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ABSTRACT

It is difficult to think about masculine and feminine behaviors without simultaneously conjuring the sex-trait and sex-role stereotypes that accompany these behaviors. Despite the fact that much has been written identifying other attributes that ought to be equally valued and encouraged in women's and men's communication ("empathy," "cooperation," "sensitivity," "effective listening," and "assertiveness"), a legacy of literature argues that using bi-polar terms to characterize men as "adventurous," "dominant" "forceful," "independent," "masculine" and "strong-willed" and women "emotional," "passive," "dependent," "sentimental," "submissive," "feminine," and "nurturing" persists. If Michel Foucault can offer guidance in handling the general question of "standards for gendered behavior," it would seem that the first step would be to alter the power relations by denying the "dividing practices" which divide women from men, and second, when the practices can not be denied (childbirth is an example), denying that the practices are or ought to be reasons for power divisions. Scholars must break down the assumption that females hold the standard for intimate relationships and males the standard for public or professional relationships. Research that supports a rigid sense of male and female behavior, such as some recent research on conversational interruptions, is often deserving of scrutiny. In the classroom, professors must be ever vigilant of absolute gender categories as defined by the textbooks they use. (Contains 79 references.) (TB)

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ETHICS OF TEACHING GENDER AND COMMUNICATION

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ETHICS OF TEACHING GENDER AND COMMUNICATION

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Recently an article appeared in The New York Times entitled "Is Bad Writing a Mental Disorder?" (Kirk and Kutchins, 1994, p. A17). In this piece, the authors discuss the release of the fourth edition of the American Psychiatric Association's "bible," the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. This nearly nine-hundred-page reference book presents more than three hundred bona fide disorders for therapists to use when making diagnoses.

What is striking is that there are scant actions or behaviors which the APA does not consider potentially symptomatic of some mental condition. Included among the possible signs of a psychiatric illness are "insomnia, worrying, restlessness, getting drunk, seeking approval, reacting to criticism, feeling sad and bearing grudges." One newly-included possible illness is code 315.2, "Disorder of Written Expression," which, according to the manual, may be manifested by "the poor use of grammar or punctuation, sloppy paragraph organization, awful spelling and bad handwriting." How practitioners are to distinguish these traits among students who may exhibit them due to mental illness from those who simply are weak writers is not clearly specified.

What is clear, however, is that there are profound implications when a single profession seeks to identify, codify, and prescribe normative behavior. When we allow any profession to define what behaviors are "normal," to determine the standards of these behaviors, and to evaluate the extent to which members of society ought conform to these standards, we run the risk of empowering that profession with enormous influence over the course and quality of our daily lives. Just as a University of Michigan study, basing its data on the impressive array of behaviors included in the psychiatric manual, concluded "that half of all Americans suffer from psychiatric disorders" (Kirk and Kutchins, 1994, p. A17), those of us in the field of communication similarly may be inclined to prescribe and proscribe behavior in the name of communication competency. In our efforts to help students become effective communicators, we may run the risk of accepting and perpetuating certain types of behavior and of labeling our students as poor communicators. In our attempts to "prescribe" strategies to enhance instruction, we often fail to question how these behaviors were deemed "appropriate" or "effective" in the first place. Often we fail to ask if other communication styles might be more productive than the norms our discipline has embraced and codified.

While the entire field of communication may warrant this type of scrutiny, it is our intention to examine some ethical issues connected specifically to the teaching of gender and communication. First we consider briefly the general meaning of ethics, especially as it relates to deriving standards for communication. Next, we explore how our tendency to dichotomize

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has informed "dividing" behavior according to sex. We consider how this division has created "standards" for communication, privileging women's ways of communicating in the context of personal relationships and men's modes of communication in the professional arena. In the final section we raise ethical considerations related to teaching the topic of gender and communication in diverse classes.

ETHICS: THE MORAL ROAD TO STANDARD BEHAVIOR

While there are several definitions for the term "ethics," all incorporate ideas of "morality" and "standards." Webster's Third New International Dictionary, for example, defines ethics as both "the principles of conduct governing an individual or a profession: standards of behavior," and "the discipline dealing with what is good and bad or right or wrong or with moral duty and obligation."

Writing from the perspectives of diverse disciplines, those who address the topic of ethics often reflect one or the other of these orientations. From a philosophical perspective, Frankena (1963, p. 3) stresses the moral dimension, suggesting that ethics is the way we think about "morality, moral problems, and moral judgments" philosophically. From an organizational standpoint, ethics has been viewed as "the right actions of individuals" (Drucker, 1981, p. 35) which may be concerned either "with rules of interpersonal conduct" or with personal traits that will presumably assure "a genuinely good human life. . . ." (Gellermann, et. al., 1990, pp. 41-42). In the field of communication, Johannesen (1990, p. 1) contributes the following definition: "Ethics denotes the general and systematic study of what ought to be the grounds and principles for right and wrong behavior," thereby uniting the standards and moral components of Webster's definition. "To be moral," Purdy (1994, p. 38) argues, "our actions should stem from moral awareness and include the greatest good for the greatest number, concern for long-term effect on others, empathy for others and their situation."

