Gender Communication: An Impact in American Management

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Gender Communication: An Impact in American Management

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CHAPTER ONE-

Problem

Among recent studies in communication research, several experts have analyzed contrasting communication between men and women. Most research presents consistent and valuable information about the dichotomous communication between the two sexes. The clash of the two styles often leads to frustration in the business office, from the female manager who feels she isn’t heard by subordinates, to the male executive who’s confused when his orders spark resentment and anger. As a greater number of women enter into the business world, the gap between the genders becomes a significant battle that needs to be won.

This paper will present an analysis of recent research which will explain the initial formation of the gender gap, followed by a detailed explanation of the differing communication components creating the gap. This thesis will then discuss the impact of gender-related communication barriers in corporate America. Suggestions directed to improvement in gender communication will conclude the thesis.

The general intent of this thesis is to increase awareness of the communication gap between the sexes. It is important that both males and females understand the differing communication styles that affects them. With an increased awareness of the opposite approaches, it is suggested that both will be able to more effectively work together to understand the positive sides of each other. Men in corporate America can become more productive by accepting some of women’s styles, rather than fighting them. Women
can utilize their talents and learn how to relate to men's communication patterns. "We continue to resist the notion that by admitting the value of female attributes we are not denying the value of males. Instead, we are proposing we need both" (Rosener, 1991, p.149).

**Childhood Socialization**

Tannen (1990) asserts girls and boys "grow up in different worlds and with different words. Children learn how to communicate through their parents as well as peers. People talk to boys and girls in stereotypical sex-role forms and expect the child to respond in certain patterns. This social protocol in communication between girls and boys creates different communication styles separating men from women in today's society (Tannen, 1990).

According to the social-learning theory, information provided by same-sex models, and reinforced by sex-appropriate behavior from significant others, serves as the foundation for sex-typed behaviors (Stewart, Stewart, Friendly & Cooper, 1990). This theory emphasizes the importance of the modeling behavior a mother provides for her children when she is the parent normally providing emotional support for the children. The children then perceive mothers as being more nurturing. The modeling behavior of a father creates a permanent impression on his son when he watches football and acts in an aggressive behavior following vital plays. The son views this aggression as appropriate for males. "Children as young as three can tell you what boys do and what girls do" (Stewart et al., 1990, p.23). Social learning theory indicates that this
knowledge develops as children model their parents’ behavior.

The impact of parents’ behavior on their children is illustrated in research by Anthropologists Maltz and Borker. They summarized research showing that boys and girls have very different ways of talking to their friends. Although some of the activities are similar, their favorite games are different, and their ways of using language in their games are dichotomous (Maltz & Borker, 1982).

Tannen (1990) has observed boys playing outside, in large groups that are hierarchically structured. Their groups have a leader who tells others what to do and how to do it, and resists doing what other boys propose. This illustrates the importance of status for boys. Tannen (1990) asserts that it is by giving orders and making them permanent that high status is negotiated. Boys demonstrate power and status between the group by taking center stage in conversations, by telling jokes, and by sidetracking or challenging the stories and jokes of others. Boasting about skills and accomplishments is common among boys. This increases their status on the hierarchial continuum (Tannen, 1990). "Boys games have winners and losers and elaborate systems of rules that are frequently the subjects of arguments" (Tannen, 1990, p.43).

On the other hand, Tannen (1990) asserts girls play in small groups or in pairs. Usually, girls will have a best friend, and intimacy is valued most in the relationship. When girls play games everyone gets a turn and there generally is not a winner or loser. The structure of the groups is not hierarchial, but instead all the
girls are equal. It is not socially acceptable for girls to boast, or show feelings of superiority. Instead of giving orders, girls will suggest preference or give suggestions that are likely to be accepted (Tannen, 1990). "When girls are in the high-status role in a social group, they're more polite. Knowing they have the position, they bend over backwards not to act bossy" (Lusardi, 1990, p.92). Often girls are shunned by other girls simply because they do not conform. A girl might be ostracized because she wears clothes that are too expensive, or because she does not look like the other girls. Often times girls operate in an egalitarian framework (Tannen, 1990).

Gender differences in ways of talking, have been described by researchers observing children as young as three. Sheldon (1990) videotaped three- to four-year-old boys and girls playing in threesomes at a day-care center. She compared two groups of three—one of boys, one of girls—that got into fights about the same item: a plastic pickle. Though both groups fought over the same thing, the dynamics by which they negotiated their conflicts were different.

The girls mitigated the conflict and preserved harmony by compromise and evasion. Conflict was more prolonged between boys, who used more insistence, appeal to rules, and threats of physical violence. Both sexes want to get their way, but they use different communication strategies to achieve the means. The deliberate sex role training of children theory holds that girls and boys behave differently because they are reared differently (Tannen, 1990).
According to Haslett (1983), language serves a self-maintaining strategy for children. Self-maintaining strategies is language used to identify one's needs and protect one's interest, such as "I'm hungry." As might be expected from traditional sex-role stereotypes, almost half of the self-maintaining strategies used by three-year-old girls emphasizes "other" rather than "self". These strategies reflect sex-role socialization patterns that reinforce females as nurturing and other-directed and males as being aggressive and self-assertive.

