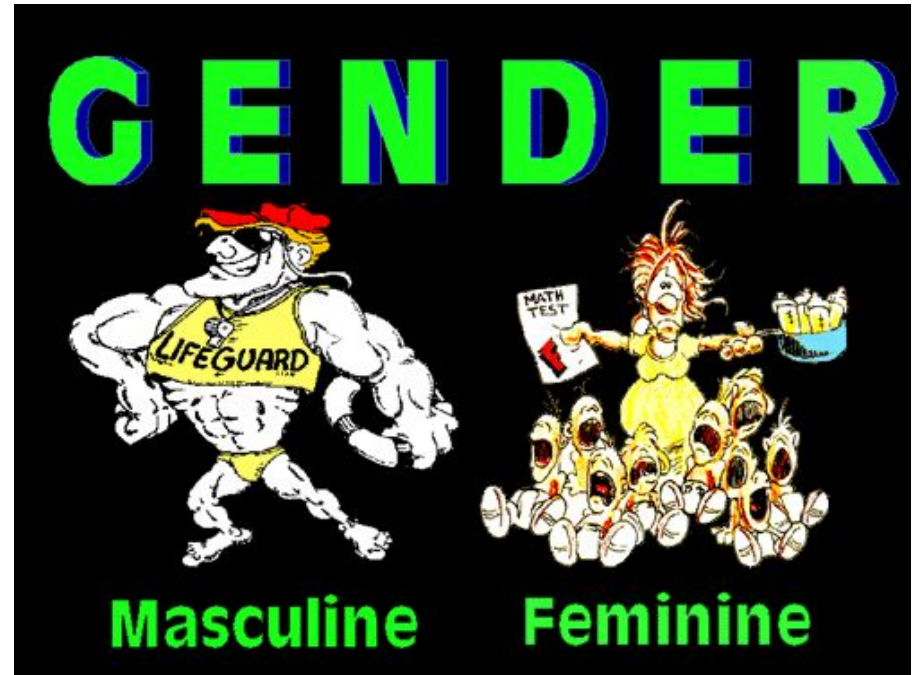


# Gender and Language



# Sex Versus Gender

- Sex refers to biological differences,
- Gender refers to the cultural construction of male and female characteristics.
- “The ways members of the two sexes are perceived, evaluated and expected to behave.”



(what different cultures make of sex.)

# *Gender Boundaries*

- We demand that the categories of male and female be discrete
- since gender is culturally constructed the boundaries are conceptual rather than physical
- the boundaries are dynamic, eg. now it is acceptable for men to wear earrings.
- Boundaries require markers to indicate gender such as:

- Voice
- Physique
- Dress
- Behaviour

- Hair style
- Kinetics
- Language use



# Gender identity

## Why is it important

How do we react when someone seems to have traits of each category?

social intercourse requires that the interacting parties know to which gender category 'the other' belongs



**Felicitia Vestvali**  
1824 - 1880

New York opera star who specialized in singing contralto "trouser roles."

# Masculine Traits

<u>Personality</u>	<u>Cognitive</u>	<u>Physical</u>
Competitive	Rational	Rugged
Daring	Analytical	Muscular
Adventurous	Problem Solving	Phys. Strong
Aggressive	Quant. Skilled	Handsome
Courageous	Good Reasoning	Phys. Vigorous
Dominant	Mathematical	Brawny

self promotion & achievement

# Feminine Traits

<u>Personality</u>	<u>Cognitive</u>	<u>Physical</u>
Affectionate	Imaginative	Cute
Sympathetic	Intuitive	Gorgeous
Gentle	Artistic	Beautiful
Sensitive	Creative	Pretty
Supportive	Expressive	Petite
Kind	Tasteful	Sexy

focus on others, community

## **Gender roles:**

- tasks and activities a culture assigns to the sexes – expected ways of behaving based on society's definition of masculine and feminine

## **Gender stereotypes:**

- oversimplified but strongly held ideas of the characteristics of men and women.