To varying degrees these definitions explicitly emphasize individual behavior in relation to actions that are good, right, and moral. Implicitly, however, is the underlying assumption that we can determine fundamental standards of good, right, and moral behaviors in the first place that will, in turn, govern our own behaviors as well as our interactions with others.

The difficulty in deriving standard behaviors, as we see it, is two-fold. First, diverse disciplines have distinct perspectives. The social psychologist, for example, may emphasize perception and motivation for understanding behavior. The anthropologist, in contrast, may stress cultural influences governing action. The sociologist may focus on the effects of role, status, education, ethnicity, and class, while the linguist may explore how language and culture are mutually shaped, reinforced and expressed. Deutsch (1991) and Wedge (1987) caution that because

individuals bring the orientation of their own discipline to bear on a subject, there are, it appears, as many different perspectives on the study of communication processes and issues as there are disciplines that study it. If we are seeking "standards," we might then ask: Which perspectives ought prevail? To what extent do, or should, all of these perspectives be emphasized?

The second difficulty in deriving standards is that the heavy reliance on other disciplines as foundational to our own may have deleterious effects on what we embrace and teach as "effective" communication. In virtually every major text in such areas as interpersonal communication, gender and communication, nonverbal communication, intercultural communication, and conflict management, the authors draw heavily on research outside the discipline to define, explain, and support their conclusions about what constitutes appropriate and effective verbal and nonverbal communication. Obviously, when any discipline depends heavily on the research issues, methodologies and findings of other fields, it runs the risk of accepting and teaching as normative or "standard" the behaviors identified, defined, and described by these disciplines, which may, themselves, be fraught with ethical controversies of their own.

The authors of the article about the psychiatric manual introduced at the beginning of this paper argue that "the book is still a travesty," in part because "the new revision sanctifies the questionable expansions of the manual that have taken place since 1980," in part because the book "applies no coherent standard of what (behavior) constitute a mental disorder" (Kirk and Kutchins, 1994, p. A17). If we fail to scrutinize and challenge what we have inherited via other disciplines and have adopted as the basis for our own study of communication, if we have no "coherent standards" governing our academic borrowings, we risk erecting a formidable barrier to the "systematic study" of our field, thus to the establishment of viable communication standards.

Perhaps no area in our discipline has received more attention in recent years regarding determining right and wrong behavior and establishing standards than the communication scripts that have been written for women and men. In the following sections we turn to an examination of the problems inherent in teaching these scripts whilst simultaneously trying to determine standards for communication.

THE IMPETUS FOR DICHOTOMIZING BEHAVIOR

Susan Sontag (1992, p. 213) has noted that "What is most beautiful in virile men is something feminine; what is most beautiful in feminine women is something masculine." Sontag's observation alludes to the emotional tapestry of women and men. It acknowledges, moreover, that men and women ought embody the best qualities of both sexes. Embedded in her words, however, is

the assumption of difference and of contrasting behavior: "virile" men and "feminine" women do not act in the same way; while the feminization of men and the masculinization of women will offer each a presumably more desirable existence, it is implied that a "natural" bipolarity will ensure that some differences will remain.

Looking at the world and at behavior in bipolar terms reflects a legacy that can be traced at least as far back as the Pythagorean Brotherhood of the Fifth Century B.C., which embodied their dualism in ten sets of opposites: the limited and the unlimited, the one and the many, odd and even, right and left, male and female, good and bad, motion and rest, light and darkness, square and oblong, and straight and curved (Wilden, 1987, pp. 3-4). If gender was not central to the Pythagoreans, its centrality was soon to be established by the Christians, in whom, according to Foucault, sexuality became "the seismograph of our subjectivity" (1985, p. 368).

While history undoubtedly has shaped our tendency to view the world in terms of opposites, this tendency also has influenced our concept of ethics. That is to say, we seek, as the aforementioned definitions tell us, what is good and bad, proper and improper, appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Furthermore, if a basic premise of ethics includes deriving "standards" for this behavior, we are forced to question in the first place our propensity for, and the effects of, dichotomizing behavior in order to identify, define and assign behavioral standards.

The identification, definition and assignment of behavioral norms often is played out in courses where the communication scripts for men and women are examined. If the goal of these classes extends beyond teaching the history of gendered communication to include as well how students may become more proficient in scrutinizing, criticizing and enhancing their own behavior, it is important to examine how dividing practices in general serve as bases for valuing behavior, how gender studies may serve to reinforce this division, and how instructional practices may form barriers to arriving at behavioral "standards."