**Classroom**

Just as parents' actions are important in gender socialization process for children, the classroom setting is influential in the molding process. This influential bias in the classroom begins at kindergarten and continues through college. For change in gender socialization patterns, it is important to analyze studies of classroom environment. College settings are a good example of the communication patterns and gender stereotypes that students take with them in the corporate world.

Hall and Sandler (1982) wrote the first report on the chilly classroom climate, describing how faculty often treat women and men students differently in the classroom. Many professors, men and women alike, call on male students more often, make more eye contact with male students, and respond more to male students' comments, while interrupting women. "By giving men students the greater share of classroom attention, faculty unknowingly create a climate that subtly interferes with the development of women
students' self-confidence, academic participation, and career goals" (Sandler, 1991, p.6).

Pearson and West (1991) conducted an investigation to assess the impact of teachers' biological sex, students' biological sex, and students' psychological sex-role on students' questioning behavior in the classroom. Results reveal that male instructors received more questions than female instructors. Further, male students were found to ask more questions than female students in the classes of male instructors. When an instructor is male, male students interactions are three times more frequent than female students interaction. The information suggests that the perception, or sex of the instructor may affect the frequency of questions asked by male students.

Males and females in the Pearson and West (1991) study did not ask a significantly different number of questions in female professors' classes. Students view classes taught by females as more discussion-centered. One would expect these classes to have more student interaction and, hence, more student questioning. Yet, increased student participation results in female teachers being perceived as less competent (Macke & Richardson, 1980). "If students perceive classrooms of female instructors as discussion-oriented and perceive female professors as less competent, they may be less eager to ask questions" (Pearson & West, 1991, p.30).

Dillon (1981) concludes, each time a student asks a question, minds open to learning. Unfortunately, it can be kept closed by a norm against asking questions, frustrating the effort to learn and to
teach.

Bennett (1982) indicates that not only is there an implicit norm against student questions, depending on gender of the student and the professor, but male and female students have gender-related expectations for their professors. They may expect women to be more personal and more supportive and motherly than their male teachers. Pressure may be put on female professors for special treatment, such as requests for extending a deadline, and be more angry at a female professor who refuses such special treatment than a male professor acting the same way (Bennett, 1982). The paradox is when women act more motherly, it may be seen as being in conflict with the notion of what a good teacher is; someone who is nurturing is not readily viewed as a strong, intellectual, dynamic teacher (Sandler, 1991). Brooks (1982), postulates that the female professor creates dissonance because she is a female in a position of authority. This threatens the self-esteem of some males and may, in turn, elicit aggressive behavior.

Sandler (1991) concludes that students and professionals have expectations of how they expect men and women to behave. Some expect men to be competent, to be in charge, to take initiatives, to be strong. They expect women to be somewhat passive, "feminine", to be followers rather than leaders, to be nurturing rather than assertive, to be emotionally responsive rather than distant. "When men and women behave according to the stereotypical expectations, they are comfortable and approving. But if someone violates their expectations, they become uncomfortable,
disapproving and perhaps even defensive" (Sandler, 1991).

**Ethical Systems**

Selected experimental studies in psychology, sociology, and communication assist in explaining that women use a care orientation in structuring their ethical systems, while men use a justice orientation (Bloom, 1990). This assumption on gender-related ethical systems follows the sex-stereotyped behavior discussed in earlier childhood socialization.

Gilligan's (1982) book states that women communicate their morality and ethics in "a different voice" than men. Usually girls experience their primary caretaker as being like themselves, thus experiencing continued attachment with their mother at the same time they are establishing their own identity. While boys experience their primary caretaker as different from themselves, thus forming a separation from the primary caretaker in order to establish their identity. This results in women putting increased priority on relationships and fearing separation. Men, on the other hand, put increased priority on separateness and fear intimacy (Gilligan, 1982).

Bloom (1990) suggests that early gender distinctions form contrasting ethical patterns for women and men, creating opposite communication styles. Women base responsibility on caring, empathy and inclusion. "Moral dilemmas are characterized by conflicting responsibility among a web of enmeshed relationships rather than the competing rights of autonomous individuals" (Bloom, 1990, p.246). The focus is on solving moral dilemmas, not hurting
anyone, maintaining harmony, and meeting everyone’s needs. The ethical systems are more contextual and situational. Men develop an ethical system concerned with fairness, the universal principle being rules and laws. Moral dilemmas of men may include competing rights, thus forming a hierarchial structure (Bloom, 1990). "The overriding concern is to do the right thing and stick to one’s principles" (Bloom, 1990, p.246).

Wood (1986) examined how men and women defined relationship problems, what they took pride in while handling a relationship crisis, and what they regretted in handling a crisis. Women defined relationship problems in terms of relational-level problems and threats to personal identity, whereas men defined problems in terms of flaws in a partner and external circumstances. Women’s pride in handling the crisis grew from paying attention to communication process, caring for others, and being responsible to self. Men’s pride grew from adherence to principles and promoting self-interest (Wood, 1986).

Disparate ethical views create opposing behaviors among males and females. Men’s relationships are competitive, while women’s are cooperative. Whereas men see closeness, intimacy, and dependency as threatening, women see winning and separateness as threatening (Bloom, 1990). "A final aspect of this theme of separateness relates to the source of self-esteem: men focus on things while women focus on relationships" (Bloom, 1990, p.247).

