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GENDER AND DISCOURSE

Edited by
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GENDER AND LANGUAGE IN THE
WORKPLACE

Shari Kendall and Deborah Tannen

Interaction in the workplace is characterized by a unique constellation of constraints: an institutional structure in which individuals are hierarchically ranked; a history of greater male participation in most work settings, especially at the higher ranking levels; a still existing, though recently permeated, pattern of participation along gender lines; periodic external evaluation in the form of raises, promotions, task assignments, and performance reviews; and a situation in which participants are required to interact regularly with others who are neither kin nor chosen affiliates. The workplace thus provides a special challenge to gender and language researchers as well as an opportunity to observe interaction in the context of these constraints.

Research on language in the workplace has focused primarily on task-related talk among professionals and lay persons. The majority of research on gender and language in the workplace has retained this focus, with a handful of studies branching out to examine talk among co-workers and among professionals. In addition, a few studies have considered the use and importance of non-task-related talk in the workplace. For example, Tannen (1994a) notes the importance of informal talk to getting work done and receiving opportunities needed for advancement. Bates (1988) finds that informal use of military, athletic, and sexual language in the workplace produces a subtle separation between women and men, and alienates those who do not participate in the use of sexual language from the informal power structure in the organization.

These studies notwithstanding, the research on gender and language in the workplace falls primarily into two categories, based on the work roles of, and relationships among, speakers. In the first category are studies that address how women and men interact with each other at work. In the second are studies that focus on how women and men enact authority in professional positions. A third area of investigation, addressed in many of the studies in the two preceding categories, is the

effect of women's and men's language use on how they are evaluated and reacted to.

In the present chapter, we will review representative sources in each of these areas and then suggest that the theoretical and methodological approach of framing is a particularly useful one for understanding the interrelation of gender and power in the workplace. This claim is supported by reference to the authors' research.

Pioneering work on gender and language stems from the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s, reflecting notions of social roles that were current then (Lakoff, 1975; Thorne and Henley, 1975; McConnell-Ginet et al., 1980). As attention turned to the investigation of gender itself (see Cameron, 1997), discourse and gender research shifted to a 'social construction' paradigm. Recent volumes that advocate this position are Crawford (1995), Hall and Bucholtz (1995), and Johnson and Meinhof (1997). In this paradigm, gendered identities – and other aspects of social identity – are maintained and (re-)created through social practices, including language practices. Individuals are active producers of gendered identities rather than passive reproducers of socialized gender behaviour. The framing approach advocated in this chapter provides a powerful theoretical and methodological approach that accounts for, and explicates, how language practices and gendered identities are dynamically linked in interaction.

Women and men actively choose ways of framing to accomplish specific ends within particular interaction. These choices are drawn, in part, from sociocultural norms for how women and men are expected to accomplish such actions through talk. Individuals' language choices, in the local interaction, invoke these gendered norms and, thus, perform gendered identities as well. Gendered ways of framing are, in this sense, resources for accomplishing the speakers' purpose. This model accounts for the observation that many women and men do not construct gendered identities in ways consistent with gender-related cultural norms. Likewise, it accounts for the fact that behaviour that transgresses such norms may be perceived in respect to these norms, which provide a 'rigid regulatory frame' for women's and men's behaviour (Cameron 1997: 49). As Bem (1993) describes, gender norms include a lens of 'gender polarization' – the ideology that women's and men's behaviour is dichotomous. When viewed through this lens, women and men who diverge from gender norms may be perceived as speaking and behaving 'like the other sex'. Furthermore, if women and men do speak in similar ways, they are likely to be evaluated differently (Tannen, 1994a; West, 1995). Norms for gendered language use are, therefore, constraints as well as resources (Cameron, 1997; Hall and Bucholtz, 1995; Johnson, 1997; Ochs, 1992; Tannen, 1994a; 1994b; West and Zimmerman, 1987). As Erickson (1995) puts it, 'There is human agency, but it can only be exercised in a world of social gravity.'

How women and men interact in groups

Research on how women and men interact with each other at work has tended to focus on amount of participation and influence. The research suggests that, in groups, men tend to get and keep the floor more often than women, talk more often and for longer, interrupt more, and make different kinds of contributions, using language strategies that challenge, create and maintain status distinctions (i.e. they create and maintain asymmetrical alignments between themselves and interlocutors). Women, according to this research, tend to get and keep the floor less frequently and for less time, interrupt less, and use language strategies that are more supportive and that minimize status distinctions.

A sense of this research may be gleaned by considering the phenomenon of interruption, one of the most widely investigated language behaviours in general as well as in the gender and language literature. Despite the highly complex nature of determining when an interruption occurred, and the equally if not more complex nature of determining its intention and effect (these are discussed in Tannen, 1994c), most studies simply count interruptions and make the overly simplified conclusion that the 'interrupted' is disadvantaged. James and Clarke (1993) review the literature that appeared between 1965 and 1991 on gender differences in interruption and note radical differences in definitions, and hence identifications, of interruption. They conclude, nonetheless, that most research has found no significant difference between the genders in number of interruptions initiated, in either cross-sex or same-sex interaction, even when taking into account the content of the interruption relative to the interrupted's talk, whether the interruption occurs in unstructured conversations or conversations in seminars or work groups, and whether the researcher differentiates between supportive or disruptive interruptions. Keeping Tannen (1994c) and James and Clarke (1993) in mind as cautionary tales, we nonetheless can observe that a review of research on gender and workplace interaction suggests some potential, albeit inconclusive, patterns. Workplace studies (some of which are reviewed below) that compare the frequency of men's and women's interruptions in mixed-sex groups suggest that men may interrupt women more frequently in these contexts, although the results vary. Studies (reviewed below) comparing how often professional women and men interrupt, or are interrupted by, lay persons suggest that men professionals may interrupt clients more frequently, and that women professionals may be interrupted more often than men in the same position. Similarly, in a study of the conversational interaction of women and men managers working in groups of ten at a management school, Case (1985; 1988) finds that the men managers tend to interrupt more than the women managers.

