Gender Differences in Communication?

Masculine and Feminine Speech Patterns
Gender Differences in Communication? – Masculine and Feminine Speech Patterns
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Purpose and Objectives

- **Purpose** – Inform Human Service Professionals on Communication Styles used by Service Professionals as well as clients in the workplace

- **Objective(s)**
  - Analyze Gender Communication
  - Analyze Scholarly Articles on Communication Styles
  - Analyze Masculine, Feminine, and Mixed Speech
  - Apply to Human Service Professionals
What is Gender Communication?

To Answer this question lets first look at the definition for both Gender as well as Communication

Gender + Communication = Gender Communication
According to Jandt (2010) gender is “learned behaviors and attitudes associated with the words feminine and masculine” (p. G-5).

Also according to Jandt (2010) communication is the “process of intentionally stimulating meaning in other humans through the use of symbols” (p. G-3).
Gender Communication then is the meanings, behaviors, and symbols associated with the words Feminine and Masculine
Youtube Video On Gender

http://youtu.be/hidBz_QfQ1c?t=1m41s

This video outlines a brief history of Gender Communication research
Now that we have a definition for Gender Communication

You may be asking yourself:
- How does this apply to me?
- Does it affect my communication style?
- As a Service Professional does gender communication affect my work with Clients?
The Answer to These Questions May Surprise You!!

q&a

You have Questions
We have Answers
Managers on Average spend approximately “66% to 75%” of their work time in interpersonal communication thus a manager’s success then deals a great deal with their perspective communication styles (Geddes, 1992, p. 590).

In short, yes working with and communicating with clients and co-workers is impacted by communication styles
Gender Communication and the Workplace

Now that we have a clear definition of Gender Communication and have thus been able to answer yes to the importance of communication styles in the workplace, let's apply the knowledge learned from gender communication research and studies with the hope of increasing our effectiveness as Service Professionals.
Geddes (1992)

Purpose - investigate communication behaviors in response to perception, competence, and the effectiveness of women managers.

- The study looked at “stereotypical masculine (powerful), stereotypical feminine (power-less), and mixed gender/power speech style” to see which one works best when working with subordinates (Geddes, 1992, p. 591).
- Previous to this study no mixed gender/speech style had been explored.
Method & Thought Behind Study

- **Method** - The Study used three sets of speech: one Masculine, one Feminine, and one that has a mix of feminine and masculine speech.

- **Thought** behind this is that individuals internalize masculine and feminine characteristics and thus act according in speech as to which one has been internalized.

- Thus a **blending** of masculine “task-oriented” with feminine “people-oriented” will lead to better management taking place in the workplace.
Important Study Highlights

- According to Geddes (1992) “behavioral flexibility is the key to being an effective communicator” and that to do this individuals must acquire both masculine and feminine communication and speech skills (p. 591).

- Feminine speech is “not restricted to women but are associated with persons of low social power regardless of gender” (Geddes, 1992, p. 592-593).

- In conclusion Geddes (1992) findings reinforce that both “masculine and feminine communication behaviors” are needed for effective management (p. 602).
Gender Communication? Or is it Really Communication Power

- The tendency then for us to see this as they relate to masculinity and femininity is reflective of positions in society.

- Therefore this presentation should read: It’s not Gender Communication but Rather Social Power
The Power of Powerless Communication – Ted Talk

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_ffqEA8X5g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_ffqEA8X5g)

- This video discusses Powerless talk and how it can actually be made to be powerful under the right circumstances
“The human voice is a medium for linguistic communication” and as such may help define certain typical speech style characteristics (p. 461).

**Purpose** - explore the physical and vocal characteristics that may help or hinder masculine speech style clarity.
Results - “masculine formant position was associated with increased physical threat potential” (p. 468).

Data confirmed that “body size, strength, and acoustic features, and smaller vowel size” were indicators of masculinity and thus masculine communication style (p. 469).

Findings - masculine communication emphasizes dominance (Power) as a style (p. 471).
Language and gender in media - audiences understand “the social world,” gender, and power relations that exist within society through media involvement (p. 89).

Media contributes to the perceptions of what constitutes “appropriate gendered behavior for men and women” (p. 90).

This allows for the construction of gender and thus identities which has a powerful influence on communication and leadership.
Gender then forms through social construction.

Linguistic choices then are associated with gender.
Masculine styles of interaction are characterized by competitive, contested, and challenging ways of speaking” whereas feminine styles are “co-operative, facilitative, and smooth” (p. 90).

Masculine speech styles are thus known for “dominance of the speaking floor, the one-at-a-time construction on the floor, and the frequent use of interruptions” whereas feminine speech styles “place emphasis on relational aspects of the interaction, are linguistically expressed through collaborative construction of the floor in conversation, avoidance of confrontation, and the use of politeness with supportive feedback” (p. 90).