This brief examination suggests that there are substantial differences in ethical systems that grow out of differences in the
expectations, attitudes and behavior of men and women. However, an attempt to reconcile these differences seems to be emerging. Both sexes seem to be seeking in leaders what they see lacking in their own stereotype, qualities that impact on the formation of the ethical system (Bloom, 1990). "Men and women seem to be searching for ways to transcend their socialization" (Bloom, 1990, p.251).
CHAPTER TWO—

Verbal Language

The dissimilar ethical systems between men and women generate specific verbal distinctions in both genders. Stewart et al., (1990) conclude:

Language is an important area to study because our language shapes our perception of the world as well as communicates our view of the world to others. We form lasting impressions of people based on the language they use. In addition, people may modify their behavior toward us based on our language usage. (p.44)

This section will discuss the differences in male and female language, and how these differences are perceived by others. The components of difference presented are questioning, hypercorrect grammar, verbosity, and topic shift. The implications of the language differences will be analyzed in chapter three.

Deferential Language:

Kohn (1988), has pointed to questioning as a distinctive characteristic of women’s speech. In an analysis of tape-recorded conversations between professionals, women asked nearly three times as many questions as the men (Kohn, 1988). Women make statements in a questioning tone. "I was walking near that, um, hey construction site?" The rising in inflection, Kohn (1988) suggests, is the speaker seeking confirmation even though she may be the only one who has the necessary information. Women often add
a brief question at the end of a sentence "don't you think?"-suggesting doubt or encouraging the listener to respond. Leading off a statement with a question is also common among women. Starting a conversation this way "Hey y'know what?" is intended to ensure a listener's attention. Kohn (1988) indicates that women use more "hedges" or qualifiers in their speech and utilize intensifiers more often, ie "kinda" and "really." These statements tell the listener how to react. Women may be unsure of the impact of their statement on the listener, thus they use these intensifiers and qualifiers to reinforce what they mean (Kohn, 1988). The implications of the Kohn (1988) research is "that women may have internalized men's assumptions that what they have to say isn't very interesting or intellectually rigorous. This hesitancy then becomes the norm for "proper" feminine speech." (p.66)

The way women speak may be devalued. The valued way of speaking, especially in academe and in business is strong, definitive, and assertive. This is common among men, but some women lack these characteristics in language. Women have been conditioned to speak in a softer voice with a higher pitch and to speak more hesitantly- "I think...I was wondering" (Kohn, 1988).

Although women's language is often perceived as having less power than men's language, it still contains strong qualities. Requesting rather than commanding, attending to others needs in a conversation, and listening more effectively are seen by many as valuable skills (Kohn, 1988). It is important for women to adopt a conversational style of speaking that doesn't sacrifice
sensitivity, one that doesn’t reduce the validity and certainty of their beliefs and values (Kohn, 1988).

**Hypercorrect Grammar:**

The expected "feminine" speech patterns of women lead to other distinctive language characteristics in women. Smith (1985) asserts that women’s speech is closer to the norm of standard speech than men’s speech, especially in formal situations. Sex-role stereotypes allow men to be excused from some of the social amenities, but a women rarely is (Smith, 1985).

However, there is a pressure on men to use more non-standard grammatical forms of speech. Coates (1986) contends that men approach their solidarity with each other by using nonstandard forms of speech. For example, men using grammatically proper language, would sound inappropriate on the football field.

**Verbosity:**

Verbosity can be described as the number count of word units of speech a person uses. The typical sex-role stereotype holds that women talk more than men and use more words. In fact, research evidence shows men talk more than women. Smith (1985) contends that male experts, on a particular subject, talk more than female experts in small discussion groups. Extensive review of the literature revealed that in mix-sex dyads, or in small groups, men tend to speak more often and at greater length than women (Eakins & Eakins, 1976). An abundance of research points toward men controlling conversations with their verbosity and conversational initiation. Men can control a conversation with little effort
because they fail to respond to topics initiated by women, while having the topics they introduce accepted (Fishman, 1978).

The stereotype of the talkative women may have been thought to be true, because women tend to spend more time initiating and maintaining conversations. Fisherman (1978) found, in a study of marital interaction, that to maintain a conversation, wives ask five times as many questions as their husbands do. Women exert more effort than men to sustain the flow of conversation between them. In Fisherman's (1978) studies of interaction among heterosexual intimates:

Women employed more attention-getting beginnings ("D'ya know What?") to introduce what they had to say and used more active monitoring responses (finely timed insertion of items such as "um-hum" and "uh-huh") to provide on going acknowledgement of men's contributions to talk. (p.98)

As Smith (1985) notes, "there is considerable evidence that the norms of femininity and masculinity encourage women and men to construe communication situations and the goals of interaction somewhat differently" (p.135). The concept of masculinity is correlated with the control dimension, the extent to which a person can exert active control over the process and outcomes of an interaction. The supportive, relationship dimension, the tendency to elicit and express warmth, is associated with the norm of femininity. Men are more concerned with control, while women are
concerned with affiliation (Smith, 1985).

**Topic Shift/Interruptions:**

Researchers West and Garcia (1988), identify topic shift as the specific procedures speakers use to produce topical transitions in talk between men and women. A discussion of experimental findings will present male and female differentiation in particular courses of conversational activity, thus revealing a distinction in the exercise of power over topics-in-progress.

Stewart et al. (1990), identify topic shifts as often being in all-male conversations, but women typically shift topics gradually. "Both sexes may be frustrated in mixed-sex interaction that they feel is dragging on too long or not moving fast enough" (p. 61).