## **Gender stratification:**

- an unequal distribution of rewards (socially valued resources, power, prestige, and personal freedom) between men and women, reflecting their different positions in social hierarchy – a division in society where all members are hierarchically ranked according to gender

## **Gender ideology**

- A system of thoughts and values that legitimizes sex roles, statuses and customary behaviour



# Gender Stereotypes

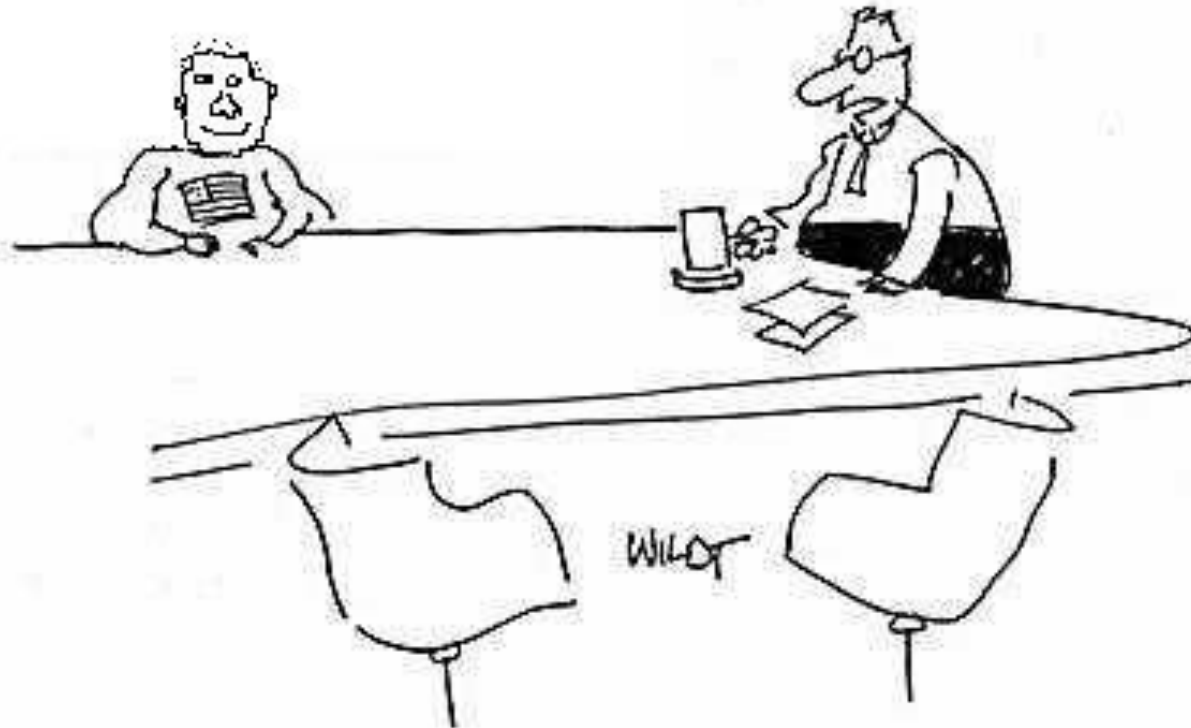
I wish for...



intelligence, logic,  
and driving skills...