Two classic studies set the stage for investigations of how women and men tend to interact with each other in groups in the workplace. Eakins

and Eakins (1976) analysed seven university faculty meetings, and found that the men spoke more often and for longer than the women, and that each of the men in the faculty meetings interrupted more often than each of the women, even when taking into account the total number of turns taken. Edelsky ([1981] 1993) analysed five university faculty meetings and found that during the more structured segments, there were few interruptions but men took longer turns than the women.

More recent studies examine the *nature* of turns. Case (1985; 1988), for example, found that women and men managers tend to make different types of contributions in groups. She assessed the frequency of 34 gender-related speech variables in each of the managers' speeches, creating a speech profile for each manager. Then, using statistical analysis, she identified two predominant speech styles that correlated with sex. Based on the types of strategies used in these styles, she characterized the style used primarily by women as a facilitative, personal style, and the style used primarily by men as an assertive, authoritative style. She found that the men tended to use more strategies of display such as joking, swearing, using slang, and talking about competition and aggression, as well as more of the strategies that appeal to authority and maintain status distinctions, such as appealing to objectivity instead of personal experience and giving direct commands. (See Goodwin, 1990, for a discussion of boys' use of commands and how this type of directive creates and maintains status distinctions.) The women tended to use more strategies that engaged others and minimized status differences, such as backchannelling, adding to others' comments to shift topics, and using modal constructions rather than imperatives.

These results are similar to those that Tannen (1994a) describes for interactions that she observed and analysed in several large corporations. She found that some men were more likely to speak in ways that claimed attention and got credit for their contributions, whereas women were more likely to preface statements with a disclaimer, speak at a lower volume, and try to be succinct so as not to take up more speaking time than necessary, especially at meetings. Tannen found that women and men tended to make different kinds of contributions as well, based, in part, on having different conventionalized ways of exploring ideas. More men than women used an oppositional format to accomplish a range of interactional goals, including the discussion of ideas. According to Tannen, those who use this style view challenge and debate as necessary for developing and strengthening ideas. Many women who do not engage in ritual opposition may take such challenges literally, as indication of weaknesses in their ideas, or as personal attacks; moreover, they may find it impossible to do their best in what they perceive as a contentious environment.

Case (1994) and Tannen (1994a) argue that when women and men interact in groups, a mismatch in the styles that they typically use is

likely to produce unbalanced participation, so that those who end up having proportionately more influence in groups and appearing more competent and capable (and hence wielding more authority) are more likely to be men. Tannen suggests that when one speaker approaches a discussion through an oppositional format and the other approaches it in ways that maintain the appearance of equality, the latter (who is more likely to be female) is at a disadvantage. Likewise, Case argues that men's interactional styles in organizations currently work to their advantage by leading to domination of talk and increased influence in decision-making in groups. Tannen also points out that women begin with a disadvantage in workplaces that have previously had men in positions of power because these workplaces already have established male-style interaction as the norm.

The insight that styles of interaction more common among men have become the workplace norm again builds on the pioneering study of Edelsky ([1981] 1993). In the faculty committee meetings Edelsky taped, the women participated more equally in unstructured and informal parts of the meeting – portions that are not institutionalized and do not carry as much authority in the organization. In a review of the literature that appeared between 1951 and 1991 on gender differences in amount of talk, James and Drakich (1993) found a pattern that alludes to the connection between institutionalized interaction in the workplace and male norms of interaction. The studies they reviewed suggest that men talk more in formal task-oriented contexts or other formally structured contexts – a description that applies to key workplace settings – whereas women are likely to talk as much or more in informal contexts.

Some studies have investigated the interaction of women in all-women groups, revealing some interesting comparisons with the patterns found in groups of women and men. Linde (1991) examined how two women who are equal partners in a design firm managed the agenda in one face-to-face meeting and in three telephone meetings. Linde notes that the women negotiated the topics equally even though there was no formal prior agenda and no specified chair for the meeting. She found that, in the meetings, the women 'are careful to negotiate closings which are agreed to by both parties and are not abrupt. Pre-closings are extensive, which assures that both participants have had their say, before a current topic is concluded. Similarly, the introduction of new topics is negotiated, rather than unilaterally announced or begun' (1991: 310). Although Linde does not discuss gender as a potential influence on how these women negotiated topics, their topic shifts are similar to the reciprocal shifts that Ainsworth-Vaughn (1992) found women doctors tended to use with their patients, which contrasted with the unilateral shifts that the men doctors used more often.

In summary, studies that address how women and men interact with each other at work suggest that men tend to get and keep the floor more

often and for longer than do women in formal task-oriented contexts, and that women and men tend to use language strategies that perform different interactional functions and create different alignments between themselves and other participants.

How women and men enact professional authority

Many of the studies reviewed above take as their starting point that workplace norms are masculine norms, owing to the historically greater participation of men in these professions, the current numerical predominance of men at higher levels, and/or the cultural interpretations of given types of work that dictate who is thought to be best suited for that work. (See McElhinny, 1993, for a discussion of the cultural interpretations of types of work that result in one or the other gender being regarded as being best suited for a given type.) This research focus is motivated, in part, by discussions of the links between language, gender, and power. For example, Lakoff explains that the norms of men's discourse styles are institutionalized, that they are seen not only as 'the better way to talk but as the only way' (1990: 210). Gal argues that men's discourse styles are institutionalized as ways of speaking with authority, that institutions are 'organized to define, demonstrate, and enforce the legitimacy and authority of linguistic strategies used by one gender - or men of one class or ethnic group - while denying the power of others' (1991: 188).