HOW DIVIDING PRACTICES LEAD TO A POWER DIFFERENTIAL IN HOW WE REGARD GENDERED BEHAVIOR

It is difficult to think about masculine and feminine behaviors without simultaneously conjuring the sex-trait and sex-role stereotypes that accompany these behaviors. Despite the fact that much has been written identifying other attributes that ought be equally valued and encouraged in women's and men's communication ("empathy," "cooperation," "sensitivity," "effective listening," and "assertiveness"), a legacy of literature argues that we persist in using bi-polar terms to characterize men as "adventurous," "dominant," "forceful," "independent," "masculine," and "strong-willed" and women as

"emotional," "passive," "dependent," "sentimental," "submissive," "feminine," and "nurturing" (Aries, 1987; Arliss, 1991; Bem and Bem 1974; Bem, 1993; Borisoff, 1993; Borisoff and Merrill, 1992; Broverman, et. al., 1970; Pearson, et. al., 1991; Powell, 1988; Stewart, et. al., 1990; Wood, 1994).

We also persist in linking these characteristics to diverse contexts so that stereotypical male or female behavior becomes the presumed norm in different situations. One of those norms concerns appropriate communication in organizational settings, which has traditionally been determined by masculine behaviors. Another norm concerns appropriate communication in intimate relationships, traditionally predicated on feminine modes of expression. Thus, the "standards" for communicative behavior in these public and private domains, as well as our ethical stance toward these behaviors, have decidedly privileged whichever sex has been culturally assigned primary responsibility for each particular environment.

Implicit in dividing and privileging behavior according to gender lines is that this behavior, in turn, becomes the "standard" or "norm" against which "other" or "different" behavior is then measured. Through such comparisons, the normative behavior for a particular context acquires a kind of power or importance that seemingly may be impervious to challenge or change.

Fundamental to how this power is exerted is how individuals allow themselves to become subject to, or the object of, power in the first place. In trying to think about this topic, we have been especially influenced by the writing of Michel Foucault, most of whose works are devoted to questions of power. Briefly stated, Foucault identifies three different modes by which humans are made subjects.

The first mode of objectification may be called "dividing practices": "In this process of social objectification and categorization, human beings are given both a social and a personal identity. Essentially 'dividing practices' are modes of manipulation that combine the mediation of a science (or pseudo-science) and the practice of exclusion--usually in a spatial sense, but always in a social one" (Rabinow, 1984, p. 8). In this mode the "dividing" is done by the actions of the culture, the society, the government, etc., acting primarily upon the mores of the group.

"The second mode for turning human beings into objectified subjects is related to, but independent from, the first. Let us call it 'scientific classification.' It arises from 'the modes of inquiry which try to give themselves the status of sciences; for example, the objectivizing of the speaking subject in *grammaire generale*, philology, and linguistics . . . (or) the objectivizing of the productive subject, the subject who labors, in the analysis of wealth and of economics. Or . . . the objectivizing of the sheer fact of being alive in natural history

or biology'" (Rabinow, 1984, pp. 8-9). In short, "science" may initiate, lay the groundwork for, or reinforce the "dividing practices" of a society.

The third mode, called "subjectification," concerns the "way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject" and has to do with "those techniques through which the (person) initiates an active self-formation. This self-formation has a long and complicated genealogy; it takes place through a variety of 'operations on people's own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct'" (Rabinow, 1984, p. 11).

Clearly, "objectification" and "subjectification" are related. The objectifications of the culture, reinforced by accepted sciences, provide the cultural and intellectual bases for subjectification, the process by which individuals come to accept, perhaps even rejoice in, the dividing practices which ultimately help create them.

While we are used to seeing individuals as both subjects and objects, Foucault does not make this distinction. Rather, he says, "There are two meanings of the word **subject**, subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his (sic) own identity by a conscience of self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to" (Foucault, p. 212). Objectification "subjects" us to others; subjectification "subjects" us to others more obliquely, through convincing us that we are, and ought be, subjects of such and such a kind.

And what does Foucault say we can do about this sorry state of affairs? Not much; that is to say, he does not say much about it, actively eschewing the role of reformer. But on one occasion he did suggest that "Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and to build up what we could be . . . The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state's institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries" (Foucault, p. 215).

If we may be permitted to translate Foucault into the general question of "standards for gendered behavior" and the resultant power that flows from these standards, it would seem that the first step would be to fight to alter the power relations by denying the "dividing practices" which divide women from men, and second, when the practices can not be denied (childbirth is an example), denying that the practices are or ought be reasons for power divisions. To accomplish these changes, as feminists have been saying for a long time, we have not only to eliminate the formal mechanisms by which power is divided, but eliminate the

self-formation practices of both women and men by which we all turn ourselves into subjects, and eventually into victims.

The dilemma in extricating ourselves from the processes of objectification and subjectification as articulated by Foucault stems, in part, from the fact that once behaviors become entrenched, or in the "groove of habit" which Hall calls culture (1981, p. 187), they constitute, according to Jean Lipman-Blumen, "the prevailing 'truth' which, in turn, becomes a justification of the dominant group's hegemony" (1994, p. 110). These behaviors become, then, the bases for determining standards for ethical action.

This "prevailing truth" is the fundamental issue for those who see gender valuation differences as a consequence of Foucault's contention that power flows from division. That is, until there is division there is no need for power; once division is achieved, power is inevitable and becomes legitimized.

