

# 5

## Discourses of Difference and Identity

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**G**endered discourses, gendered stylistics, or even genderlects—the approach and body of work has many names. In this chapter, we introduce you to the interrelationships between second-wave difference and identity feminism, feminist standpoint theory, and feminist critical discourse analysis (CDA) from which this particular approach within feminist communication scholarship has emerged. The chapter will present significant empirical studies that relate to this tradition; will outline our two chosen contexts, media and organization; and will conclude with a discussion of a case study that illustrates feminist-informed CDA.

### Gender, Discourse, and Articulation

At the core of the difference and identity approach is the conviction that there is a correlation between gender and communication in terms of gendered sets of adapting and articulating discourses. Such sets consist of a gendered use of voice, vocabulary, speech genre, rhetoric, and media, often referred to as “gendered stylistics” or even “genderlects,” inspired by the ethnography of speaking (see Chapter 3). This correlation may be considered relative to situation and context and the social categories of the actors, but it is nevertheless decisive. Renowned feminist communication scholar Sara Mills (1995a) has provided an overview of the field. Let us start with the question of articulation in a very concrete sense: the gendered uses of voice.

## Gender Voices

Questions of articulation and discursive practices are very important to feminist communication scholarship, and the different approaches outlined in this book offer different explanations. Within the difference and identity approach, articulation is most often considered to mirror a genuine—even if also socially formed and thereby changeable—gender identity and to do so consistently in terms of voice, style, strategy, and so on.

The use of voice has not been sufficiently researched within gender and communication scholarship and much less theorized. One of the main resources on this particular aspect is *Gender Voices*, which provides an overview of empirical research and discusses the findings from a standpoint position (Graddol & Swann, 1989). The authors have directed our attention to the fact that most people can easily tell whether a voice belongs to an (anatomical) boy/man or an (anatomical) girl/woman and that this fact seems to be reflected in popular stereotypes about men as “loud” and women as “softly spoken” (see also Baken, 1987; Lee, Hewlett, & Nairn, 1995). However, Graddol and Swann also stated that we know very little about the hows and whys of gender differences in voice. We do know that voice is produced by the use of the vocal cavities (timbre), the vocal tract (resonance/formants), and the vocal cord (pitch/frequency). These factors and their interaction are determined to a certain degree by genetics and influenced by hormones. Thus, men will tend to develop longer and thicker vocal folds, and in most cultures, boys’ voices drop drastically in pitch in puberty (see also Baken, 1987; Lee et al., 1995). In a Western context, it has also been documented how women’s voices are affected by menstruation and pregnancy and that women experience these changes as positive, even in the case of premenstrual “dysphony.”

These differences are usually considered biologic facts, but Graddol and Swann (1989) emphasized that they can and should also be interpreted as cultural. Thus, both men and women are reported to have a broad range of voice, which they do not, however, make full use of. The pattern shown in Table 5.1 seems to be agreed upon in a Euro-American context.

**Table 5.1** Sounds of Gender

	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
Pitch	high	low
Timbre	light	dark
Resonance	easy	forceful
Breath	weak	strong

This pattern is usually found to be the norm with certain standard variations. Lee et al. (1995) have documented how young girls tend to have more extremes of frequency and a greater intonation variety than boys. Such variations can also be found to be national/regional. For instance, American women have been reported to use a larger vocal range than British women, whereas American men have been reported to employ a more limited vocal range than British men (Graddol & Swann, 1989).

Vocal differences are, however, difficult to describe without a subjective dimension; indeed, voice evaluation will always somehow be interwoven with gender expectations. For example, the reporting of younger women's larger scale of voice may be due to a common understanding of greater gender flexibility in this period of life. Or the larger scale supposedly at the disposal of American women tells us more than the "factual" scale about expectations of gender flexibility for women in this local context, just as the estimated lower scale available to American men may be attributed to narrower definitions of masculinity in this particular speech community. Graddol and Swann (1989) therefore went on to ask whether it is possible to identify a common logic in the reported findings, be they more objective or more subjective, and conclude by suggesting a model (p. 33), which we have elaborated on (see Figure 5.1).

In this very structuralist-inspired model, the extremes are represented by the sex-typed male/female (masculine male/feminine female), juxtaposed with the opposite terms (feminine male/masculine female). In between are the nexus of male/female (undifferentiated male/female) and the not yet opposite (androgynous male/female). The point is that the positions in question are differently appraised. While the female spectrum often connotes weakness, insecurity, and loss of authority, the male spectrum connotes strength, self-assurance, and authority. Both are associated with sexual attractiveness when coupled with the "right" gender, as we see in relation to studies of "sweet talk" in Chapter 6.