Given these findings, it is not surprising that many studies have focused on women in professions in which women have not traditionally been significantly represented. In particular, numerous studies have addressed the question of whether women and men enact authority in these professions in ways similar to their male counterparts. The majority of studies conclude that women adopt some of the practices associated with the profession that have been established by men while adapting others. For example, McElhinny found that the women police officers she observed project a 'police officer' identity by adopting discourse management techniques that portray 'facelessness in face-to-face interaction' (1995: 236). But they also adapt interactional norms of policing by projecting a more middle-class image of a police officer who is rational, efficient, and professional, rather than the working-class image of the police officer that is centred on displays of physical force and emotional aggression (1995: 219-20).

West (1984; 1990), Pizzini (1991), Ainsworth-Vaughn (1992), and Fisher (1993) consider how women and men physicians interact with patients. West (1984) finds that, although doctors generally interrupt patients more frequently than the reverse, when women doctors see men patients, it is the doctors who are interrupted more often. West (1990) analysed directive-response sequences in medical encounters.

She found that men doctors tended to give aggravated directives that explicitly establish status differences, whereas women doctors tended to mitigate their commands, using directive forms that minimize status distinctions between themselves and their patients. West concludes that women are constituting the role of physician in a way that exercises less interactional power than men physicians typically exercise.

Pizzini (1991) compares women and men gynaecologists' use of humour in gynaecological exams. She found that both the women and the men used humour to interrupt their patients, but the men interrupted their patients more frequently. Furthermore, the men tended to use interrupting humour to reestablish their scientific authority, whereas the women did so to discontinue discussions they considered unnecessary.

Ainsworth-Vaughn (1992) found that women doctors she observed downplayed status differences by using reciprocal topic shifts that share interactional power between doctor and patient, whereas men doctors tended to shift topics unilaterally, without waiting for patient agreement. She concludes that men and women physicians realize greater interactional power *vis-à-vis* their patients than do women physicians, and predicts that 'the ways women constitute being a woman physician will surely affect social and sociolinguistic norms for the role and for the encounter' (1992: 424).

Fisher (1993) contrasts the medical consultation of a (woman) nurse practitioner with the consultation of a (man) doctor to assess whether nurse practitioners, who claim to bring caring to the practice of medicine, minimize the asymmetry in the provider-patient relationship. She concludes that the doctor recreates his status as medical expert by asking narrowly focused questions and by moving rapidly to diagnostic closure. The nurse practitioner, in contrast, simultaneously reinforces her authority and 'distances herself from it, minimizing her professional status' (1993: 102) by establishing and maintaining a gender-based solidarity, asking open-ended questions, and not moving rapidly toward diagnostic closure. In this way, the nurse practitioner refrains from imposing her medical expertise and her definition of the situation, and legitimates the patient's feelings.

In each of these studies, women physicians speak in ways that minimize status differences and downplay their own authority. These findings make a significant contribution to the language and workplace literature, much of which focuses on interactional asymmetries in interactions between professionals and lay persons. Based on the research presented in their collection, Drew and Heritage conclude that 'In many forms of institutional discourse . . . there is a direct relationship between status and role, on the one hand, and discursive rights and obligations, on the other' (1992: 49). The linguistic behaviour of the women physicians reported in the studies described above suggest that, although a connection between status/role and discursive rights and

obligation exists, this relationship is mediated by gender-related patterns as well.

Those studies that mentioned effectiveness found that the women's strategies were actually more effective in these contexts. In Fisher (1993), the doctor and his patient never reached agreement on the cause of or treatment for her condition, but the nurse practitioner and her patient reached a compromise agreement. West (1990) found that more 'polite' directives produced more compliant responses and, since women doctors used more of the polite directives, they had a greater rate of compliance from patients overall.

Researchers have also focused on how women and men enact authority in managerial positions. Tannen (1994a), Horikawa et al. (1991), and Tracy and Eisenberg (1990/1991) investigate how superiors give orders to subordinates. Patterning much as physicians were shown to speak with their patients, the men superiors in these studies tended to speak in ways that maintain or maximize status differences, whereas the women superiors tended to speak in ways that minimize status differences.

In her analysis of women and men in corporations, Tannen (1994a) notes that the women she observed in positions of authority tended to give directives to subordinates in ways that saved face for the subordinate, whereas many men in similar positions tended not to give directives in this way. However, Tannen cautions against assuming that talking in an indirect way necessarily reveals powerlessness, lack of self-confidence, or anything else about the internal state of the speaker. Indirectness, she notes, is a fundamental element in human communication and one that varies significantly from one culture to another. Although women in her study were more likely to be indirect when telling others what to do, she suggests that their motivation may be to save face for their interlocutors, especially subordinate interlocutors. Men were also often indirect, but in different situations and in different ways. For example, many men tended to be indirect when revealing weaknesses, problems, or errors, and when expressing emotions other than anger (1994a: 90). Tannen explains that those who would not use indirectness in a particular way often misjudge those who use it in that way. Those who expend effort to save face for a subordinate - including indirect approaches - can be seen as being manipulative or somehow less than honest.

Using an experimental design, Horikawa et al. (1991) investigate the effects of request legitimacy on the directness and politeness of women and men managers' compliance-gaining tactics. They asked women and men managers to report what they would say if they had to cancel a subordinate's vacation in one of two scenarios. In one scenario, the manager had no formal right to request that the subordinate cancel the vacation, so the manager needed to gain the compliance of the subordinate; in the other scenario, company policy gave the manager the

right to cancel the vacation and, therefore, the manager did not need to gain the subordinate's compliance. Horikawa et al. found that the strategies that both women and men managers said they would use were less direct and more polite when they needed to gain the subordinate's compliance. However, when the managers did not need to gain the subordinate's compliance, the women managers used less direct and more polite requests than the men; in other words, if these managers would actually speak the way they said they would, the women would expend linguistic effort to protect the face of the subordinate even when the subordinate is obligated to comply.

