Gender (communication)

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:≡ WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the connection between gender and public speaking. Specifically, this lesson will focus on:

1. Gender and Culture
2. Gender and Speech
3. "Masculine" and "Feminine" Communication Styles

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1. Gender and Culture

In our society, we often use the **gendered** terms "women" and "men" instead of "male" and "female. " What's the difference between these two sets of terms? One pair refers to the biological categories of male and female. The other pair, men and women, refers to what are now generally regarded as socially constructed concepts that convey the contextually fluid cultural ideals or values of masculinity and femininity.

Gender exists on a continuum because feminine males and masculine females are not only possible but common, and the varying degrees of masculinity and femininity we see (and embody ourselves) are often separate from sexual orientation or preference. In other words, as a social construct, gender is learned, symbolic, and dynamic.

📄 TERM TO KNOW

Gender
The socio-cultural phenomenon of the division of people into various categories, such as "male" and "female," with each having associated clothing, roles, stereotypes, etc.

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2. Gender and Speech

Starting in childhood, girls and boys are generally socialized to belong to distinct cultures and thus, speak in ways particular to their own gender's rules and norms (Johnson, 2000; Tannen 1986, 1990, 1995).

This pattern of gendered socialization continues throughout our lives. As we've previously discussed, culturally diverse ways of speaking can cause miscommunication between members of each culture or speech community. As such, men and women often interpret the same conversation differently.

3. "Masculine" and "Feminine" Communication Styles

For those socialized in a feminine community, the purpose of communication is to create and foster relational connections with other people (Johnson, 2000; Wood, 2005). On the other hand, the goal for typically masculine communication is to establish individuality. This is done in a number of ways, such as indicating independence, showing control, and entertaining or performing for others.

When the goal is connection, members of a speech community are likely to engage in the following six strategies:

- Equity
- Support
- Conversational "maintenance work"
- Responsiveness
- A personal style
- Tentativeness

When the goal is independence, on the other hand, members of this speech community are likely to communicate in ways that:

- Exhibit knowledge
- Refrain from personal disclosure
- Are abstract
- Are focused on instrumentality
- Demonstrate conversational command
- Are direct and assertive
- Are less responsive

All of us are capable of speaking, and do speak, the language of multiple gender cultures. Again, this is one of the reasons it is important to make a distinction between gender and sex. Both men and women may make conscious choices to speak more directly and abstractly at work, but more personal at home. Such strategic choices indicate that we can use our knowledge about various communication styles or options to make us successful in many different contexts.

As with other cultural differences, when listening to a speaker who is communicating in a particularly gendered style, try to focus on the content of the message while suspending judgment and exercising empathy.

📋 **SUMMARY**

In this lesson, you learned that **gender and culture** are connected, as are **gender and speech**. As a social construct, gender is learned, symbolic, and dynamic. Starting in childhood, girls and boys are

generally socialized to belong to distinct cultures and thus, speak in ways particular to their own gender's rules and norms. For those socialized in a feminine community, the purpose of typically **feminine communication** is to create and foster relational connections with other people. The goal for typically **masculine communication** is to establish individuality.

Source: Source: Boundless. "Gender." Boundless Communications Boundless, 2 Mar. 2017. Retrieved 28 Jun. 2017 from https://www.boundless.com/communications/textbooks/boundless-communications-textbook/learning-to-listen-and-helping-others-do-the-same-5/barriers-to-listening-31/gender-141-10956/

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