According to Graddol and Swann (1989), this is probably why radio and TV in most Western countries feature men in news programs and hosting documentaries and other "serious" programs. Woman speakers partner in news "couples" or do voice-overs in certain programs, for example, those targeting a female audience. On the other hand, women aspiring to higher positions in society adapt to the male norm and deliberately change their voices. For example, former prime minister of the United Kingdom, Margaret Thatcher, reportedly received voice training in order to be heard in her first years as prime minister in the 1980s (Graddol & Swann, 1989, p. 38).

Graddol and Swann (1989) explained gender differences in articulation in social and cultural terms, and they highlighted the complex ways in which

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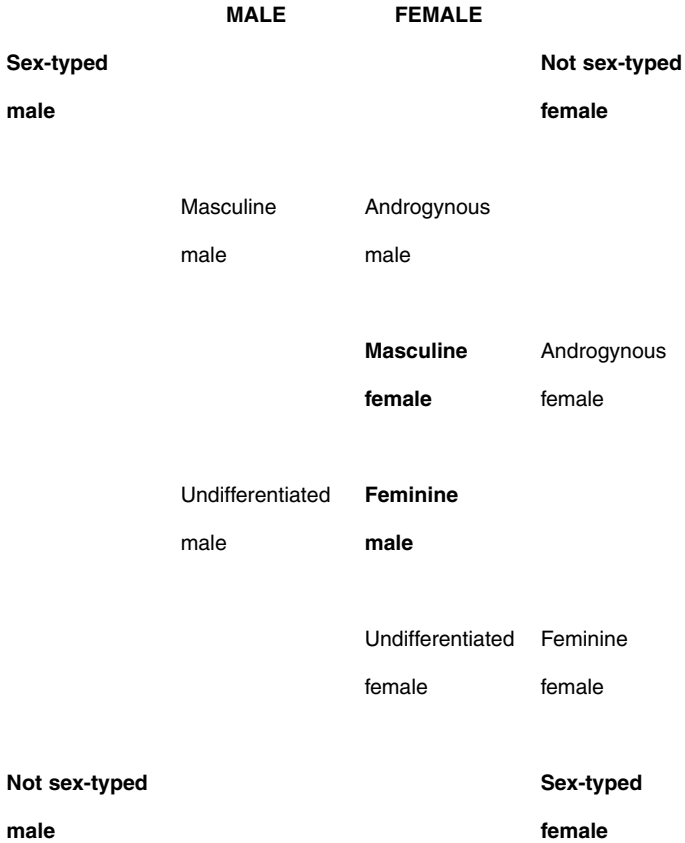


Figure 5.1 Gender and Voice

society and culture influence both the ways women and men use their voices and the ways these voices are heard and reported. One of their most illuminating examples stems from an American psychiatric case history. The parents of a young boy brought him to a clinic because they felt that his voice was pathologically feminine, and he was given hormone treatment. Meanwhile, Graddol and Swann also highlighted cross-cultural differences, and thus differences among women, and even seem to have suggested that orchestration of voice may best be understood as a stylized way of performing gender, a point highlighted in other overviews (Eckert & Mc Connell-Ginet, 2003).

Later, we discuss how these findings are related to intersections of gender, class, race/ethnicity and sexuality, for instance, when young working-class

or Black women use higher pitch when code switching from standard English to vernacular English or when “signifying” (Gates, 1987). For now, we turn to research on articulation in terms of different ways and means of expression, made into sets or “styles” of communication. The body of work on this issue from a difference and identity approach is both exhaustive and sophisticated.

### Stylistic Gender Differences

American anthropologists John Maltz and Ruth Borker were the first to introduce the two-culture model in terms of gendered communication styles, designating them the “cooperative” versus the “competitive” style, respectively. In an often-cited review article, they referred to a range of studies of gendered communication that they saw as precursors to a new framework, for example, a study of children by their colleague, Marjorie Harness Goodwin (Maltz & Borker, 1982/1998, p. 420). Goodwin, with a video camera, had followed a group of African American children in a neighborhood in Philadelphia as they played (Goodwin, 1990; based on her original thesis, 1978). She found that children organized themselves differently according to gender and displayed gendered group dynamics and language strategies. The girls played in twos or threes in small, nonhierarchical groups and made joint decisions with minimal status negotiation, a high degree of cooperation, and only indirect use of directives. The boys, on the other hand, formed hierarchical teams or gangs, engaged in status negotiation and competition for leadership, and used directives as commands. On the basis of such research, Maltz and Borker concluded that girls use speech to create relationships, criticize others in acceptable ways, and interpret others’ speech accurately in order to keep the group going. Boys, on the other hand, use speech to denote their position, attract and maintain an audience, and assert themselves when other speakers have the floor (Maltz & Borker, 1982/1998, pp. 424, 426). They further claimed that because of the different social contexts in which American children grow up and learn the rules of conversational interaction, boys and girls learn to use language in different ways and for different purposes at a very early age.