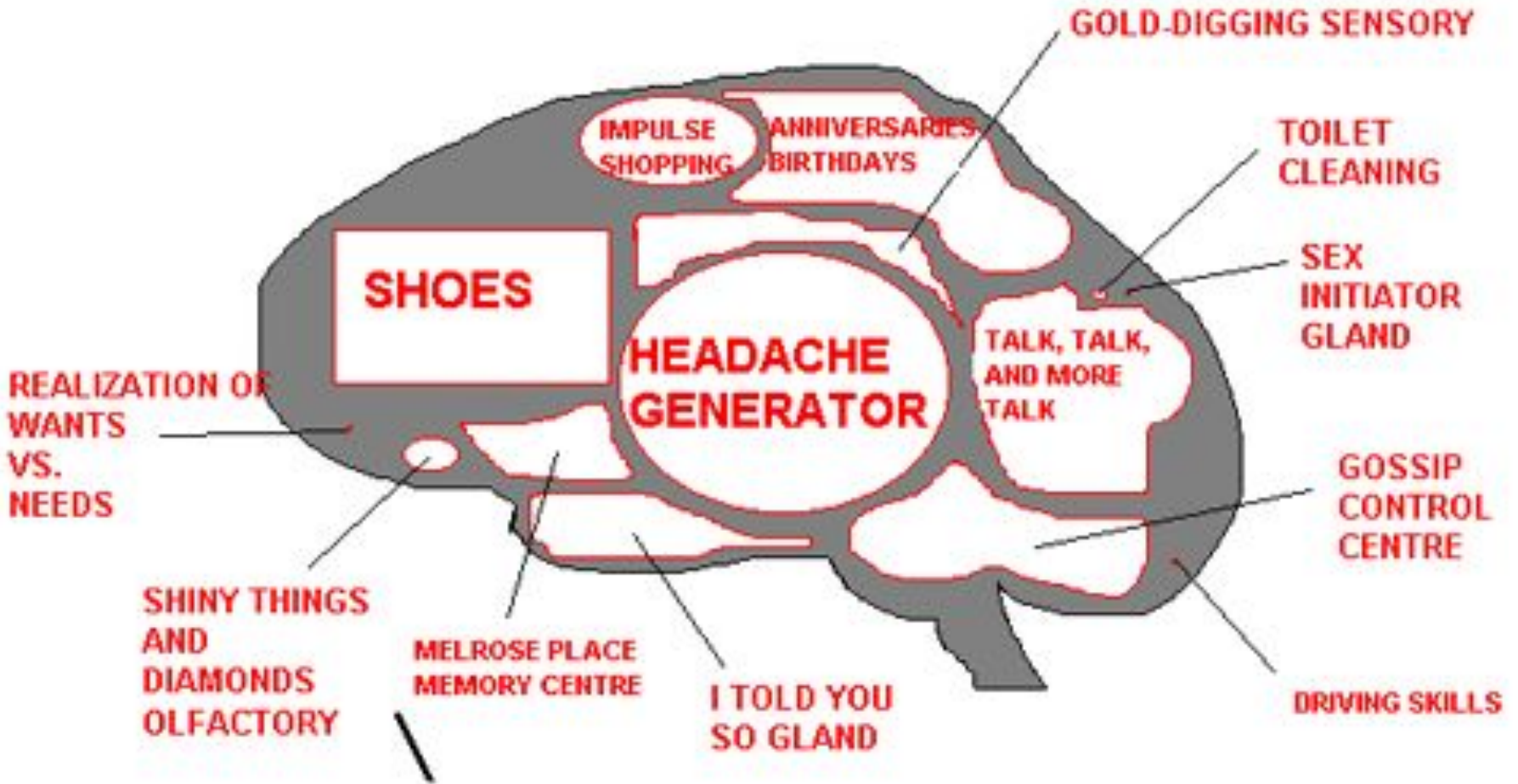




**"This meeting of The Male stereotype's Club  
is cancelled. Everyone is lost and  
won't ask for directions."**

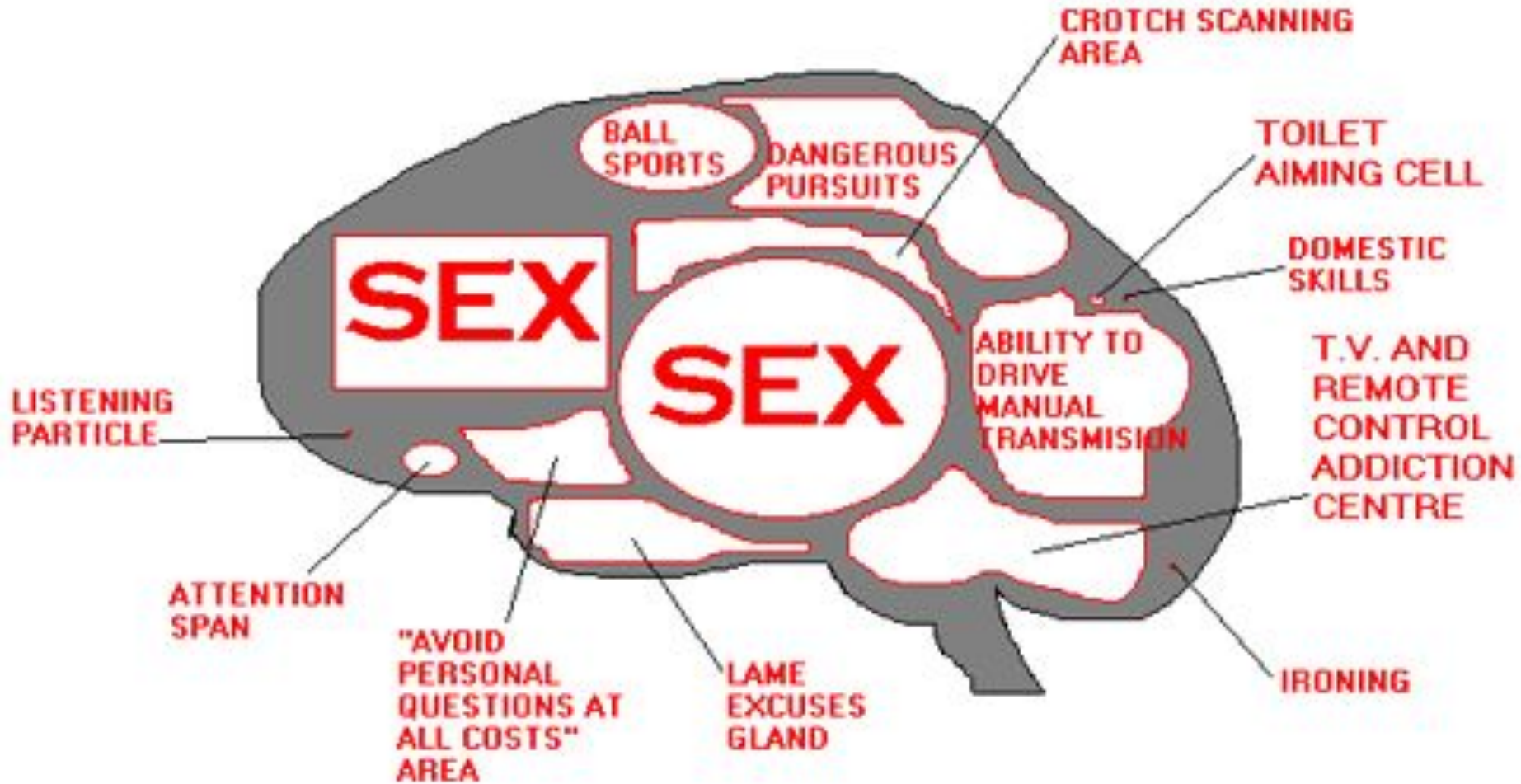
© Original Artist

# The Female Brain



FOOTNOTE: The "Put Oil into the Car" and "Be Quite During the Game" glands are active only when the "SHINY THINGS AND DIAMONDS" OLFACTORY has been satisfied or when there is a shoe sale.

# The Male Brain



**FOOTNOTE:** the "Listening to children cry in the middle of the night" gland is not shown due to it's small and underdeveloped nature. Best viewed under a microscope.



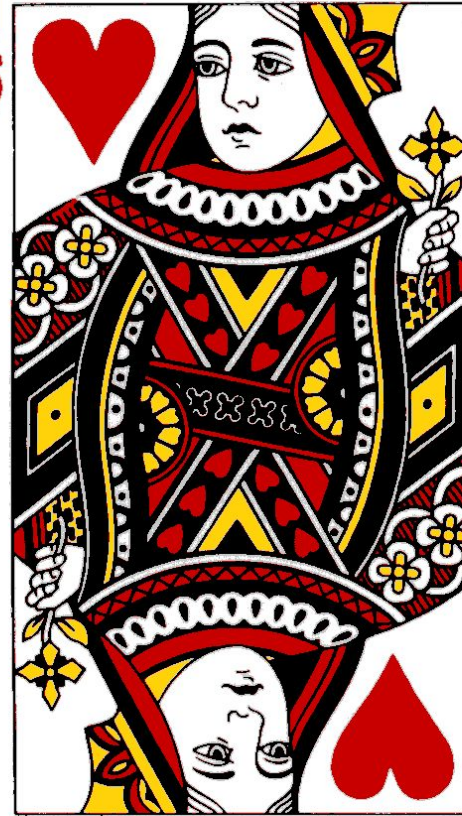
# Gender Inequality

K  
♥



♥  
K

Q  
♥



♥  
Q

- Gender is an important dimension of social inequality
- Gender stratification frequently takes the form of patriarchy whereby men dominate women

- Do women in our society have a second class status relative to men?
- If so How?
- How do we measure gender stratification?



# How do we measure gender stratification?

- Economics
- Politics
- Religion
- Legal rights
- prestige
- Autonomy
- Education
- Employment
- Health
- ideology
- How deferential they are expected to be towards men.



- We can also look at the roles played by women and the value society places on them roles
- Generally:  
Differential access to Wealth, Power, and Prestige

# Language and gender

Men and women are socialized to express themselves in different ways in accordance with cultural norms that teach and reinforce differentiated gender roles

## Three issues:

1. Do women and men speak a different language - genderlect? – Do they speak differently
2. Do women and men behave differently in conversations? – Use language differently
3. Gender bias in English



# Genderlects

What a terrific idea!

What a divine idea!



# THE CUP

1. Give me the cup
2. The Cup
3. Could you please give me the cup
4. Would you give me the cup?
5. Give me the cup, won't you
6. Can you give me the cup?
7. I can't reach that cup
8. I want that cup
9. Can you get that cup for me?
10. I need that cup



# Genderlects

Shit! You've put  
the peanut butter in  
the fridge again!

Oh dear! You've put  
the peanut butter in  
the fridge again!