Other research confirms consistent topic shift patterns in males and females. Kohn (1988) maintains that men often shift conversations to their preferred topics, whereas women are more apt to respond supportively. In a study of married couples, wives gave more active encouragement to their husband's talk. However, husbands didn't listen as well and were less likely to actively bring out the topics of their wives (Kohn, 1988). "In fact, men often interrupt outright, and they do this far more frequently than women do" (Kohn, 1988, p. 66).

Mulac, Wieman, Wieman, and Gibson (1988) attest that men often use interruptions as a direct control tactic, while women use interruptions as turn-taking behavior. Interruptions can support as well as control. They can be used to communicate support, to elaborate on what has been said and participate in ongoing topics,
or to take control of the speaking turn.

Interruption patterns do differ depending on the sex composition of the dyad. There are more opposite-sex interruptions than same-sex interruptions (Dindia, 1987).

**Nonverbal Language**

Nonverbal communication includes all communication except that which is coded through words. Social psychologist, Mehrabian (1981) has estimated that no more than seven percent of the social meaning in face-to-face communication is carried through the verbal message; the remaining ninety-three percent of the social meaning is carried through nonverbal communication channels. "Nonverbal communication most often reveals our emotions, our attitudes, our personalities, and the nature of our relationships with others" (Stewart et al., 1990, p.76). Beyond this however, nonverbal communication reflects sex of a person through sex-role stereotypes (Stewart et al., 1990).

Nonverbal cues have many functions in the communication process. Nonverbal cues may repeat, contradict, substitute, complement, or accent the verbal message (Stewart et al., 1990). Research reveals that nonverbal cues have an extensive impact on the perceptions of what is being communicated. "Researchers report that when we receive contradictory verbal and nonverbal cues, we tend to believe the nonverbal cues" (Stewart et al., 1990, p.77). This demonstrates the importance of an analysis of nonverbal communication between the sexes.

Stewart et al. (1990) assert that in general females are more
proficient than males at both forming and interpreting nonverbal messages, a difference that begins in childhood socialization.

In infancy, males are not typically exposed to as many emotional displays as are females, as a result, girls who are exposed to these emotions throughout their development are provided with a broader base for interpreting emotional displays and a greater latitude in the emotions they are allowed to display. (Stewart et al., 1990, p. 79)

This section first presents gestures, body movement and posture as distinctive nonverbal differences between males and females. Then, facial expressions and eye behavior, proxemics, paralanguage, and physical attractiveness are discussed as distinctive nonverbal differences in the sexes.

Gestures, Body Movement, and Posturing:

Extensive research points to early childhood socialization in forming sex-stereotypical gestures, body movement, and posturing. Parents behavior toward children reinforces male independence and activity and female affiliation and passivity, which impacts nonverbal cues. These distinctions form differing body movement, and posturing in adult men and women (Stewart et al., 1990). Women are more likely to use less space than men, walking with their legs together and their arms close to their side. Contrastly, men are more independent in their movement of their arms and legs (Stewart et al., 1990).
In comparing gestures used by males and females, Eakins and Eakins (1978) noted several differences. Men generally use more gestures than women, and the gestures display more dominance such as pointing, sweeping gestures, and closed fists. Women are more likely to employ submissive gestures such as holding their hands in their laps or playing with their hair and clothing.

Research acknowledges a perceived status difference in male and female posture. Men sprawl out, taking as much space as desired, while maintaining a relaxed posture. Women, however, are generally less relaxed in their posture, with their legs crossed and their arms close by their side (Stewart et al., 1990). Relaxed posturing is most likely a reflection of a perceived higher status among men because high-ranking men are comparatively more relaxed than lower-ranking men when communicating (Stewart et al., 1990).

**Facial Expression and Eye Behavior:**

Most research that compares facial expressions of adult males and females focuses on smiling and eye contact. Several researcher have drawn consistent findings about facial expressions in men and women. In general, women use more facial expression than men. More specifically women smile more than men, returning smiles from others, and are attracted to those people who smile (Stewart et al., 1990).

In addition, women engage in more overall eye contact than men.

This finding has lead many researchers to
conclude that visual information plays a far more significant role in the social field of women than in the social field of men, and that visual activity of women is more sensitive to situational conditions than that of men. (Stewart et al., 1990, p.86)

Since eye contact is often associated with people of lower status seeking approval, women engaging in frequent eye contact may be following the sex-role stereotype of women in lower status positions.

**Proxemics:**

Hall (1976), defines the proxemics as how our use of zones or territories affects our communication and relationships. Men and women differ in their use of personal space, and this difference begins in infancy and continues into adulthood (Stewart et al., 1990). Early childhood patterns form contrasting proxemics in the sexes. Girls are expected to maintain a close relationship with their mother, and remain close to home. "By about six months of age, boys are hustled away from touching contact with their mothers, who generally believe that boys should be independent and should explore the world around them" (Stewart et al., 1990, p.87).

Overall, research indicates men require more space than women (Stewart et al., 1990). These sex differences, as well as the observation that women tend to be more cooperative and less aggressive than men in high-density situations (Freedman, O’Hanlon, Oltman, & Witkin, 1972), reflect sex-role stereotyping.
Paralanguage:

Paralanguage refers to the vocal qualities surrounding speech, and these qualities include vocalization, pitch, and loudness (Stewart et al., 1990).