Due to the heated debate on her research from 1978, Goodwin (1988/1998) later emphasized that her data documented more complex patterns, for instance, that girls also compete, albeit in slightly different ways than boys. When her dissertation on the research in question, *He-Said-She-Said*, was published in 1990, she further claimed that task and situation are of great importance to understanding competition when children play. For instance, she now found that “he-said-she-said” was a specific genre of

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dispute among girls in which they ostracized group members but that they also engaged in playful cross-gender verbal disputes. Goodwin (1990) ended up stating that “cooperation and competition are not mutually exclusive agendas and often co-exist within the same speech activities” and moreover, with reference to Maltz and Borker, that “the specific type of joint action which is exhibited [in girls’ play] does not resemble ‘supportive’ forms of collaboration described elsewhere as characteristic of female speech” (p. 284). In a recent study on bilingual Spanish- and English-speaking girls, primarily second-generation Mexican and Central Americans playing hopscotch, Goodwin (1999) further nuanced her own research results, claiming that these girls participated in many supposedly male communicative features, such as legalistic language, “footing” or stance, and irony (p. 403). In yet another article on the issue, however, she raised the question of class and ethnicity in her own earlier study of young Black African Americans, and she introduced the interpretation that the assertive approach among the girls could partly be ascribed to the fact that they were working-class Blacks (Goodwin, 2003). Following other research on cross-cultural differences among children at play, she further suggested that among African Americans and Italian Americans, playful and teasing confrontational talk provides a way of displaying character, constructing social identities, cultivating friendships, and both maintaining and transforming the social order of the peer group. This is also said to be characteristic of the practice of “signifying” among adult African Americans, which makes it difficult for outsiders to distinguish between in-group confrontation and out-group opposition, for instance, to “Whitism” (see Chapter 6).

A range of additional studies in gendered communication styles have followed Goodwin’s research. Barrie Thorne, for instance, researched children’s play and communication extensively in an ethnographic study of two American schools in different neighborhoods of different class, reported in *Gender Play: Girls and Boys at School*, from 1993. Like Goodwin, Thorne reported complex patterns of gender segregation and mixed settings and also a range of nongendered activities and communication strategies. Amy Sheldon (1990/1993) focused on conflict management in a communication study on “pickle fights” and disputes among pre-school American children. She found that both girls and boys engaged in conflict management, but they did so in different ways and for different purposes. The female-associated conflict style balanced signals of interest, support, and agreement, such as keeping turns short and giving the floor to others, and was accordingly referred to as “community oriented.” Conversely, the male-associated conflict style manifested in signals of opposition, directive speech, and even threats and physical intimidation, and

Sheldon accordingly classified it as “self-oriented” (p. 104). In other studies, Sheldon refined her thesis in accordance with standpoint theory, describing girls’ conflict management as “double-voice discourse” and claiming that it is an example of communicative competencies. However, she also asserted that such competencies are displayed among boys who are close friends and can thus be ascribed as much to the quality and style of a particular group as to gender (Sheldon 1992, 1997).

The conversational styles of co-optation and competition have framed a range of studies in the 1980s and 1990s. However, as discussed above, this has also been questioned by some scholars who have called for sensitivity toward intersections of gender, class, and race/ethnicity, as well as to the contextual framing, the task or format in question, the multifunctionality and embedding of particular communicative features, and so on.

### *Same-Sex Interaction*

One of the main interests of feminist communication researchers in the 1980s and 1990s was to document gendered speech communities and talk in same-sex groups and to explore the thesis of dual stylistics under such circumstances. However, few of these studies are comparative, and more research has been carried out on women’s in-group communication than on men’s. British scholar Jennifer Coates has most consistently pursued the subject (1997a, 1997b, 1989) and has also delivered an in-depth discussion of female style in *Women Talk* (1996).