**Men often use socially disfavored variants of sociolinguistic variables while women tend to avoid these in favor of socially more favored variants.**

# Phonological variations

<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>
•Runnin	running
•Less use of post-vocalic /-r/	greater use of post-vocalic /-r/
•“dis and dat””	“this and that”
•Double negation	single negation

**Gender is a factor in the choice of variant**

**-ing symbolizes female**

**What motivates boys to choose /in/ and girls /ing/  
/in/ form is used in informal settings and /ing/ in  
more formal contexts**

**The /ing/ variant therefore carries social meaning –  
i.e. it symbolizes formality**

**/ing/may also be associated with compliance and  
politeness**

**formality,  
politeness,  
compliance  
with female  
– go together**

## Grammatical Variants

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. non-standard -s        | They calls me all the names under the sun                  |
| 2. non-standard has       | You just has to do what the teachers tell you.             |
| 3. non-standard was       | You was with me, wasn't you?                               |
| 4. negative concord       | It ain't got no pedigree or nothing.                       |
| 5. non-standard never     | I never went to school today.                              |
| 6. non-standard what      | Are you the little bastards what hit my son over the head? |
| 7. non-standard do        | She cadges, she do.  |
| 8. non-standard come      | I come down here yesterday.                                |
| 9. ain't = auxiliary have | I ain't seen my Nan for nearly seven years.                |
| 10. ain't = auxiliary be  | Course I ain't going to the Avenue.                        |
| 11. ain't = copula        | You ain't no boss.   |

**Jenny Cheshire – adventure playground use. Boys used non-standard form more than girls**

# Intonation

- combination of rhythm, volume and pitch overlaying entire utterances
- In general women use a wider range of pitches and more rapid shift in volume and velocity
- In other words women talk melodically and faster than men who are more monotone and slower

**What does talking melodically and faster imply?**

**What does talking in a monotone and slower imply?**

**Melodically and faster - emotionality and natural impulses**

**Monotone and slower - control and restraint**

**This is a cultural interpretation**

**Which does our society value?**

**Masculine speech melodies can be heard to be metaphors for control**

**female speech melodies as uncontrolled**

**women's speech behaviour is negatively evaluated in relation to male norms**

**■ Women's frequent changes in pitch and volume may serve the function of attracting and holding the listeners attention**

**■ Because rising pitch is an indicator of questions some linguists believe that when women use rising pitches they are interpreted as hesitant, uncertain, and lacking assertiveness**



# Women use more tag questions than men

- Affective tags "are used not to signal uncertainty on the part of the speaker, but to indicate concern for the addressee":
  - Open the door for me, could you?
  - His portraits are quite static by comparison, aren't they?
- Affective tags are further subdivided into two kinds: softeners like the first example above, which conventionally mitigate the force of what would otherwise be an impolite demand
- facilitative tags like the second example, which invite the listener to take a conversational turn to comment on the speaker's assertion.

## Explanations for differences

- 1) Subordinate groups must be polite**
- 2) Woman's role as guardian of society's values**
- 3) Vernacular forms express machismo - men who act like women are strongly criticized, men consciously or unconsciously strive toward speech norms that reject styles associated with women ``Covert prestige`` (speaking white)**
  - because women model their behaviour on middle class styles men covertly prefer "working class" speech**
- 4) Women have less access to power and status: they 'make up' for this by their preferences for the prestige (standard) linguistic forms. This is thought to give them respect and some status.**

## **Explanations for differences**

- (5) women are more conscious of prestige norms and strive to use them because they are judged by their social self-presentation and are aware of strong social sanction if they do not conform – linguistic insecurity**
- (6) Women and men are socialized in different ways which is reflected in their language use patterns.**
- (7) women may be more status conscious than men because:**
  - society sets more standards for women and**
  - Women's typical activities do not confer status itself.**
  - Women don't want to use lower class language because of the associations made with lower class people**
- (8) Women and men have different networks which lead to women and men using different ways of speaking.**
- (9) many of the jobs available to women require standard form**

- **Women use more hedge words**
- **Use mitigation to blunt direct statement**
- **More tag questions**
- **Men and women vary in frequencies with which they use – particular sounds (pronunciation), prosodic features (intonation, velocity) grammar and choices of vocabulary. i.e. women and men use have different styles of speaking (although for the most part we speak the same)**
- **Linguistic and stylistic variations arise from, reflect and reinforce existing gender differences**
- **Gender is an aspect of identity that is enacted through speech practices**
- **careful speech by women reflects their position in a hierarchical system of gender in which they are culturally relegated to second place**

# Do Men and Women Use Language Differently?

- Who talks more?
- Who interrupts more?
- Who introduces topics?
- Who asks questions?
- Who is more supportive?



# **Men and women in conversation**

## **Who talks more?**

- **Stereotype says that women talk more than men**
- **Proverbs:**
  - **A woman's tongue wags like a lamb's tail.**
  - **Foxes are all tail and women are all tongue.**
  - **The North Sea will sooner be found wanting in water than a woman be at a loss for a word.**

## Describe the Picture?



Lucas Cranach the Elder (German, 1472-1553). Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg as St. Jerome in his Study, 1526

Men took almost 4 times as long to describe painting by Durer as women

Why?