Tracy and Eisenberg (1990/1991) conducted a role-play experiment which suggests that women in positions of authority expend linguistic effort to save face for their subordinates. Twenty-four dyads of college students, all of whom had work experience, were asked to orally criticize letters written by another. In one situation, the student role-played a supervisor giving feedback to an employee; in the other, the student role-played a subordinate giving feedback to a superior. Naive judges completed questionnaires rating each of the speakers in terms of the degree to which their criticism was concerned with clarity and attention to face. Strategies rated high in attention to face included positive initial statements prefacing negative comments, positive endings, and explanations for the criticisms. Strategies rated as low in attention to face included statements magnifying the size of the problem and blatant face attacks such as name-calling, unqualified statements about the worthlessness of the work, and strong reprimands for minor errors. Tracy and Eisenberg note that the women were significantly more concerned about the other's face when they were in the superior role than when they were in the subordinate role.

Nelson (1988) demonstrates a similar pattern in which a higher status woman supports women of lower status. She describes the interaction between herself (a professor) and graduate teaching assistants in small groups intended to discuss and improve the assistants' teaching. Nelson reports that she 'tried to minimize authoritarian behavior' by modelling ways of phrasing criticism that avoided 'making light of any writer or her work' and by herself using the strategies that she wanted to encourage: praising others, focusing attention on others' strengths, being emotionally open in revealing weaknesses, and involving others in decision-making (1988: 202, 201).

All of these studies indicate that how women and men in positions of authority speak - and how women and men claim that they would speak in these situations - is influenced by both gender and status. Woods (1989) examines the patterns of interruption in triads of higher ranking and lower ranking women and men colleagues to determine the relative influences of gender and occupational status on patterns of interruption. (She does not specify the context in which she tape-recorded but does note that the conversations were naturally occurring

and surreptitiously taped with consent to use them given after.) The men subordinates in her study interrupted higher status women more often than the reverse, and the subordinate men interrupted higher status women more often than they interrupted higher status men. In addition, the men succeeded in gaining the floor by this means 85% of the time, compared with 52% for the women. She concludes that, in these interactions, gender-based patterns of interruption overrode status variables.

In an analysis of how three headmistresses speak in committee meetings, Wodak (1995) examines women in another type of 'managerial' position, that of the head of a school. (A headmistress is the Austrian equivalent of the principal in US schools.) She finds that the headmistresses speak in ways that 'disguise' their 'power and authority' (1995: 46). For example, in one meeting, one headmistress announced that she was limiting her accessibility in a way that overtly maintained her emphasis on cooperation and openness. She suggested that the change would enable her to 'be there for everyone' even though, as Wodak points out, she was actually restricting their access to her. Another headmistress, in her report at the beginning of a meeting, downplayed her criticism of the teachers' lack of discipline in their classrooms by providing possible reasons (such as 'children are like that'), by using a rhetorical question, and by praising the teachers. The third headmistress, in a committee meeting with parents, indirectly criticized the parents for not being prepared by embedding the statement, that they should 'think about what they need or what they want' beforehand, in her description of the committee's purposes.

The language behaviour of the headmistresses, as described by Wodak, is consistent with the other studies discussed in this section in that the headmistresses enact their authority by using language strategies that overtly appeal to equality and consensus, and thereby overtly minimize status differences. Her description of these women's language strategies underscores two important points that are explained by Tannen (1994a) and suggested by the research of Case (1985; 1988), West (1990), Ainsworth-Vaughn (1992), and Fisher (1993). First, the strategies used by the women described in this section to lead and to interact with subordinates and lay persons are authoritative strategies even though they overtly minimize status differences. Wodak suggests that the headmistresses' strategies are 'controlling and authoritarian strategies' used 'to achieve their aims' (1995: 54). However, these leadership strategies differ from those traditionally used by men in these roles and circumstances, so they are not as readily associated with these roles and, consequently, are less recognizable as authoritative. Nonetheless, these strategies are effective, especially when used with others who share this style. Wodak argues that the headmistresses' leadership styles, although different from each other, all draw on authoritative strategies of motherhood. She suggests that, because 'the

pattern of maternity was shared by all those involved in the institution of the school', the women's strategies were accepted by teachers and parents and were 'not seen as an uncomfortable exercising of power' (1995: 54).

In summary, studies that focus on how women and men enact authority in professional positions suggest that women tend to expend linguistic effort to minimize status differences between themselves and their subordinates or patients (or, as Tannen puts it, save face for them), whereas men tend to use strategies that reinforce status differences. Thus, the women and men in these studies tend to create and maintain different alignments between themselves and their subordinates or patients. The women exercise their authority by using language strategies that create a symmetrical alignment (that is, they downplay their authority). The men use language strategies that create and maintain an asymmetrical alignment, the alignment that is traditionally associated with authority.

Evaluations of women and men based on their verbal behaviour

Research suggests that institutional identities such as 'manager' and 'physician' are socioculturally associated with one or the other sex and with the interactional styles typically used in these positions. In other words, the predominance of one sex in institutional positions creates and maintains gender-related expectations for how someone in that position *should* speak. Such associations simultaneously are produced by, and serve to reproduce, gender ideologies: socioculturally defined expectations for how women and men should speak and behave. In addition, interactional styles traditionally used by individuals in authoritative positions become authoritative themselves and come to be seen as 'speaking with authority'. The result of these combined processes is that expectations for how individuals in positions of authority should speak to subordinates are similar to expectations for how men should speak and interact. In this section, we examine these associations and the implications they have for how women and men are evaluated in the workplace, based on their ways of speaking.