A study conducted by Addington (1986) is a particularly thorough exploration of the personality perceptions typically associated with nine vocal qualities. Results of the study indicate that finer personality distinctions are made concerning the vocal qualities of women. We are more likely to judge women by vocal qualities than we are to judge men by vocal qualities. One significant finding in this study indicates that more negative judgements are made about women than about men.

One of many examples used in this study describes vocal tenseness in a female voice suggesting youth, emotion, and lack of intelligence; however tenseness in a male voice suggests maturity and steadfastness (Addington, 1986).

It appears that a women whose vocal qualities are typically considered feminine is accepted as consistent with her sex role, but this feminine sex role often implies immaturity, shallowness, and lack of intelligence. A male whose voice is consisted with his masculine sex role is considered intelligent, mature, sophisticated, and well-adjusted. (Stewart et al., 1990, p.82)
Physical Attractiveness:

Generally, an individual will label what is considered beautiful by personal taste, and the perception is unique. However, in our culture there is relatively high agreement on what is considered attractive and what is not (Stewart et al., 1990).

Research suggest attractiveness is important for males and females, but attractiveness is perceived differently in males than females. Attractive males and females are more effective influencers than unattractive males and females, but males are allowed to be more attractive than females and still retain credibility. Beyond a certain level of attractiveness, very attractive women are perceived as less effective persuaders than unattractive women (Stewart et al., 1990).

Overall, nonverbal behaviors reflect the same sex-role stereotypes as verbal behaviors. Boys and men demonstrate nonverbal cues that associate with the sex-role expectations of independence and dominance, while women demonstrate cues that associate with dependence and submission. Unfortunately, these conforming patterns in both sexes leads to negative repercussions for both sexes. Chapter three will discuss the implications of nonverbal and verbal sex-role stereotyping in American management.
Chapter Three-

Recent research concludes that contrasting verbal and nonverbal language between the sexes leads to stereotypical perceptions of each sex. Researcher Paludi & Strayer (1985) affirm that the gender of a person affects the way in which we view the competence, behavior, and achievements of males and females.

Research to determine the effects of these perceptions in interactions has focused on the use of deferential language. Liska, Mechling, and Statas (1981) completed a study to see if deferential language affected perceptions of speakers. The implications of women using deferential language, characterized by tag questions, qualifiers, hedges, and other forms of speech traditionally associated with women's language, causes views to perceive females as more submissive, less assertive, and less willing to take a stand. In addition, deferential language users are more likely to be perceived as feminine. Individuals are more likely to perceive users of deferential language as having less power yet more personal warmth.

The deferential style of communication is closely associated with femininity (Paludi & Strayer, 1985). Men, on the other hand, use a variety of communication behaviors to develop control in their relationships with others (Mulac et al., 1988). Because the control dimension of communication is strong for males, they use more verbally aggressive, persuasive messages strategies than do females. When men use less control dimensions it violates sex-role expectations and weakens their persuasive impact (Mulac et al.,
Different verbal language causes severe repercussions for women; nonverbal language also carries some of the negative sex-role implications in the workplace. Nonverbal cues of status and power indicate a degree of influence or control rather than a submissive and dependent attitude (Stewart et al., 1990). The high status individual obtains a greater expanse of space in which to move and use gestures. "As a result, high-status individuals usually feel comfortable assuming a confident, relaxed posture and using expansive gestures that encroach on the space of lower-status" (Stewart et al., 1990, p.103). The high status individual is often allowed to refuse eye contact or to initiate touching with a lower-status person. Vocally, men have deeper, more resonant voices which is characteristic of confidence and control in speech (Stewart et al., 1990).

The implications of men being perceived as having higher status than women creates significant consequences in the workplace where higher status usually translates into higher salaries. "As long as women are perceived as subordinates in the work force, as well as in other communication contexts, their ability to demonstrate power and control will be limited" (Stewart et al., 1990, p.104).

There are numerous studies showing that the gender of a person affects the way in which society views his or her competence and how behavior and achievements are evaluated (Paludi & Strayer, 1985). In one study, two groups of people, both men and women,
were asked to rate a collection of something, such as articles, pictures of works of art, or resumes. The names of the authors were switched for each group analyzing the collections. Those items ascribed to women for the first group were ascribed to men for the second group, and those items ascribed to men in the first group were ascribed to women in the second group. The results of this study indicate that if people believed a woman was the creator they ranked the collection lower than when they believed it was created by a man. Both men and women devalue those items ascribed to females (Paludi & Strayer, 1985).

Pearson & West’s (1991) study presents an example of negative gender perception that can be seen in the classroom. Perceptions of the instructor affects the frequency of questions asked by male students. When an instructor is male, male students interactions are three times more frequent than female student interaction. Further research will prove that these negative perceptions are prevalent in the corporate world.

Management

An abundance of research indicates that men and women may be treated differently or communicate differently in the workplace because of their sex. One of the contexts in which these differences is most apparent is at work in organizations (Stewart et al., 1990). The years from 1960 to 2000 are a period of transition for people in managerial positions in organizations. Forty-four percent of workers today are women (U.S. Department of Labor, 1987). "Although women are becoming more common in
management positions, male and female managers are still perceived differently" (Stewart et al., 1990, p.216).

