved by enlightenment. Only as awareness of the differences in communication of women and men allows rethinking will there be deep structural changes in societal attitudes and expectations that envisions communication equality for the sexes as an ideal.

To break down the communication barriers to women in business, the foundation of knowledge gleaned from historical information (Lakoff, 1975; Eisler, 1987; and Bate, 1988) provides the basis for a beginning. Merely crashing these barriers would not accomplish any lasting or valued benefits. Rather, an awareness of the communication barriers is a stronger beginning, and enables further research in gender communication.
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