Lakoff questions whether that 'mythic golden mean' between aggression and deference – assertion – is possible for women, or 'whether, too often, assertive behavior is misidentified as aggression' (1990: 207). Three experimental matched guise studies demonstrate that assertive language is not evaluated in the same way when it is used by women and by men. Carli (1990) assessed how college students perceived a persuasive message performed by a woman or a man who spoke assertively or tentatively (which in her study was characterized by the presence of

disclaimers, tags, and hedges). She found that women who spoke more assertively were perceived as more competent and knowledgeable than women who spoke tentatively, but they influenced men less, and were perceived as less likeable by women. Men were judged as more influential, knowledgeable, competent, and likeable regardless of how they spoke.

Crawford (1988) found that women who spoke more assertively – for example by telling a boss to discontinue calling them demeaning names – received lower likeability ratings than men in the same situation, especially from older male raters. Crawford (1995: 65) notes that this may have significant ramifications in workplaces in which older men are in power. Sterling and Owen (1982) conducted a study in which college students heard police officers persuading a student to relinquish an alcoholic beverage that the student was consuming in public. The officers spoke in either a demanding, 'assertive' style (using imperatives and direct orders) or a 'reasoning' style (expressing empathy and requesting compliance). Women using a demanding style were rated as less feminine, but evaluation, of men officers' masculinity were not influenced by their speech style.

In each of these studies, the ratings that women received for competence, likeability, and/or femininity depended on their language behaviour and the sex of the rater, but the ratings the men received did not. Assertive women were perceived as more competent but less likeable, less influential or less feminine. These studies suggest that women must choose between being 'assertive' or being likeable and feminine. Wiley and Crittenden (1992) highlight this opposition. They surveyed 128 tenured men professors in a matched guise experiment to discover how these professors perceived the kinds of accounts that women and men academics give for publishing success. They find that, in the eyes of these senior colleagues, the modest accounts of success that are typically given by women academics enhance femininity but detract from professionalism, whereas the causal explanations typically offered by academic men support a positive professional identity and confirm a masculine gender identity as well.

A growing body of research, then, demonstrates that women in authority face a 'double bind' regarding professionalism and femininity. Lakoff describes the double bind this way:

When a woman is placed in a position in which being assertive and forceful is necessary, she is faced with a paradox; she can be a good woman but a bad executive or professional, or vice versa. To do both is impossible. (1990: 206)

One of the sources for women's inability to be perceived as being both a good authority figure and a good woman is that, as Tannen puts it, the 'very notion of authority is associated with maleness' (1994a: 167). This phenomenon, which Tannen demonstrates at length on the basis

of observation, is supported by experimental studies examining the link between what it means to be a man and what it means to be a manager.

In two classic studies, Schein (1973; 1975) found a significant resemblance between terms describing 'men' and 'managers' and a near zero, non-significant resemblance between descriptions of 'women' and 'managers', based on questionnaires completed by 300 men and 167 women managers. In 1989, Heilman et al., Brenner et al., and Schein et al. replicated Schein's earlier work; the studies that included women and men raters found an intriguing change from the earlier studies. Heilman et al. (1989) surveyed 268 men managers and found the same resemblance between 'men' and 'managers'. Brenner et al. (1989) surveyed 420 men and 173 women managers and found the same pattern among the men surveyed, but not the women. Among the women managers, there was a significant resemblance between the ratings of 'men' and 'managers', but there was also a similar resemblance between the ratings of 'women' and 'managers'. Schein et al. (1989) surveyed 145 men and 83 women management students, and found the same discrepancy between the attitudes of the men and women surveyed. The men perceived a link between 'men' and 'managers' but not between 'women' and 'managers', whereas the women saw a resemblance between 'managers' on the one hand and both 'women' and 'men' on the other. According to Schein (1994), similar patterns were found in studies conducted in the United Kingdom, Germany, China, and Japan.

Based on these results, Schein (1994) concludes that, as women have moved into management, managerial sex typing has diminished among women, but men have 'continued to see women in ways that are not complimentary *vis-à-vis* succeeding in positions of authority and influence'. Nieva and Gutek (1980) review a large number of studies in which evaluators were given descriptions of hypothetical persons who were identical except for sex. They found that, given identical qualifications of performance, there is a general tendency to give men more favourable evaluations than women. This bias is particularly strong in situations that, until the present, have been predominantly male domains. However, as Williams (1995[1992]) points out, such discrimination cannot be solely the result of 'tokenism', which Kanter (1977) described as the pattern in which members of under-represented groups will be subject to predictable forms of discrimination. Williams found that 'token' men in the 'female professions' (nursing, librarianship, elementary school teaching, and social work) are discriminated against, but with a twist: Whereas women often encounter a 'glass ceiling' that prevents them from advancing upward in male-dominated professions, men encounter a 'glass escalator' that prevents them from remaining in lower-level positions. As Williams puts it, 'As if on a moving escalator, they must work to stay in place' [1995[1992]: 197].

Women who attempt to resolve the double bind by using interactional strategies associated with men find that women (and men) who speak in ways expected of the other sex may be judged harshly. In her study of women and men managers interacting in groups, Case (1985; 1988; 1993) finds that two of the most influential members of the groups were a woman and a man whose styles combine ways of speaking expected of the two sexes. However, these two individuals were not pleased with the receptions they got in the group, and the woman fared worse; she was widely disliked and provoked openly hostile comments from others in the group. As Tannen (1994a) notes, this study suggests that women and men who do not conform to expectations for their gender may not be liked.

Evidence for this pattern is found in Edelsky and Adams's (1990) comparison of turn-taking and topic violations in six political debates. A woman in the Arizona gubernatorial debate who was a long-time party insider, spoke in ways similar to how the men spoke in this and other debates: she took full turns that were out of turn, inserting some of these turns into otherwise orderly episodes, and she was the only woman to make a demeaning move and to engage in friendly repartee with moderators. The authors note that by speaking in these ways, she was able to make the debate an equal forum; however, she was later lampooned in political cartoons and on local call-in talk shows for being 'mannish' (1990: 185). Because she spoke in ways that were common in political debates but more typically associated with men, she was evaluated negatively in a way that the men were not.