In the business world, many people still assume that men must have successful careers, and that women's careers will be interrupted while they raise a family (Stewart et al., 1990). Researchers Cowan and Koziej (1979), note that the sex-role stereotype is reflected in the observation that the active, aggressive, and instrumental behavior of males in organizations is more highly valued than the nurturing and expressive behavior of females.

Although corporations are moving more toward a male/female balance of communication in the workplace, Rosener (1991) maintains that males clearly prefer the command-and-control, top down, more dictatorial leadership style, and the women prefer the interactive, participatory, more conciliatory leadership style. Corporate males still don't know how to deal with women. They are afraid to yell at them or to give them negative feedback. It's as though they think they are yelling at their mothers or their wives. Men often worry women will run from the room in tears, or worse yet, yell back. They're not really sure the women will come through for them. They just don't trust them as much as the guys with whom they talk football. (Fierman, 1990b, p.41)

Rosener (1991) discusses the debate over whether researchers
should concern themselves with gender differences when analyzing leadership styles. It's a fact that no matter how hard women try they can't be men, thus as long as sameness between the sexes is valued, women are at a disadvantage simply because they are women. In organizations, being different from those in positions of power has historically disadvantaged women because sameness has been valued. Now that there is an awareness that the differences women bring to work are considered a resource not a problem, why should this difference not be celebrated? (Rosener, 1991, p.147)

Rosener (1991) maintains it is also possible for women to succeed and do what comes naturally, act like a women. It appears that women who act like themselves boost the self worth of subordinates. Also, women who feel comfortable sharing information, are enthusiastic, participatory, and view work as fun (Rosener, 1991). "This is not to say that all women and no men exhibit these qualities, or that interactive leaders are necessarily the most effective in all situations" (Rosener, 1991, p.147).

Rosener's (1991) point is that there is more than one effective way to lead, and as organizations change, management needs to reexamine the control-and-command strategy style of management. This is important because the organization of the future is less hierarchial, more service-oriented. Catering to
customers produces a dependence on interpersonal skills and creates a need for establishing new ways of sharing information and power (Rosener, 1991).

Peter (1989), a management expert, declares new survival traits for all firms must possess women's inclinations and natural talents. When linked to gender, the acknowledgement of difference immediately pits men against women (Rosener, 1991). Rosener's (1991) message is:

Women who act like women make effective leaders, particularly in organizations that value difference. And organizations that value difference will have a strategic advantage as competition for the best and brightest men and women becomes more intense.

(p. 149)

Fierman (1990a) indicates that women's superior management instincts, are similar to the Japanese approach to management. She believes that what were once labeled women's weaknesses, and reasons women were ill suited for top jobs, are suddenly the traits male executives are expected to possess. The Japanese approach values teamwork and a free flow of information, this is commonly characterized as a women's environment. Men and women manage in extremely different ways and research reveals the female approach is superior. "What were once labeled women's weaknesses and cited as reason they were ill suited for top jobs are suddenly the very traits male executives are expected to wear on their sleeves"
The important point to be made about differing management styles between men and women is that managers must use a style that is appropriate for the organization. Research reveals that corporations are leaning towards accepting women's approaches as beneficial to their organization. Men need to be aware and may need to adjust their current management styles towards that of a female (Fierman, 1990a).
Chapter Four—

Solutions

In the previous chapter a discussion of prevalent sex-role stereotypes of men and women in organizations presented the consequences of the gap between the two sexes. Stewart et al. (1990), concludes that it is important to remember that the sex-role stereotyping negatively affects both men and women in organizations. "Women may be hindered in their career advancement, while men may not be able to develop nurturing or expressive behavior" (Stewart et al., 1990, p.223).

There is not one solution that will resolve the gap between communication patterns of men and women. However, Americans can participate in steps toward change. Chapter four will discuss some communicative strategies that have been suggested to overcome these negative consequences. The concept of androgyny will be identified as an ideal outlook of gender behavior, followed by a discussion on assertiveness. Then networking and mentoring will be defined as significant strategies enhancing the communication environment for women. Finally, a discussion of needed academic institution change related to gender sensitivity will conclude the suggestions for change.

Androgyny:

The first solution involves an alternative to the rigid sex-role division prevalent in our society, the concept of androgyny. Bem (1974) popularized the concept of androgyny, which maintains that individuals can blend both masculine and feminine identities.
Bem (1974) argues that masculinity and femininity do not represent a bipolar construct. Rather, it is possible for a person of either sex to be both masculine and feminine. There are three assumptions underlying androgyny: (1) androgyny allows the individual more flexible sex-role behavior, (2) this flexibility allows the individual to adapt in various social situations, and (3) males and females both may attain this situational flexibility.

Bem (1974) describes the concept of androgyny as a healthier orientation compared to a traditional sex-typed orientation because the androgynous person has a collection of more traits and is therefore able to adapt to more situations. Other research supports this concept. Waterman & Whitbourne (1982) indicate that androgyny has been positively correlated with self-esteem and psychological development. Androgynous individuals also demonstrate high levels of communication competence (Wheeless & Duran, 1982) and are better able to adapt to communication situations (Wheeless, 1984).

Kelly, O'Brien, & Hosford (1981) conclude that since complex interpersonal situations require the use of well integrated masculine and feminine social skills, androgynous individuals are highly effective in interpersonal situations. Androgynous males are able to use warm, complementary social behaviors when these affective responses are necessary; androgynous females are able to use effective refusal social skills when faced with unreasonable requests from others. The ability to blend traditionally masculine and feminine qualities when necessary in interpersonal situations
maximizes interpersonal effectiveness. With an awareness of the positive affects of androgyny, individuals can shed sex-role stereotypes and work toward a blend of both sexes.

