Gender (audience)

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about a particular audience characteristic. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Gender and Genderism
2. Use Inoffensive Language in Your Speeches
3. Use Gender-Neutral Language in Your Speeches
4. Tips for the Speaker

1. Gender and Genderism

It is important to remember that since birth, we have been conditioned to make the distinction between men and women, masculinity and femininity. **Gender** is the perceived or projected (self-identified) masculinity or femininity of a person.

Societies tend to have binary gender systems in which everyone is categorized as male or female, but this is not universal. Some societies include a third gender role, referred to as **transgender**, which combined both male and female.

Although there are almost as many males as females in the U.S. population, not all people conform to the their birth sex. Genderism is the cultural belief that gender is binary, or that there are, or should be, only two genders - male and female - and that the aspects of one's gender are inherently linked to the sex in which they were assigned at birth. It reinforces negative attitudes, bias and discrimination toward people who display expressions of gender variance or nonconformity and/or whose gender identity is incongruent with their birth sex.

Advertisers do, however, create "gendered environments" in everything from children's toys to motor vehicles.

IN CONTEXT

Early on children are exposed to toy commercials that are set out to target a specific gender. As a result, western society is conditioned to believe that dolls and houses are for little girls because they represent the idea that females are to be fertile and nurturing. Little boys are conditioned to believe that they can only play with toys that will define their masculinity, such as cars and toy weapons.

Much like the masculine ideal, toys for little boys often include cars, action figures , and sporting goods, all which fulfill the idea of a conquest. These items and the advertisements redefine the gender role ideal that men are active, strong, and courageous.

On the other hand, little girls are raised to believe that their roles is to care for the family. Typically, little girls toys include baby dolls and play houses. Since the idea of identification carries immense weight in the targeting of specific audiences, advertisers begin promoting the concept of gendered environments early on beginning with children's toys. However, as people grow older the gender roles are only made more evident and are further perpetuated in advertising that is targeted towards adults. What can the speaker do?

📄 **TERMS TO KNOW**

Gender
The sociocultural phenomenon of dividing people into the categories of "male" and "female," with each having associated clothing, roles, stereotypes, etc.

Transgender
Transgender is the state of one's "gender identity" (self-identification as woman, man, neither or both) not matching one's "assigned sex" (identification by others as male, female or intersex based on physical/genetic sex).

2. Use Inoffensive Language in Your Speeches

Cognitive psychologists and linguistics suggest that word choice has significant framing effects on the perceptions, memories, and attitudes of speakers and listeners.

When one uses less inclusive or stereotypical language, the following can occur:

- The rights, opportunities, and freedoms of certain people are restricted because they are reduced to stereotypes.
- Stereotyping is mostly implicit, unconscious, and facilitated by the availability of pejorative labels and terms.
- Rendering the labels and terms socially unacceptable, people then must consciously think about how they describe someone unlike themselves.
- When labeling is a conscious activity, the described person's individual merits become apparent, rather than their stereotype.

3. Use Gender-Neutral Language in Your Speeches

Gender-neutral language and gender-inclusive language aim to eliminate (or neutralize) reference to gender in terms that describe people.

↪ EXAMPLE The words fireman, stewardess, and, arguably, chairman, are gender-specific; the corresponding gender-neutral terms are firefighter, flight attendant and chairperson (or chair). The pronoun "he" may be replaced with "he or she," "s/he," or "they" when the gender of the person referred to is unknown. Other gender-specific terms, such as actor and actress may be replaced by the originally male term "actor" used for either gender.

Gender-neutral language should not be confused with genderless language, which refers to languages without grammatical gender. It has become common in academic and governmental settings to rely on gender-neutral language to convey inclusion of all sexes or genders (gender-inclusive language).

Various forms of gender-neutral language are becoming more common, but the underlying gender roles are still evident in our society. We still have generations of previously defined gender roles and associated language use to conquer.

4. Tips for the Speaker

One must guard against gender discrimination and stereotyping members of the audience.

It is not enough to be politically correct by using inclusive, neutral terminology; one can also explore more fully the gender conditioning that has occurred throughout ones lifetime from childhood to adulthood in order to confront genderism.

📋 **SUMMARY**

In this lesson, you learned that since birth, we have been conditioned to make the distinction between men and women, masculinity and femininity. Advertisers create "gendered environments" in everything from children's toys to motor vehicles. **Gender-neutral language** and inclusive, **inoffensive language** aim to eliminate (or neutralize) reference to gender in terms that describe people. An essential **tip for speakers** is to guard against **genderism** and any tendency to stereotype members of the audience.

Source: Source: Boundless. "Gender." Boundless Communications Boundless, 3 Mar. 2017. Retrieved 1 Jul. 2017 from https://www.boundless.com/communications/textbooks/boundless-communications-textbook/analyzing-the-audience-7/demographic-factors-to-consider-38/gender-165-1883/

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