“the language of leadership equates with the language of masculinity” because of such qualities as “aggression, assertiveness,” and competiveness (p. 90).

In conclusion to be effective communicators and managers it’s important to be flexible with both “masculine and feminine speech strategies” (p. 102).
O’Connor and Joffe (2014)

- **Purpose** - Study conducted to analyze five different domains of communication as they relate to the science of gender dynamics on communication.

- **Participants** - the “brains of 949 individuals” were analyzed (p. 1).

- **Results** - Differences were found in genders as they were associated to “cognitive and behavioral abilities” (p. 1).
Cognitive Behaviour
Scientific research is an “intrinsically social activity, which is shaped by identity, reputation, and competition” (p. 2).

Scientific information then “revolves around issues of identity” (p. 2).

Information is used to “preserve existing group hierarchies” (p. 2).

To acquire gender roles it takes a gradual process of “repeated communicative exchanges” (p. 2).
O’ Connor and Joffe (2014)

- **Purpose** – Conduct content analysis on Gender research and its impact on communication.
- **Data** - imported into the ATLAS.ti software program
- **Results** - “linguistic framing, behavioral manifestation, and gender politics” (p. 4).
  - Those with masculine speech connected “perception to action” and feminine speech connected “sequential reasoning” to communication (p. 5).
  - Gender separates speech patterns due to “cognitive skills as well as behavioral and social functioning trends” (p. 5).
  - Masculine speech was highly connected to “single task” orientation (p. 6). Whereas feminine speech was highly connected to “multitasking” especially with respect to social skills (p. 6).
  - “logic” was associated with masculine speech and feminine speech was associated with “emotion” (p. 6).
- Gender wise masculine speech was also higher on single-mindedness and rational actions while feminine speech was extremely high on emotion. Gender categories then portray gender differences in communication as “natural and immutable” (p. 12).
Thompson and Lougheed (2012)

- **Purpose** - Understanding gender differences in social networking sites especially in response to Facebook.

- **Method** - Survey was distributed to 268 college students at Southeast Coastal University of whom those surveyed 76 percent were females, 53 percent female, and 76 percent Caucasian.

- **Results** - It was found that 94 percent of those surveyed had Facebook accounts.
  - Females were found to be more likely than males to spend time on Facebook according to Statistical Analysis System (SAS).
  - According to Thompson and Lougheed (2012) “women generally use language skills to their advantage as women were more likely than males to use language to build relationships” (p. 89-90).
  - In general women are faster and more accurate at identifying emotions and noticing vocal intonations thus social networking may in fact hamper emotion sensing and leave females more distressed.
West (2009)

- Greeting card communication is highly emotional and thus this mode of communication would be best suited for those using feminine speech style.

- According to West (2009) his informants “didn’t seem to resent the gender division of labor, but accepted it as a natural consequence of the different communication styles of men and women” (p. 294).

- Women seem to be more comfortable with talk focused on “establishing connections” while men tend to focus on “providing information” (p. 295).

- **Data** - “greeting cards are better at “maintaining relations across time” and thus a stronger “emotional connection” can be made (p. 295).
  
  - It was found the two different modes of communication exist and they are ritual and transmission.
  
  - Ritual modes of communication such as greeting cards are incorporated into feminine speech because it emphasizes “relationship maintenance” while transmission mode such as using a telephone to call someone is emphasized for masculine modes of communication because it evokes “control and reason” (p. 295).
According to Yinlong, Feick, and Mittal (2014) “studies have shown that consumers are more likely to transmit word-of-mouth to those with whom they have strong ties” (p. 1097).

**Purpose** - Using “agency communication theory we argue that men and women have different levels of concern for self-versus others” (p. 1098).

The expectation then is that women will transmit concern for strong ties whereas men as more self-focused and thus concern is transmitted less.

Prior research suggests that “men and women due to socialization” have different patterns of judgment and behaviors (p. 1099). Women are “socialized to place greater importance on relationships” (p. 1099).

**Method** - Cross section of 425 consumer surveys were consulted and upon reviewing negative experience, tie strength, concern, gender, and NWOM transmission likelihood using ANOVA it became apparent that “the theory was fully supported” (p. 1100).
A second study of “151 undergraduate students at the University of Texas, San Antonio” was conducted (p. 1101).

Method - As before the same procedure was taken and again it was found that women have a stronger connection to concern for others.

A third and final study was conducted using the market research firm, The Response Center.

Results were supported.

In conclusion these studies “empirically support the theoretical position” that women are far more likely to be concerned with others versus self (p. 1106). Thus this research supports that feminine communication involves greater relative concern for others and that they are more “relational” in their approach to communicating (p. 1106).
Masculine Speech (p. 130).