**Assertiveness:**

The second solution to overcome some of the sex-role stereotypes in organizations, encourages women to be more assertive. Stewart et al. (1990) notes that one of the most striking examples of how the communication styles of men and women are perceived differently is in the area of assertive communication.

There are three interpersonal communication styles that are important to consider when examining communication behavior—assertive, nonassertive, and aggressive communication. A passive, nonassertive communication style denies individuals their rights because they fail to express their needs and desires. This behavior leads to misunderstanding. "The recipient of nonassertive behavior is forced to infer constantly what the other person is thinking or feeling. This taxing activity can lead to frustration, annoyance, and anger in the recipient" (Stewart et al., 1990, p.235).

Aggressive communication is characterized by a person expressing feelings and opinions in a punishing, threatening, assaulting, demanding, or hostile manner. Aggressive behavior often results in immediate and more forceful counteraggression that often produces a disastrous relationship.

In contrast to nonassertive or aggressive communication, is a
median of assertive communication. "The goal of assertive communication is to express feelings and opinions directly and honestly; by doing so, the assertive communicator hopes to negotiate reasonable changes to solve interpersonal problems" (Stewart et al., 1990, p.235).

An assertive communicator is skillful at engaging in the control aspects of a communication interaction (Stewart et al., 1990). As discussed in chapter one, women are more likely to manage the affiliative goals of an interaction, while men are more likely to control the process and outcome of an interaction. Therefore, men are more likely to feel comfortable using assertive behavior. Whereas women must learn the skills of assertiveness and successfully manage the control-related aspects of an interaction, and put less emphasis on the affiliative aspects of the interaction (Smith, 1985).

Mentors:

The third solution that both men and women can use to overcome sex-role stereotyping in organizations is to acquire a mentor—"someone who gives advice on appropriate career strategies and who may even help you gain a desired promotion by influencing decisions affecting your future in an organization" (Stewart et. al., 1990, p.240). Hunt & Michael (1983) maintain that mentorship is related to success and mobility for both males and females.

Casbolt and DeWine (1982) identify the communication behavior associated with mentors. They have effective interpersonal skills and are good listeners who are nonjudgemental, exhibiting openness.
Mentors will often share valuable information about the organization that wouldn't be verbalized to other colleagues. They link proteges with other influential members of the organization or profession. "Mentors can serve as upward communication channels for subordinates in organizations trying to overcome sex-role stereotyping" (Stewart et al., 1990, p.241).

**Networking:**

The fourth possible suggestion to reducing the gender gap in organizations is networking. Networking is "the process of developing and using your contacts for information, advice, and moral support as you pursue your career" (Welch, 1980, p.15).

Men have traditionally had their "old boys'networks" that helped them find jobs, and get the better advantage in business deals. In the past women have been at a disadvantage. Now, women are beginning to form networks of their own or are joining some of the established male networks (Stewart et al., 1990).

The networking procedure can aid males and females to a closer understanding of the needs of each sex. By networking colleagues can gradually understand the communication patterns of the opposite sex through casual relationships. Also, the same-sex networking will help women establish a stronger role in the corporate environment (Stewart et al., 1990).

**Academic Institution Change:**

Wood and Lenze (1991) discuss the content and processes of teaching and how this can substantially affect the quality of learning. It is vital to develop strategies to enhance gender
sensitivity in communication education. The quality of learning in the classroom can enhance or diminish the gender gap in communication. 

Adults are responsible for the attitudes and beliefs of their children. An awareness of male and female communication differences should be displayed in the classroom (Wood & Lenze, 1991). "Many professors men and women alike tend to call on male students more often, to make more eye contact with male students, respond more to male students comments, interrupt women more and so on" (Sandler, 1991, p.6). This gives men more attention, creating a climate that interferes with the development of women students. This is a two fold problem, because students put gender-related expectations on their professors. Even though women faculty may spend more time with students than male faculty do, the women are rated as being less available than men (Sandler, 1991). "A female professor creates dissonance because she is female in a position of authority. This threatens self-esteem of some males and may, in turn, elicit aggressive behavior" (Sandler, 1991, p.7). Whereas men are more likely to be idealized receiving more attention, eye contact, and direct praise from students (Sandler, 1991).

An abundance of research reveals that this problem starts in schools and continues on to the business world. Wood and Lenze (1991) conclude that change must start in the institution of the school before it can convert the rest of society. In the academic world can be divided into specific strategic areas consisting of administrators, academic supports services, and instructors.
"Institutional support for gender sensitivity is vital because it both legitimates the issue and acts as an impetus for changes in faculty attitudes and behaviors" (Wood & Lenze, 1991, p. 17). Instructors can promote this type of support by informing institutional leaders about gender sensitivity. Once leaders are informed, they should be encouraged to express their support for gender sensitivity teaching and then carry this sensitivity to administrative functions. Gender sensitivity should be expressed in circulated documents, such as faculty handbooks and criteria for tenure, promotion, and raises. "By defining expectations and modeling gender sensitivity, deans, chancellors, principals, and chairs set an institution's tone" (Wood & Lenze, 1991, p.18).