Some researchers suggest that language strategies that women use to downplay their authority are drawing on the resources available to them. Tannen notes that our 'primary images of female authority come from motherhood' (1994a: 161). Wodak observes that three school headmistresses drew on strategies associated with the role of mothers because 'The exercise of power within the parameters of the traditional mother role is considered socially legitimate' (1995: 45). It is likely, then, that women who downplay their authority or draw on the resource of mother for an authoritative style are attempting to resolve the double bind between professionalism and femininity.

Women in the workplace

Despite such evidence for negative perceptions of women in authority at work, research does not support the idea that the ways many women speak are powerless interactional strategies or necessarily the result of insecurity or other psychological states. Instead, the findings suggest that the strategies that many women tend to use are designed for specific ends and, in many cases, are effective for getting others to do things and getting work done.

Case draws on studies of management to argue that the ways that many women speak in the workplace are suited for 'current organizational realities' (1994: 160). Parker and Fagenson argue, in a review of research on the trends of women in management worldwide, that organizations are finding that a diverse workforce is not just useful, but a 'demographic imperative' (1994: 12). In addition, some research on management suggests that women are fostering a type of power which, as Case notes, 'involves the ability to accomplish goals and to help others achieve their goals as well' (1994: 162). For example, Astin and Leland (1991) find, in a cross-generational study of 77 women leaders, that these women use collaborative, participative communication and demonstrate a leadership style based on empowerment and collective action.

A great deal of research on language and gender in the workplace suggests that the ways that many women speak may have other benefits as well. Holmes argues, based on her extensive research in New Zealand, that 'the interactive strategies which are typically found in the talk of women appear to be the kinds of strategies that encourage high quality exploratory talk' (1995: 212). Coates (1995), comparing women and men speaking in law, medicine, and education, argues that women in these professions maintain a more cooperative discourse style rather than adopting the more adversarial style that is typically used and valued in these professions. If this is the case, women's increasing participation in the workplace may help to alleviate some of the problems that result from asymmetrical interactions between professionals and lay persons that have been reported in the language and workplace literature.

A framing approach to gender and language at work

As the preceding literature review makes clear, one of the most striking aspects of the workplace context is the hierarchical nature of relations among speakers. In the remainder of this chapter, we will draw on our own research to suggest that the most fruitful theoretical framework for understanding how gender-related patterns interact with the influence of hierarchical relations, as well as other issues of gender and of workplace communication, is a framing approach. Rather than counting up features such as interruption and then assigning totals to females and males, the researcher needs to ask what alignment each speaker is establishing in relation to interlocutors and to the subject of talk or task at hand. In other words, what persona is being created, and how are linguistic strategies functioning to create that alignment?

The usefulness of a framing approach can be seen in the literature on ways women and men tend to create their authority, as reviewed above. As Tannen (1994a; 1994b) has argued elsewhere, the differences

in how women and men enact authority may best be understood as differences in the alignments that women and men tend to take up in relation to their interlocutors. In interpreting her own observations as well as results of studies by others, the women, Tannen suggests, tended to downplay their own authority both to avoid appearing 'bossy' - to be what they consider a good manager and a good person - and to save face for others by taking a ritual (not literal) one-down position. The view of their behaviour as intended to save face for the subordinate is key to understanding the behaviour. This contrasts with a psychological approach that would see such ways of speaking as evidencing lack of self-esteem or powerlessness. A framing approach allows us to see that women who talk this way are not evidencing a lack of authority but rather enacting their authority in a different way.

This perspective emerges as well in a study by Kendall (1993) conducted in a radio station control room. Kendall describes how a (woman) technical director of a radio news/talk show instructed a (man) substitute soundboard operator in a way that saved face for him. The director arrived at the recording room early to make sure that the substitute operator had the information he needed to operate the soundboard. She knew that he had a thorough technical knowledge of the equipment but was unfamiliar with the routines of this show and inexperienced in this role. When she entered the room, he was visibly nervous. The director could have run through a list of information about what to do and what not to do, issuing direct commands right up until airtime; instead, she phrased information in a way that implied that what she was saying was not general technical knowledge (which he should have) but information particular to that show (which he could not be expected to have). For example, instead of saying 'Don't forget that tapes have a one-second lead-in,' she said, 'On this show everything has that one-second dead roll.' She avoided giving direct orders by saying, for example, 'Probably we will want to re-cue the switch' when obviously it was he who had to re-cue the switch. After making sure that he had all the information he needed, she engaged him in small talk about personal computers, positioning herself as a novice in a domain in which he had expertise. Although he had been visibly agitated at the beginning of the conversation, the small talk allowed him to sit back with his feet up and discuss a subject in which he felt competent. By the time the show began, he was visibly relaxed. There were no errors during the live broadcast that day. Kendall suggests that, in this interaction, the director enacted her authority by speaking in ways that saved his face because, by so doing, she built his confidence to enable him to do his job, and thus accomplished her job as well.