Perhaps because women are socialized to defer to men in thier speech

“talkative” women are women who talk as much as men

Because men have more rights to talk they are not seen as talkative

In real settings men tend to be more talkative



- In Faculty meetings men talk almost 4 times longer than women
- In informal settings it was more equal



**In emotional settings who talks more?**

- In discussions of emotion men talked less – were more silent
- Why?
- Is the unwillingness to talk a means to maintain and assert power?
- By not talking men appear unemotional and rational – a good way to express control
- By being silent men control the conversation – “play by my rules”

## Who Interrupts and overlaps more?

Survey of faculty meeting	X interrupts Y	Inter-ruptions	Over-laps
% of utterances that involved interruptions and overlaps	M □ M	43%	55%
	F □ F	57%	45%
	M □ F	96%	100%
	F □ M	4%	0%

Zimmerman and West (1975)

Interruptions are violations of current speakers rights

Overlaps are errors in judgement in transitions and timing of next turn

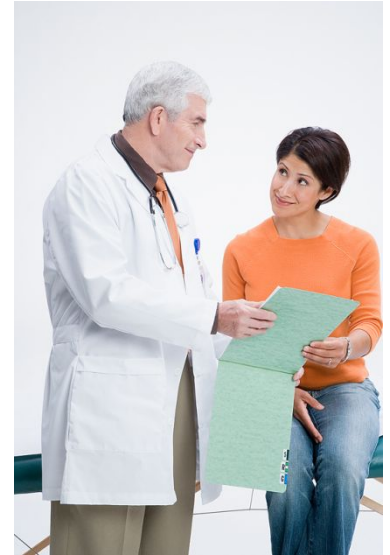
The table indicates a male exercise of power

## **Cross Sex Conversation in 5 dyads between unacquainted people**

<b>Conversation</b>	<b>Amount of Interruption</b>	
	<b>Male initiated</b>	<b>Female initiated</b>
<b>Dyad 1</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Dyad 2</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Dyad 3</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>Dyad 4</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Dyad 5</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>37%</b>

- What do interruptions do?**
- What does this table demonstrate?**
- Demonstrates a clear inequality in the rights of men and women in conversation**
- Men use mechanisms of power and control in conversations with women**
- Interruptions prevent a person from expressing themselves fully and also allow for control of the topic**
- Do these sorts of interactions contribute to women's subordination?**

# Does Status outweigh gender?



- Even in situations where the woman is in a position of power relative to the men, men still organized the interaction so that they controlled the conversation
- Men still interrupted more
- Were more successful in introducing topics
- When the women are in lower status positions they are even more vulnerable to lose control in conversations

# The work of conversation

The efforts people make to maintain a conversation

- Attention beginnings – (this is interesting – used twice as often by women
- Asking questions – to maintain conversation since a response is required
- Women asked more than twice as many
- Asking “D’ya know what?” - a ritualized question designed to continue conversation – used more than twice as often by men
- (Fishman 1983)



# The minimal response -- “umm”, “yes”, “oh”



## Who Does more of What?

**Women do more of the work of conversation**

- **What is the effect if it comes at the end of a speaker’s turn?**
- **It takes the place of a turn and discourages further conversation and expresses no interest in speaker, provides no material to build further conversation on**
- **What is the effect if it is placed within the current speaker’s turn?**
- **Signals listener interest and encourages speaker to continue**





Male

# Gender Differences in Language Use

(from Tannen video)



Female

Avoid eye contact

**1** Physical Orientation

Use eye contact

Talk for status

**2** Status & Connection

Talk for solidarity

From decision to discussion

**3** Directness & Indirectness

From discussion to decision

Talkative in public, quiet in private

**4** Public & Private Talk

Quiet in public, talkative in private

Fight for fun

**5** Ritual Opposition

May fight, but not for fun

"Trouble talk" avoided; would put status at risk

**6** Conversational Style

"Trouble talk" used to create rapport



# Turn taking behaviour in mixed sex conversations

- Turn-length: men take more and longer turns
- interruptions: mainly by men
- Silence (after speaker's turn before addressee continues): women's silence far longer
- back-channels: (e.g. um hmm, oh really?) women use more (supportive behaviour)
- questions: 70 per cent by women, e.g. as a means for topic introduction ("D'ya know what?")
- topics: men tried 29 times and succeed 28 times; women tried 47 times and succeeded 17 times
- women talk to other women about family and interpersonal matters; while men talk to male friends about cars, sports, work, motorcycles, carpentry, and politics
- women are more sensitive to social connotations of speech