Wood & Lenze (1991) define academic support services as instrumental in the gender sensitivity movement in academic institutions. A number of services exist to support the academic mission of campuses. Chief among these is an office that promotes instructional development. This office prepares instructors and develops the teaching proficiency of individuals and groups, providing a vital resource for advancing gender-sensitivity teaching.

Instructional development staff are able to design and facilitate workshops on issues such as sexism, exclusivity, and classroom climate for both new instructors and veteran teachers. Workshops can also be administered to demonstrate ways of increasing gender sensitivity in teaching. This step towards change creates a general awareness of the gender gap for professors
and is a definite move towards change in early development (Wood & Lenze, 1991).

Another important service many instructional development units provide is video taping, used both to illustrate clearly what comprises gender insensitivity and provide good examples of gender sensitive behavior in the classroom.

A video tape of real or simulated classroom situations dramatically shows the effects of different teaching practices. Instructors who want feedback on their own teaching style may ask instructional development units to tape their classes and to review the tape with them. (Wood & Lenze, 1991, p.18).

This is an extremely effective method of promoting change in the academic setting.

Wood and Lenze (1991) conclude that instructors are the most important source of change in instructional policies, attitudes, and behaviors regarding gender sensitivity. There are numerous ways in which instructors can make direct impact in the classroom.

The essential foundation for faculty change is information about gender sensitivity and behaviors that impede and promote the notion. Reading materials can empower faculty to effect direct change in their own classroom. Faculty who are already well read on gender sensitivity can increase the awareness in both directions, to their administrators, and to their students (Weimer, 1990).
Wood and Lenze (1991) discuss how instructors who already recognize the importance of gender sensitivity may also initiate efforts to enlarge awareness through formal and informal programs. By responding to administrators' invitations to suggest visiting speakers to a campus, faculty, particularly if organized to form a collective voice, may persuade administrators to bring in scholars whose emphasis is gender sensitivity. Especially during the initial stages of increasing gender sensitivity on a campus, outside consultants are important.

(p.19)
An outsider's credibility to name issues and initiate ideas is of greater impact than resident faculty.

Individual instructors, administrators, and academic support units are key sources of institutional change. By using strategies identified, they can systematically and dramatically enhance the gender sensitivity present in an educational environment. This change in the academic setting will produce gender sensitive administrators in the corporate setting to follow (Wood & Lenze, 1991).
Chapter Five—

**Conclusion**

A thorough investigation of gender communication presents consistent results. Distinct differences in communication barriers between men and women begin in early childhood. The socialization of children teach girls to communicate in stereotypical feminine patterns and boys to communicate in stereotypical masculine patterns. The socialization pressure begins with parents and is reinforced by other peers, including teachers.

Extensive research indicates the distinctive differences in both verbal and nonverbal communication between men and women. Because of the differences the two sexes often misunderstand the others message. This conflict has a strong impact on the business environment of America today.

Research reveals that men and women may be treated differently or communicate differently in the workplace because of their sex. In the past, the stereotypical behavior in the workplace followed masculine communication patterns. Now companies are recognizing that there is more than one effective way to lead, and as organizations change, management needs to reexamine the control-and-command strategy of management. This awareness is instigating change, but the process has just begun.

Important solutions to decreasing the gap between the sexes have been discussed. But few people are encouraged by being told they are doing everything all wrong. "The problem may be that each sex is operating within a different system, speaking a different
genderlect" (Tannen, 1990, p.297).

Individuals rarely want to change their own styles. Usually they expect the other person to change. "Changing one’s own style is far less appealing, because it is not just how you act but who you feel yourself to be" (Tannen, 1990, p.247). Therefore a more realistic approach is to learn how to interpret each other’s messages and explain your own behavior in a way the other person can understand and accept.

Once individuals realize that the opposite sex has different conversational styles, they are inclined to accept differences without blaming themselves, the other sex, or their relationships. "The biggest mistake is believing there is one right way to listen, to talk, or to have a conversation or relationship" (Tannen, 1990, p.297). Understanding the other’s way of communicating, both verbally and nonverbally, is a giant leap across the communication gap between men and women, and a giant step toward opening lines of communication in the business world.

**Need For Further Research:**

In order for this understanding to continue to all individuals in the workplace, more investigations on gender must be conducted. There are many questions unanswered about gender and the impact of differences. With more research, experts will become more knowledgeable in the field of gender communication. This knowledge will continue to unfold new solutions to the gender problem in corporate America and will then create a more productive, satisfying work environment.
The correlation of power and language has been researched by many experts. However, a more extensive investigation of perceived power that opposite sexes maintain in a given situation, and the impact of this power on language use, would aid in the understanding of why each sex communicates differently in specific power-related situations. This research would impact new approaches to improving gender communication in the workplace.

Detailed studies of distinct language use, both verbal and nonverbal have defined the two sexes as opposites, often creating a gap in communication. An investigation of language differences in the home compared to the workplace might reveal some more causes of distinct gender patterns. Different communication settings should be analyzed and compared for each sex.

Researchers are conducting studies on the distinct causes of gender communication differences. Some indicate that biological factors account for the distinction in gender communication. This paper discussed the human socialization as the root cause of contrasting gender communication. Future investigations into the root causes of gender communication differences will create a stronger base for explicit studies in this field of study. Possibly, biological and socialization factors need to be integrated for a more accurate definition of the origins of opposite sex communication patterns.