The power of a framing approach is also exemplified in a study by Kuhn (1992) examining the classroom discourse of university professors, although she does not use that term. Kuhn noticed that the American

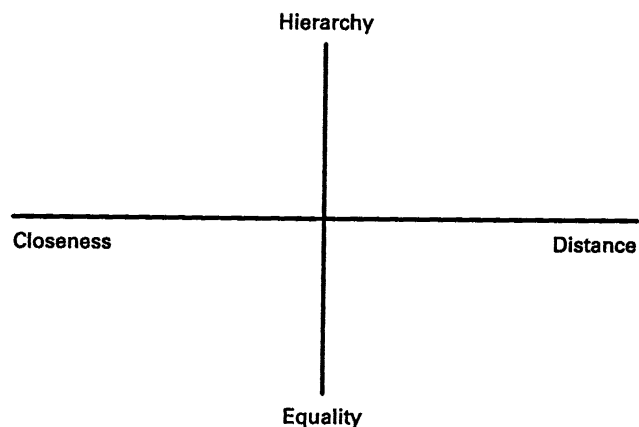
women professors she observed were more assertive in giving students direct orders at the beginning of the term than were the men she observed. This initially surprised her, but she concluded that it was because they spoke of 'the requirements' of the course as if these were handed down directly from the institution, and then told the students how they could fulfil the requirements. For example, one American woman professor said, 'We are going to talk about the requirements.' Kuhn contrasts this with the men professors in her study who also handed out lists of requirements in the form of syllabuses but made it explicit that the syllabuses represented decisions they personally had made. For example, one man said, 'I have two midterms and a final. And I added this first midterm rather early to get you going on reading, uh, discussions, so that you will not fall behind.' A simple counting approach would have yielded the results that the women professors were more assertive than the men. This could have been presented as results that fail to confirm the findings of earlier studies, and left at that. Noting, however, that the women were talking about the syllabus as if it were handed down by the institution explains why they might feel comfortable describing the requirements in more assertive terms than the men who put 'on record' the fact that they are describing requirements they themselves have set. Thus the 'framing' approach, which asks what alignment the speaker is taking to the subject of talk and to interlocutors, allows a much more meaningful understanding of ways of speaking.

Tannen (1994b) proposes a framework for understanding the relationship among gender, power, and workplace communication that combines a framing approach with a new theoretical construct of power and solidarity. According to Tannen, researchers must ask not only about power, but also about how power and solidarity (in her terms, status and connection) interact, taking into account the conventionalized nature of many linguistic strategies. What is conventionalized, in other words, is not simply a way of exercising power but ways of balancing the simultaneous but conflicting needs for status and connection.

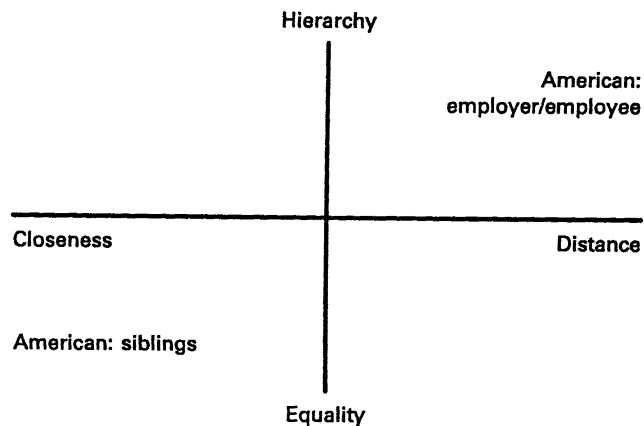
The framing approach that Tannen proposes draws on Goffman (1977) to point out that the relationship between gender and language is 'sex-class linked' in the sense that ways of speaking are not necessarily identified with every individual man or woman but rather are associated with women as a class or men as a class in a given society. By talking in ways that are associated with one or the other sex class, individuals signal their alignment with that sex class.

The remainder of this chapter lays out this framework by summarizing the argument and examples in Tannen (1994b). Building on the sociolinguistic concept of power and solidarity, Tannen substitutes the term 'connection' for 'solidarity', and sees these two dynamics as intertwined and both ambiguous (for example, calling someone by first name can show either closeness or lack of respect) and polysemous (it

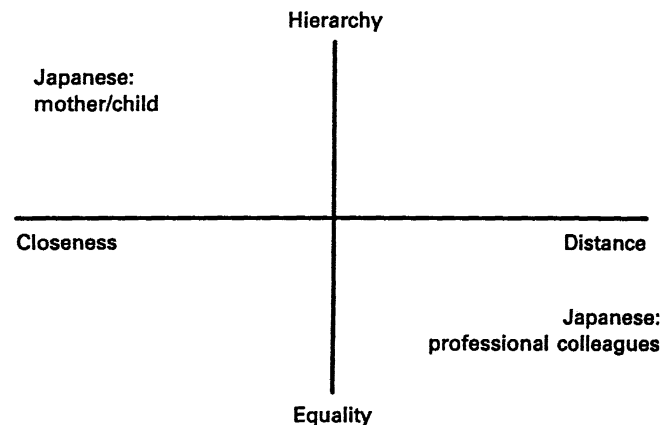
can signal both at once). She proposes that these be conceptualized on a multidimensional grid as shown.



This grid illustrates that hierarchy/equality is one axis, and closeness/distance another. Americans seem to conceptualize relationships along an axis that runs from the upper right to the lower left: from hierarchical and distant to equal and close. We put business relations in the upper right quadrant, and family and close friendship in the lower left, as shown.



In contrast, other cultures, such as Japanese, Chinese, and Javanese, tend to conceptualize relationships along an axis that runs from the upper left to the lower right: from hierarchical and close to equal and distant. The archetype of a close, hierarchical relationship for members of these cultures is the mother-child constellation, which is the basis for conceptualizing hierarchical relationships at work as well. In this cultural view, equal relationships are not typically close but rather distant, such as business associates at similar levels in their organizations.



In analysing workplace discourse, then, the analyst must ask how the linguistic strategies used balance the needs for connection (or solidarity) and status (or power), and the answer to that question can be gleaned by asking what alignment a speaker is taking to others, to the task at hand, and to the material under discussion. Finally, one can ask whether the ways of speaking observed are associated with one or the other sex class, regardless of whether the speaker is a member of that sex class.

Tannen (1994b) presents two examples of workplace interaction - one among men and the other among women - in order to illustrate how the speakers balance both status and connection, and to suggest that their ways of speaking are best understood through a theory of framing.