- Logical
- Concise
- Controlling/Dominant
- Competitive
- Straightforward
- Adversarial
- Negotiating
- No connection to ideas
- Leaping/Interrupting
Tubbs (2012)

- Feminine Speech
  - Emotional
  - Vague
  - Friendly
  - Gentle
  - Submissive
  - Collaborative
  - Connection Focused
  - Building on Ideas
  - Shifting Topics Gradually
According to Geddes (1992) masculine characteristics such as “aggressiveness” and “objectivity” were some of the most valued skills to have in the managerial world (p. 589).

Masculinity then is seen as cultural standard for management and thus aspiring managers should adopt “masculine behaviors” (Geddes, 1992, p. 590).

Geddes (1992) Women using a masculine style of communication were labeled as the least effective managers in the workplace. Therefore masculine behaving women are not well liked by their peers.

Due to communication being one expression of sex role behavior a “masculine communication style” is then associated with effective leadership (Geddes, 1992, p. 590).
Masculine speech then is characterized as being “direct, clear, and precise” (Geddes, 1992, p. 592). Thus this style deemphasizes emotional and interpersonal dimensions of interaction. Masculine speech then is rational and instrumental.
Feminine Speech is found to be more “expressive, responsive, unassertive, and attentive” (p. 592). In general they are better at filling the non-communication gap and often tend to ask more open ended questions. Feminine speech is more expressive with intensifiers and in general deals a great deal with being polite and having more concern for people. Feminine language then “emphasizes relationships and the interpersonal dimension of interaction” (p. 592).
Now You may be Asking Yourself?

What can we apply from these Scholarly Articles to the Human Service Profession?
Human Service Application

- Geddes (1992) - To be an effective communicator it’s best to practice a mixed style of communication in the workplace thus combining the best of masculine and feminine culture.

- To be an effective communicator you really need to understand who you’re communicating with, what pretenses there are for communication, and thus have an understanding of what kinds of communication styles are out there for people to use during bouts of conversation.
Kempe (2013) Alongside word choice your pitch and range also impact how masculine speech style in particular is interpreted or perceived during conversation and or situations where communication is taking place.

So Human Service Professionals need to be mindful of how pitch and range is perceived during bouts of communication.
Sung (2013) To be an effective communicator it’s best to practice a mixed style of communication in the workplace thus combining the best of masculine and feminine speech styles.
O’Connor (2014) Masculine speech is high on action, task orientation, and logic. Whereas feminine speech is high on sequence, multi-tasking, and emotion.

Data confirms that differences in communication are natural and thus behavior and framing are inevitable parts of the communication process.

Remember that when dealing with one gendered communication speech pattern over the other we need to be cognizant of which pattern a person is using and how thus that pattern needs to be communicated to so then less tension is experienced and more positive communication is had by all.

For instance if you’re dealing with someone using a more feminine speech style then it’s better to let emotions out and do it in a manner where there can be sequential conversation. However, if I’m speaking to a masculine style then it’s better to stay on task and be logical about what is said.
Application

- Thompson (2012) Emotional connection through communication in a social networking environment is most effective for Feminine Style.
- Feminine speech tends to be highly relational and making connections and thus emotions and concern are generally highly expressed within Feminine speech styles.
- This study pointed out to me that generally anxiety and increased stress is experienced in online communication format and thus the Feminine Speech style may due to this have a rather hard time in online communication.
- As professionals you should take more initiative to always communicate face to face then in online formats such as email.
Application

- West (2009) Even though there is a difference in communication styles based on gender people naturally recognize that there is that difference and thus don’t actively resent this fact.
- Certain modes of communication are more apt to being more masculine and more feminine in nature.
  - In this case greeting cards according to the study were found to be linked to greater emotional connection and relationship maintenance and thus feminine speech is more geared to readily use this communication outlet whereas masculine speech style is better suited at transmission talk and thus talking on the phone is better for masculine speech styles.
Application

- Yinlong (2014) Feminine communication is going to be highly relational in nature and thus concern for others over self is going to take precedence.
- Professional those practicing feminine speech style are going to be more concerned with looking for deeper connection and building a relationship.
- So professionally you need to be competent which speech style your communicating with because the goals and concerns for the styles is almost a polar opposite and to get the most out of the interaction you need to know why that style is looking to communicate.
Reflection

- Which Speech Style is your default?
- What was most useful information provided to you in this presentation?
- Through the Human Service Application portion what will you take back with you?
In this presentation we looked at:
- Analyze Gender Communication
- Analyze Scholarly Articles on Communication Styles
- Analyze Masculine, Feminine, and Mixed Speech
- Apply to Human Service Professionals

Would you agree with me that it’s not about Gender but rather Power and how it’s used in Communication?
References

- Grant, A. TEDxEast. (2013, May 23). *The power of powerless communication: Adam Grant at TEDxEast* [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_ffqEA8X5g
References