# Gender Bias in English

- **Language expresses cultural models – in part through the way things are named**
- **In societies where women's roles are devalued inequalities in linguistic images are one sign of denigration**
- **By continued use of words and expressions that demean women speakers unconsciously reproduce and reinforce negative stereotypes**

**Man and woman**

**Man and wife**

**Husband and Wife**

**He and she**

**His and hers**

**Male and female**

**Father and Mother**

**Mr and Mrs**

**Bride and groom**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

**Mother and father**

**Good and evil**

**Happy and sad**

**Rich and poor**

**Dominant**

**subordinate**

**Order of linguistic terms**

**reflects cognitive**

**importance**

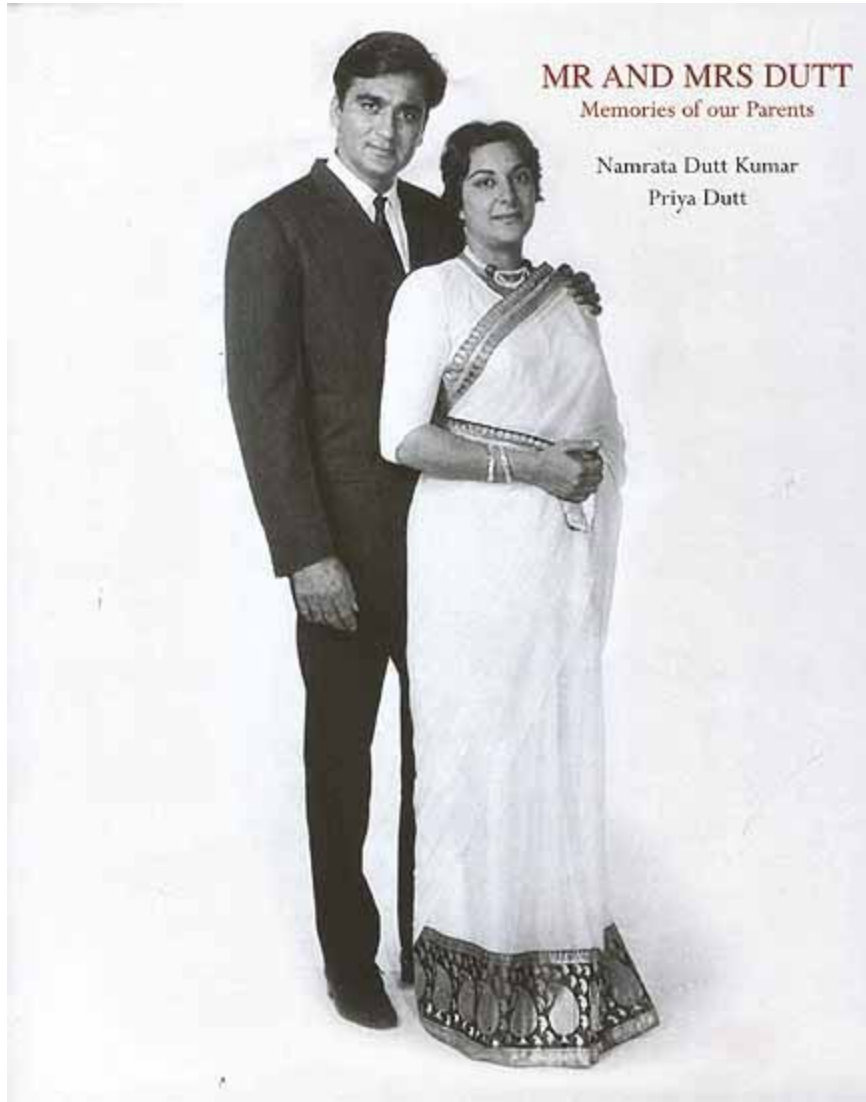
**In formal polite contexts, or**

**emotional contexts they may be**

**reversed**

**Paired words also give positive**

**connotations to the first word**



**Mr and Mrs John Dutt**  
**The Dutts**  
**The John Dutts**  
**John Dutt and his wife**

# What's in a Name?

**Christine  
Geraldine  
Roberta  
Pauline  
Bernadette  
Staphanie  
Antonia  
Alexia  
Bobbie  
Brienne  
Yvette**



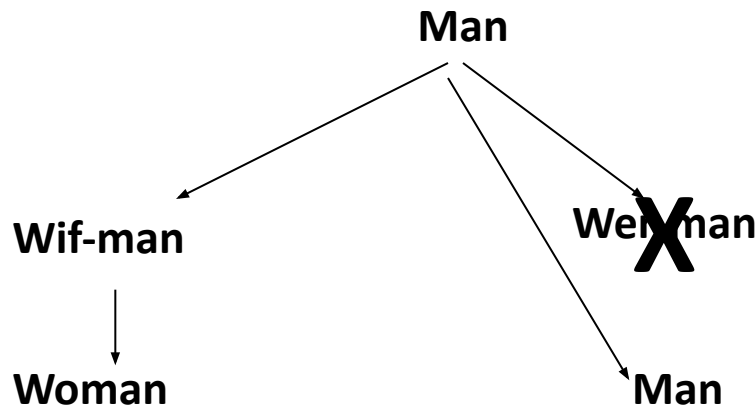
**A symbolic reflection of female's subsidiary status by deriving girls names from male names**

# Sexism in the English language

## Generic use of *man* and *he*

- The words *he* (used to be they) and *man* are sometimes used to refer to humans in general
- *-man* used as a kind of suffix

(Bolinger 1980, quoted by Graddol and Swann 1989: 103)



When he or man is used generically male images surface

# Sexism in the English language

- **The feminine as a marked category**
  - *dog - bitch* (masc. = neutral term)
  - *lion - lioness / tiger - tigress* (masc. = neutral term)