According to Sandra Bem (1993, pp. 2-5) this "legitimate power," insofar as it applies to our expectations for and valuation of gendered behavior, has been fueled by the acceptance of biological sex differences (or "biological essentialism") as justifications for dichotomizing gendered behavior and roles (or "gender polarization"). Once this division is firmly embedded and the roles, along with the "correct" behaviors for these roles, are established, we are apt to embrace unchallenged these behaviors. We are apt to perpetuate and reinforce them in the classroom. If part of our responsibility as "ethical" educators includes the continual scrutiny of "what ought to be the grounds and principles for right and wrong behavior" (Johannesen, 1990, p. 1) we are compelled, as the next section suggests, to consider the extant "standards" for gendered communication and how studies on gender often reinforce the standards that divide rather than unite us.

HOW DIVIDING PRACTICES LEADS TO PRIVILEGING GENDERED COMMUNICATION IN PROFESSIONAL AND INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

The division of the worlds of work and home has been attributed to the Industrial Revolution. One consequence of this division has been to accept as "standard" the communication styles of whichever sex has assumed primary responsibility over each of these domains. We hasten to point out that while the Industrial Revolution was not the sole cause of the distinct styles of men's and women's communication, the division of responsibility according to sex created a climate that allowed each style to become self-perpetuating. Thus the world of work, fashioned after male modes of behavior, became characterized by aggression, competition, independence, action, etc. (Berryman-Fink and Eman-Wheless, 1987; Davis, 1992; Powell, 1988). Conversely, the domestic sphere and modes of behavior appropriate for personal affiliation became associated with women's ways of communication and was characterized by sensitivity, nurturance, affiliation,

empathy, cooperation, self-disclosure, etc. (Beck, 1988; Borisoff, 1993; Chelune, et. al., 1984; Duck, 1991; Hatfield and Rapson, 1993; Rubin, 1983; Wood and Inman, 1993).

The division of roles according to sex and the concomitant acceptance of the communication behaviors that have become associated with these roles have undergone reevaluations in recent decades, thereby presenting a special challenge for those who teach gender and communication in the college classroom. As ethical teachers and scholars, we ought raise two fundamental issues. First, to what extent do we, ourselves, accept as normative the communication skills required for diverse contexts? Second, we need to scrutinize our acceptance and interpretation of extant research on gender and communication and acknowledge how studies on gender often reinforce and perpetuate the "dividing practices" to which Foucault alludes. We turn to an examination of these two issues.

1. The assumption of contextually-based normative behavior.

The acceptance and acknowledgement of "standard" or "appropriate" behavior in organizational settings and in intimate relationships poses an ethical dilemma for educators who teach about gender and communication. The assumption of standards is divisive because it leads to the presumption that those who do not conform to these standards, whether for biological, social, or cultural reasons, are somehow deficient. Our culture's traditional division by sex of work and domestic spheres and the roles subsumed by these spheres unwittingly subjects women and men to the dividing practices described by Foucault (Rabinow, 1984).

In the workplace, this division traditionally has presumed that men's communicative behavior inherently is appropriate, and, therefore, superior to women's communicative behavior in this context. This presumption, in turn, devalues women's communicative styles in this context as both less powerful and inferior. This clash of values has been a major concern to researchers in the fields of communication, linguistics, psychology and sociology, who, over the past three decades, have argued that women's ways of communicating reflect strategies of powerlessness, coping, and silence (Aries, 1987; Bem, 1993; Deaux and Major, 1990; Henley, 1977; Johnson, 1983; Kramarae, 1981; LaFrance and Henley, 1994; Lakoff, 1975, 1990; Radtke and Stam, 1994; Spender, 1985; West and Zimmerman, 1983; Zimmerman and West, 1975). This clash has been acknowledged as well by writers about management, who found that women's entry into the work force--particularly their entry into positions traditionally dominated by men--often was met with innumerable and insurmountable obstacles (Allis, 1990; Blau and Ferber, 1986; Borisoff and Merrill, 1992; Harlan and Weiss, 1982; Kanter, 1981; Morrison, et. al. 1987; Powell, 1988; Stewart and Ting-Toomey, 1987).

Consistent in these, and in innumerable other works addressing

women's roles and success in the work place, has been the admonition that somehow women ought adapt their behavior to the male norm either minimally (the "difference" hypothesis, Johnson, 1983) or maximally (the "deficit" hypothesis, Henley, 1977; Johnson, 1983; Lakoff, 1975). While the androgynous model of communication as articulated by Bem (1974) identified qualities of male and female behavior that belonged inherently to neither sex but which were, rather, human qualities that both men and women could embrace (e.g., assertiveness, emotionality, independence, intellectual commitment, and warmth), the burden of changing fell largely to women.

The same "dividing practices" (Rabinow, 1984) that separate our assumptions about men's and women's contributions to the work place apply to our traditional assessments of intimate relationships. In this instance, however, men's styles of communication are devalued; the feminine stereotype for valuing relationships and communicating are the norm. Those studying intimacy concur that developing and sustaining intimate relationships is a process that is predicated on the partner's ability to self-disclose in a trusting environment and to communicate openly and supportively (Acitelli and Duck, 1987; Beck, 1988; Chelune, et. al., 1984; Duck, 1991; Hatfield, 1982; Hatfield and Rapson, 1993).