The first example is from a conversation taped by Lena Gavruseva (1995) that took place in the office of a local newspaper between John, the editor-in-chief, and Dan, a recently hired writer. Dan was walking past John's office, spied him sitting at his desk with his door open, and stepped into the office to engage in friendly chat, which he initiated by asking, 'What are you scowling at, John?' In response, John began talking about problems involving another staff member's computer, in the course of which he referred to Dan's computer as 'that little shitburner of an XT'. Dan responded by saying that his computer 'sucks'. In response to this remark, John began asking Dan what was wrong with his computer and offering to repair it.

During playback, Dan told Gavruseva that he intended his remark 'It sucks' as a ritual exchange of woes in the service of solidarity. In choosing the vulgar verb 'sucks', he took his cue from John's use of the term 'shitburner'. Because he intended his remark in this spirit, he averred, he was taken aback when John treated his remark as a literal complaint about his computer and offered to remedy the situation. Because of the paralinguistic and prosodic quality of John's offers - fast-paced and overbearing, from Dan's point of view - Dan became

increasingly uncomfortable, a discomfort that peaked when John proclaimed that he could fix Dan's computer in 25 seconds. It is also possible (though this is purely speculative) that John felt obligated, as the boss, to do something about a problem brought to his attention, regardless of the spirit in which it was mentioned. In any case, Dan told Gavrusseva that he felt John was 'showing him up' and putting him 'on the spot'. Gavrusseva observed that John was framing Dan as a supplicant. In other words, connection-focused banter turned into a statusful (and stressful) interchange because of hierarchical relations.

At this point, Dan restored balance by playfully challenging his boss, and the boss agreed to the shift in alignment by playing along. I suggest that in the excerpt that follows, Dan's reframing signalled to his boss that he had stepped over a line, and that John tacitly agreed to redress the imbalance of power by bonding with Dan as two men who can talk indelicately, and can align themselves in opposition to women.

Knowing that John had been suffering from an intestinal ailment, Dan shifted the topic to John's health by asking, 'How are you feeling today, John?' John responded:

um Actually my guts started grinding and I thought, 'Hey, it's back,' but I had like a heavy night last night. I mean I went to bed at six, and only came out to like piss and drink water, and eat a can of tuna fish. I mean it was bad. I get a gastro-intestinal thing at both ends. It was it was spewing. It was violent.

Dan responded, 'Not simultaneously. Please tell me no.' John reassured him, 'No no no but it was intense. And it made me so glad that there was no girlfriend around, nobody could take care of me. There's only one fucking thing I hate it's being sick and somebody wants to take care of me.'

With his query about John's health, Dan redirected the conversation away from one that framed Dan as subordinate (both because he needed to report his problems to John and because John declared himself able to fix in 25 seconds a problem that Dan was unable to fix) in favour of a conversation that framed John as potentially one-down (a sufferer of embarrassing physical ailments). John went along with the reframing by recounting the symptoms of his intestinal distress. By talking explicitly about body functions gone awry, he seems to be positioning Dan as an equal: they are now two men who can talk openly about topics such as these, which they might not do if women were present. John then goes further toward aligning himself with Dan, man to man, by referring to how annoying women can be. Moreover, the very act of choosing the topic and having John accede to it reframes Dan as higher in status than he was in the preceding interchange. At the

same time, however, as Gavrusseva pointed out to me, John is still framing himself as someone who does not need help. In this example, then, Dan and John reflect and negotiate their relative status while apparently engaging in office small talk.

Contrast this with the following segment that was taped by Janice Hornyak (in preparation) in connection with her study of discourse in an all-woman office. Tina had been telling a story when June, the mail clerk, entered the office to deliver mail. Tina stopped her narrative and invited June into the room, and into the interaction, by commenting on her clothing. The other women joined in:

- June: Hii.
 Tina: Hey! Ah, we gotta see this getup. Come on in.
 Heather: C'mere June!
 Tina: She she she's uh . . . that's cute.
 Heather: Lo:ve that beau:tiful blou:se!
 Janice: Hey, high fashion today.
 Tina: Cool.
 June: Hi . . . I had the blouse /?/ and didn't know what to wear it with. And I just took the tag off and /?/ said /?/ I'm gonna wear it with a vest.
 Tina: And that hair too.
 Janice: Oh that's neat.
 Heather: Is that your Mom's? [Tina laughs.]
 June: No I got this from uh /?/
 Tina: What is it?
 June: /It's from/ Stylo.
 Tina: I've heard of it.
 June: The one in Trader Plaza that has all that wild stuff.
 Heather: What'd you do to your hair?
 June: Added /?/. Judith said you just are bored, you have to do something. [All laugh.]

At first glance, this too is an instance of office small talk. Nonetheless, relative status is a pervasive influence on this interaction as well. The complimenting ritual is initiated by Tina, who is the manager of the office as well as the daughter of the company's owner. She is the highest status person in the interaction. June, the mail clerk (and also the intruder into the office), who is the object of the complimenting, is the lowest status person present. Complimenting June on her clothing was a conventionalized, sex-class linked resource by which Tina could include June in the conversation, even though she did not want to include her in the narrative event she interrupted, as Tina might have done if a status equal and/or friend had entered unexpectedly. Importantly, one could not imagine their alignment reversed: June would be less likely to have entered with the mail and called out to Tina regarding her clothing. As with John in the computer-fixing segment, the highest status person controlled the framing of the interaction.

There are many aspects of the preceding small talk examples that differ along lines of gender, such as the use of profanity by the men and the ritual complimenting among the women. By examining the alignments that the speakers take up to each other and to the topics of talk, however, we are able to glean a deeper understanding of what they are trying to accomplish: both the men and the women negotiate their relative status while simultaneously reinforcing the connection between them, though the ostensible focus is more explicitly on connection among the women.

We suggest, then, that examining discourse in the workplace through a framing approach allows deeper insight into how gender interplays with hierarchical relations - in other words, issues of gender and power.

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