  - *actor - actress* (fem. nowadays often avoided)
  - *manager - manageress* (fem. suggests lower status, e.g. of laundrette but not of bank)
- **Generally, masculine terms often unmarked in the sense that**
  - it is the feminine term that takes an ending
  - only the masculine term can be used both for males and females.

# Lexicon: lexical Asymetries

- **Mistress v Master**
- **Queen v King**
- **Spinster v Bachelor**
- **Witch v Warlock**
- **Governess v Governor**
- **Lady v Lord**
- **Cow v Bull**

- **the lexical bias reflects a social bias in the culture**
- **What happens when you try to correct lexical bias?**
- **Once alternatives have been offered, each speaker is faced with a choice of which form to use.**

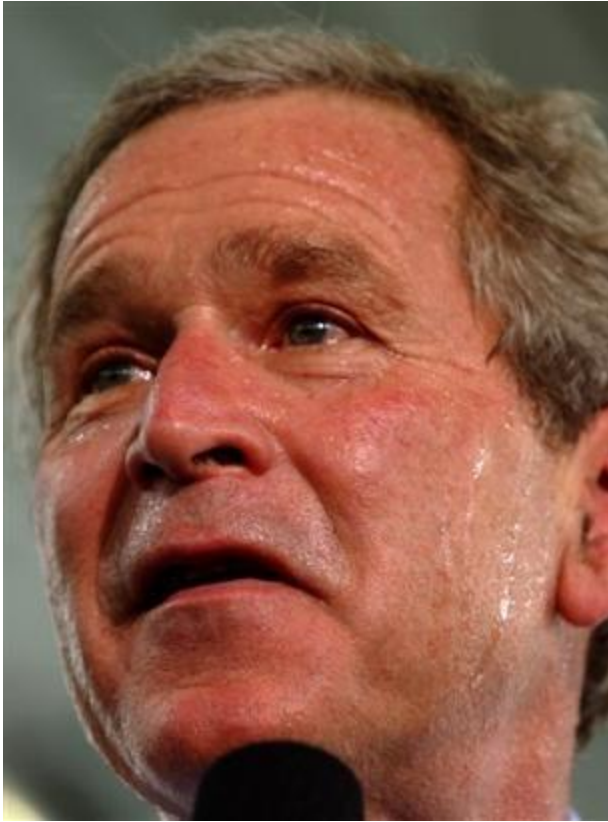


# Semantic derogation/pejoration

**Semantic derogation**: words referring to women tend to take on derogatory or pejorative meanings through time

What was the original meaning of these words?

- 
- Queen
  - Hussy
  - Spinster
  - Tart
  - Girl
  - Mistress
  - Wench
  - Whore
  - Harlot
- Woman in charge of spinning
  - A young child of either sex
  - A lover of either sex
  - A fellow of either sex
  - housewife
  - Term of endearment for young women
  - a female sovereign ruler
  - a youthful female person;
  - a woman who has power, authority, or ownership



**George Sweats, Hillary perspires  
George Yells, Hillary shrieks  
George talks, Hillary gossips  
George laughs, Hillary giggles**

***In general words  
describing women's  
activities have  
negative meaning***

# Terms and Concepts

**Gender**

**Gender Boundaries**

**Gender roles**

**Gender stereotypes**

**Gender stratification**

**Gender ideology**

**genderlect**

**Affective tags**

**facilitative tags**

**Covert prestige**

**Interruptions**

**Overlaps**

**The work of conversation**

**Semantic derogation**