The extent to which women and men can negotiate comfortably their intimate relationships is at least partially influenced by how they are socialized. The ability to self-disclose and to communicate openly and supportively (through active listening, using paralinguistic cues and nonverbal gestures for conversational maintenance, and by encouraging reciprocity) conform to the sex-role and sex-trait stereotypes for women. These traits are consistent with behavior that nurtures, that supports, that reveals rather than conceals. It is no surprise, then, that "(m)odern tradition dictates that women should be the 'intimacy experts'" (Hatfield and Rapson, 1993, p. 158) and that in communication courses, men are encouraged to adapt their behavior to the feminine "norm." By incorporating the feminine style of interaction into their behavior, men, presumably, will become more proficient at "expressing" intimacy effectively.

As a discipline that seeks to identify, define, study and teach contextually-based appropriate communication, we face an ethical dilemma when we subscribe to "standards" for communication, be they in professional or personal domains. We become vulnerable when we encourage groups of individuals to adopt the behavior of other groups. The works that address gender and communication in the work place and in intimate relationships argue that adaptation alone does not necessarily guarantee success. When women enter positions traditionally defined by and assigned to men, they often are faced with the conflict of trying to conform to one set of expectations in the professional environment whilst also striving to meet the equally compelling "expectancy sets" (Bruner, 1958) that we have for them in their assigned sex-trait

and sex-role stereotypes for being feminine. Putnam (1983 calls this a "double bind." Similarly, when men endeavor to conform to the type of self-disclosure that is the preferred characteristic for intimacy, that is, to feminine behavior, they are challenging the conventional view of masculinity that "holds that disclosing . . . problems is a sign of weakness, that men shouldn't need help or show vulnerability, and that men shouldn't talk about their feelings" (Pleck, 1990, p. 10).

Teaching students to adopt the communication strategies of the other sex does not necessarily serve our students in good stead. Not only does teaching them to do so reflect the tacit acceptance of the superiority of the behavior which one is adopting, it also perpetuates the divisive cultural values which created the differing strategies in the first place. How, then, can we begin to effect cultural change on a fundamental level, to rewrite the communication scripts of women and men in their everyday professional and personal relationships?

2. Perspectives on how research can be re-conceptualized and re-interpreted.

If we are to effect a shift in the cultural values that are basic to how we view and act with and toward others, we have to resist the dividing practices in which our power structures are rooted (Rabinow, 1984). To do this, we must refrain from using gender as the basic determinant for defining and valuing differences. Men should not be the presumed arbiters of communication standards in the work place. Nor should we ascribe to women's style of communication the preferred traits for communication in intimate relationships.

How can we facilitate a climate that embraces inclusion rather than exclusion, that values differences as well as similarities? What conditions need to be present to allow for change? While "the obviousness of a person's sex in most instances makes it very likely to influence implicit assumptions," gender identity need not necessarily serve as the essential criterion for sustaining beliefs and evaluating others (Deaux and Major, 1990, p. 95). Moreover, while the literature on gender and communication acknowledges that patterns of gender differences in the verbal and nonverbal communication styles of women and men are still evident, of special significance to our understanding of communication in professional settings and in intimate relationships is what we make of these findings (Aries, 1987; Baker, 1991; Bem, 1993; Deaux and Major, 1990; LaFrance and Henley, 1994; Powell, 1988).

Much of the extant research focuses on a single behavior or on a selected number of behaviors. The conclusions uncovered often then are generalized to a variety of situations, contexts and relationships. Aries (1987) maintains that these generalizations may be inaccurate: "When researchers focus on a single behavior, or even a selected number of behaviors, the total impression

conveyed at a particular moment by a speaker through all available channels becomes distorted. In most studies, the motives, intentions, and expectations of the communicators are not systematically studied" (p. 170).

The danger inherent in making gender-based assumptions that are based on single-situation or single-context studies is that this behavior(s), or behavioral difference(s), often becomes incorporated into our assumptions about men's and women's actions. Such generalizations may influence our "expectancy set" for gendered behavior. Such generalizations may perpetuate "dividing" behavior by sex that is unwarranted or unsubstantiated. Often, "These characteristics are not possessed exclusively by either sex, but are used by the two sexes with different frequencies" (Aries, 1987, p. 170).

Two often-cited examples of gendered behavior drawn from the research on men's and women's styles of communication include patterns of interruption and self-disclosure. A brief examination of how each of these behaviors have been examined illustrates how we may begin to refocus and revalue gendered communication.

"One of the most disputed interaction patterns," according to Borisoff and Merrill (1992, p, 36), "is the interruption." Authors of recent texts on gender and communication concur that individuals engaged in conversation do not want to feel ignored, silenced, muted, or to have their contributions diminished (Arliss, 1991; Borisoff and Merrill, 1992; Pearson, et. al., 1991; Stewart, et. al., 1990; Wood, 1994). These writers also agree that research findings on patterns of and explanations for interrupting behavior are contradictory.

Much research has substantiated that regardless of status, context and relationship, women are more frequently interrupted than are men (Beck, 1988; Eakins and Eakins, 1978; Mulac, et. al., 1988; Spender, 1985; West and Zimmerman, 1975, 1977). But other findings report no difference in the frequency patterns of interruptions of men and women (Dindia, 1987; Kennedy and Camden, 1983).

Also debated is the attribution of intent for interrupting. Several researchers contend that women employ interruptions as a means of conversational maintenance to indicate interest and support, while men interrupt others as a means of conversational control (Aries, 1987; Mulac, et. al., 1988; Stewart, et. al., 1990). Other scholars, however, offer a different interpretation for why interruptions occur. Dindia (1987), for example, suggests that interruptions occur because opposite-sex conversations may be more awkward than same-sex interaction. She therefore compares interruptions in these instances to conversational overlaps rather than to direct attempts at dominance. Also proposed as an explanation for why men may interrupt others more frequently and take up more speaking time is

that they are more uncomfortable with silence than are women (Tannen, 1990).

A final problem with determining interruption patterns and their motivation stems from a lack of research in this area on same-sex dyads, which, Arliss (1991) contends, may be due to the presumption of symmetry among same-sex partners and/or to a lack of research interest in studying same-sex interaction. Yet, she suggests: "(I)t seems important to be able to contrast qualitative findings on cross-sex interruption with qualitative findings on same-sex interruption. . . . Knowledge of distinctive patterns according to sex composition of the dyad is necessary to draw valid conclusions about the effect of interruptions on status and vice versa" (1991, p. 63). We would add to Arliss' suggestion by contending that it may also be significant to look at interruption patterns in dyads over time. Research findings conducted among relative strangers, or among colleagues or partners at one point in a relationship, may report findings which serve to perpetuate stereotypes and value-laden assumptions about gender traits and roles even if these assumptions are inaccurate. The association of interrupting patterns with gender, power and dominance has undoubtedly contributed to expectations for and assumptions about women's roles and effectiveness for leadership positions in the work place. Yet, as Aries has posited, "These gender differences . . . are not absolute across situations, and are greatly reduced or even reversed in some contexts" (1987, p. 170).

Patterning of interruption is only one example of the articulated gender differences reported on in the extant books and chapters on gender and communication. But this example illustrates how very careful we must be when assuming communication patterns, attributing intent to these patterns, and when selecting populations to study. We also would caution that as our population becomes increasingly diverse, the infusion of distinct cultural influences may well come to inform interaction patterns over time.

If forging "nurturing" roles along biological lines has presumably divided the ways in which women and men employ how we view interrupting patterns, it has similarly divided women's and men's patterns and interpretations of self-disclosure in intimate relationships. Hatfield and Rapson (1993) contend that in Western culture men "still fail to take (intimacy) seriously enough to learn about it or develop techniques to aid in gaining a measure of it. Indeed, for many men, 'intimacy' only means 'sex.' Anything else seems . . . exotic, or even 'a woman's thing'" (p. 133). Implicit in their contention is an androcentric orientation which constrains men from crossing gender boundaries.

Hatfield and Rapson's observation that men devalue intimacy or see it as not their concern may be misleading. Men may not so much intend to devalue intimacy as to avoid deprecation in how

they view themselves or how they are viewed by others as a result of conforming to the type of self-disclosure that is the preferred characteristic for intimacy--that is, to feminine behavior. Thus, as Rubin (1983) has asserted, the basic difference in self-disclosure between women and men may not be a function of quantity, but, rather, a function of content. She suggests that men disclose views and attitudes; women reveal feelings and fears. This contention, like those related to gender differences in interruption patterns, is fraught with controversy and contradictions.

Part of the dilemma with gathering empirical evidence about self-disclosure is embedded in the way self-disclosure is studied. "When a researcher is privy to the information between subjects," Arliss warns, "it cannot be considered real self-disclosure between two relationship members" (1991, p. 71). To rectify this problem, she continues, "most researchers have opted to study either self-reports . . . or recorded laboratory conversations designed to promote self-disclosure" (p. 71). Findings from these types of studies confirm that women self-disclose more than men and reveal more personal information (Cozby, 1973; Derlega and Chaikin, 1976; Gitter and Black, 1976; Morgan, 1976). These findings, however, may be reflective of the interaction setting itself; that is, these studies took place in a setting amenable to self-disclosing affective information, that is, to a feminine style of intimacy.

While the texts on interpersonal communication that include chapters on intimacy acknowledge gender differences in romantic relationships,² they accept the feminine style for self-disclosure as the norm. The feminine script becomes, in turn, the "standard" taught in communication classes. This "standard," Wood and Inman (1993) argue, ignores the masculine ways for expressing closeness, which, research suggests, emerge from shared activities (Duck, 1988, 1991; Helgeson, et. al., 1987; Rubin, 1993; Swain, 1989).

As long as closeness "is defined exclusively or primarily by typically feminine behaviors such as self-disclosure, it is pre-given that women will be found more skilled than men" (Wood and Inman, 1993, p. 285). "To persist in dismissing ways of interacting that men seem to prefer and to excel in," Wood and Inman conclude, "impoverishes understanding of human communication" (1993, p. 291).

Much as feminist scholarship has argued that women's styles of communication could contribute positively to the work sphere and could expand our notion of effective communication in that arena, arguably we might consider how men's modes of communication and the content of their communication could inform our understanding of effective communication in intimate interaction. Rather than urging men to conform to women's modes of expression (the "deficit" hypothesis in reverse) Wood and Inman suggest that we ought refrain from defining, accepting and testing intimate bonds

solely in terms of a feminine framework. Rather than perpetuating the biological dividing practices (Rabinow, 1984) that fuel valuing "expressive communication (as constituting) intimacy while joint activities are dismissed as impersonal" (Wood and Inman, 1993, p. 290) we may begin to examine how shared experiences may affect closeness.

This examination of the extant research on patterns of interruption and self-disclosure and the controversies surrounding these behaviors brings into sharp focus the challenge confronting those who teach gender and communication. It underscores the problems we face when trying to arrive at "standards" for behavior. It challenges, as well, our responsibility in the classroom. In the final section, we explore some of these challenges.

THE CLASSROOM SETTING AS A POTENTIAL FOR RE-EVALUATING AND CHANGING HOW WE TEACH GENDER AND COMMUNICATION

Those of us who are communication educators would probably agree that we have an obligation to inspire, inform, challenge, mentor and prepare our students for their futures. We have a responsibility to perform these functions, moreover, in an appropriate classroom environment, which, drawing from Johannesen's (1990) traits for "ethical dialogical attitudes," may be characterized by "authenticity," "inclusion," "confirmation," "presentness," "spirit of mutual equality," and a "supportive climate" (pp. 58-64).

The topic of gender and communication poses a special challenge to accomplishing our obligation as educators and to fulfilling these obligations within an environment that reflects "ethical dialogical attitudes." As we examine these challenges, we demonstrate how they may create barriers to arriving at "standards" for communication and how we may begin to break down these barriers.

First, the role of the professor. Part of the professor's responsibility is to inform, to educate students. This presumes a certain level of competency and expertise on the part of the educator, and, in addition, the availability of materials to provide adequate instruction. For professors teaching specific courses on gender and communication, the five texts published since 1990 (Arliss, 1991; Borisoff and Merrill, 1992; Pearson, et. al., 1991; Stewart, et. al., 1990; Wood, 1994) provide, with varying degrees of emphasis and complexity, the possible causes for and differences in the ways women and men communicate. In several texts, differences are situated in diverse interaction settings and relationship levels. Those who rely on these texts, and this is especially significant for faculty for whom gender and communication is not their primary area of research, must be ever-vigilant to continually emerging studies that support and at times contradict the studies reported in these texts. Need for such awareness is especially crucial when the topic of gender is

treated as a unit, or is subsumed in texts that address other topics in the communication discipline, where often the behavioral styles of men and women can, at best, be covered only superficially.

Regardless of the depth with which the topic of gender is addressed in the communication classroom, the professor must simultaneously be aware of the tendency in our culture to dichotomize, to divide behavior according to male and female as the previous sections suggested.

There are three major problems with the propensity to dichotomize behavior. First, studies which focus on how women and men differ in their behavior emphasize and perpetuate this division. Aries (1987) warns against generalizing these differences across relationships and interaction settings. Second, such studies often ignore, thereby diminishing, shared commonalities between these two groups. Women and men, Wood (1992) contends, share personal and social goals, desires and needs. "When attention rivets on differences, however, commonalities between and divergencies within the sexes are obscured. Such imbalance threatens to distort understandings of ourselves, each other, and human communication" (p. 10). Wood's allusion to the differences within the sexes is the third dilemma created by our tendency to dichotomize, for it presumes that all women and all men embrace the same goals, needs and behaviors. Often ignored are the effects of such factors as culture, ethnicity, education, class, sexual orientation, age, etc. on individuals. Those who teach gender and communication must be sensitive to the factors that separate and unite all women and all men and the theories currently offered and debated for how we interpret these factors (e.g., biological essentialism, androcentrism, poststructuralism, standpoint theory, etc.).

While addressing the causes for, manifestations of, and valuation of gender and communication from a conceptual framework, the professor simultaneously has an obligation to prepare students for the world they will face. What ought be our valuation for behavioral differences, similarities and expectations of women and men is not necessarily understood or valued in the professions our students pursue or in the personal lives they are expected to or want to lead.

The academic teaching gender and communication may appreciate the need to break down the stereotyped gendered communication "standards" in personal and professional domains that have resulted from dividing and assigning these domains according to sex. But many bosses and companies who hire our graduates do not necessarily share this view. Many families do not share this view. Indeed, many of our own students do not share this perspective either. Perhaps the best we can do is to expose students to what has shaped our current understanding and interpretation of gender and communication. While we are not in a position to grade the quality of their lives, we can assess

their grasp of this legacy.

More importantly, perhaps, is our own recognition as educators that what we are teaching reflects a moment in time. The communication "standards" we teach today reflect contemporary Utopian thought of what ought be embraced. What we teach as the best way today may tomorrow be perceived as flawed.

Evidence of this shift in viewpoint has been documented on women's styles of communication in the work place. In a study on social interaction between women and men, for example, Preisler (1986) found that women used tentative language more than did men. In contrast to Lakoff's (1975) conclusion that this communication strategy belies powerlessness, and that women ought adapt their communication to the more direct mode of men's communication (communication adaptation), Preisler urges that we reassess how we value this communication strategy (value accommodation). Preisler suggests that tentativeness provides "an atmosphere of open-mindedness, flexibility and respect for each other. . . ." (p. 294). Such an atmosphere, we might add, closely resembles the supportive communication climate which Gibb (1961) posited as a facilitator of conflict management and resolution. Jelinek and Adler (1988) come to a similar conclusion about valuing women's communication styles. They suggest that women's effectiveness in interpersonal communication may prepare them especially well for dealing in business settings abroad.

We are at a point now, as Wood and Inman (1993) suggest, of allowing for similar kinds of re-evaluations of masculine expressions of closeness. Thus we are reluctant to advocate the pursuit of "standards" for gendered communication, for these "standards," it seems, are mutable and are continually evolving.

In a provocative article entitled "The Nature of Symbolic Interactionism," Herbert Blumer (1969/1979) criticizes the rigid adherence to cultural norms and values for defining and justifying interaction. Sociological schemes, Blumer contends, uphold the view that the established order, which we call culture, prescribes and regulates how members of that culture ought behave. While Blumer's article does not specifically address gender, we note that prescriptions for "feminine" and "masculine" behavior as well as for "professional" and "nurturing" behavior are implicit in these schemes. Important to our understanding of how prescribed behavior may be altered is Blumer's argument that cultural norms are not immutable; they ought not be the exclusive factors in governing behavior. Blumer believes that what we accept as the "norm" needs continually to be scrutinized and negotiated: "New situations are constantly arising within the scope of group life that are problematic and for which existing rules are inadequate. . . . Such areas of unprescribed conduct are just as natural, indigenous, and recurrent in human group life as are those areas covered by pre-established and faithfully followed prescriptions of joint

action" (p. 117). These "new situations," he maintains, "may be challenged as well as affirmed, allowed to slip along without concern as well as subjected to infusions of new vigor" (p. 118). The cultural values for roles and behaviors may change and grow only when these "new situations" are not governed by existing norms, but are allowed to inform current rules and create new ones: "It is the social process in group life that creates and upholds the rules, not the rules that create and uphold group life" (Blumer, 1969/1979, p. 118).

Blumer argues that symbiotic interactionism allows for difference. Implied in his argument is that rules for behavior are not rigid; they are open to scrutiny, which allows for new modes of behavior to emerge. For too long, it seems, the tendency to uphold men's styles of communication in the work place and women's styles of communication in personal relationships have decidedly privileged one or the other sex while simultaneously marginalizing the behavior of the other, thereby impoverishing both. Karlene Faith (1994) reminds us that "(t)he anarchic impulse in both Foucault and strands of feminism converge in a world whereby Authority and Truth are abandoned, and such a world can be reached only to the extent, to paraphrase Foucault, that subjugated groups find their voices and insurrect or generate their knowledges" (p. 62).

Essentially what we have argued here regarding the teaching of gender and communication, with a particular focus on the professional and intimacy domains, is that the concept of two separate sexual beings, one male, the other female, who differ not only in their anatomical features but also in their psychic and moral articulations, a viewpoint which may have emerged during the French Revolution (Simms, 1994, p. 365), should be replaced with a view of humans as one sex, articulated in either male or female form, and engaged in behaviors which are human rather than gendered . . . and that one way to "get from there to here" is to integrate the various "articulations" of the contemporary genders until their behaviors no longer are differentiated. Women and men, we have argued, are beginning to find these mutual articulations. How we choose to hear them no doubt will influence the quality of our lives in the twenty-first century.

NOTES

1. A partial list of frequently-cited scholars from the fields of anthropology, linguistics, psychology and sociology includes Elizabeth Aries, Albert Bandura, Sandra Bem, Jesse Bernard, Nancy Chodorow, Carol Gilligan, Erving Goffman, Edward Hall, Judith Hall, Elaine Hatfield, Matina Horner, William Labov, Robin Lakoff, Albert Mehrabian, Ashley Montagu, Jean Piaget, Lillian Rubin, Deborah Tannen, Carole Tavris.
2. Prior to 1990, texts on interpersonal communication did not address intimacy as a separate subject. This paper considers

only the following four post-1990 authors whose texts address comprehensively the major dimensions of intimacy: Mark Knapp, Sarah Trenholm and Arthur Jensen, Richard Weaver III, and Kittie Watson and Larry Barker.

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