In this study, Coates’s empirical data derived from tape recordings of informal, private meetings of an established group of women friends (British, White, middle-class, in their 30s–50s) over a period of 12 years (Coates, 1996). Coates focused on formal features and suggested that they formed both a coherent aesthetic and an implied ethic. Features that at first seemed very similar to the findings of the dominance and deficit approach (tag questions, hedges, minimal responses, epistemic modality, incomplete utterances, recycling of lexical terms and phrases, latching of turns, and simultaneous speech) turned out to constitute a unique format when understood as elements of a formal structure. For instance, participants were seen to use minimal responses to signal active listening and support for the current speaker or to mark recognition of different stages of topic development. They used epistemic modalities to signal that they did not “take a hard line” and to minimize conflict, secure agreement, and signal respect for other participants. Simultaneous speech was used to complete others’ contributions and produce a collaborative story. According to Coates, all these phenomena constitute a conversational dynamic that allows topics to emerge and shift gradually and

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by mutual effort into a joint discourse, the goal of which turns out to be the continuity and flow of communication. This is particularly evident in a distinct sequential progress, which Coates illustrated in the following way:

A introduces topic,

B tells anecdote on the same theme,

C tells another anecdote on same theme, leading into general discussion,

D summarizes,

A has the last word. (Coates, 1989, p. 99)

The main point both in Coates's early reports on the study and in her 1996 monography is that women's conversational mode can be verified as a specific style in which the pattern of formal features, structure, and format creates a distinctive aesthetic, which, in turn, implies an ethic of cooperation. Thus, this conversational mode is considered to support the collective rather than the individual and to facilitate equity and collaboration. In her conclusion, however, Coates (1996) called for further research to document whether the characteristics she identified may be found in other contexts or might turn out to have other purposes, thus anticipating future criticism.

One of the most controversial discussions of same-sex communication during the 1980s and 1990s was concerned with the choice of topics. Coates's (1996) opinion was that the findings of the dominance and deficit approach concerning women's interest in the home, family, emotions, everyday life, and so forth, are valid but that they must also be refined and reinterpreted. Her own study showed how topics in an all-female group vary according to situation, context, framing, and so on and that they develop over time and according to age. Furthermore, topics tended to concentrate on issues of home and family when the women in the group were in the midst of child rearing, but they tended to diversify as the children grew up. Coates found the opposite trend in a longitudinal study of a group of teenagers who, at the age of 12, reportedly exhibited a multifaceted and almost anarchistic communication pattern. At the age of 16, however, they tended to focus on their own performance in relation to boys, friends, and each other, but they also turned out to be both self-reflexive and socially aware (Coates, 1999). Other studies, still mostly in an Anglo-American context, have shown how women's "personal talk" includes not only topics such as children, home, and intimate relationships but also work and professional relationships and, to a lesser degree, politics and religion (Johnson & Aries, 1983/1998).



In her study of the role played by talk in women's friendships, Coates (1996) paid particular attention to the subject of chatter and gossip. Disagreeing with the dominance and deficit approach, she claimed that chatter and gossip do have positive functions. Deborah Jones (1980/1990) had found that gossip is generally considered trivial, is exclusively attributed to women and scorned by men, and is therefore problematic to feminists. Coates, however, pointed to the creative use and constructive function of gossip among women friends. For example, she found that chatter is used to elaborate on the rhythm of conversation and that gossip is used to include rather than exclude participants not present (Coates, 1996).

Jane Pilkington (1998) conducted one of the few comparative studies on female and male friendships and in-group conversation. Her work both supported and contradicted Coates's findings. Pilkington's study took place in New Zealand and involved two groups of women friends and two groups of male friends (White, lower to middle class, from the 20–40 age group). She confirmed that both women and men gossip but claimed that they do so in different ways and for different purposes. Pilkington found that both genders enjoy and value gossip, though it is usually regarded as trivial, but that it is integrated in gender-specific conversational styles. The female style is characterized by few and short pauses, short turns, minimal responses, supporting questions, repetitions, mutual extension of topics, disagreement countered by politeness, and so on. The male style, on the other hand, is characterized by silences, longer pauses, sudden changes of subject, lack of response, marked disagreement in terms of either questioning or negating the other's proposition or making an opposing statement, criticism going into abuse, and ritual abuse framed as fun. Pilkington (1998) reasoned that the two types seem to correspond to the established notion of cooperation versus competition, but she also expressed doubts, in particular when it came to the presumed male mode (p. 267). She reported that her male informants often valued their own abusive behaviors positively, while considering polite behavior to be women's conversational mode and devaluing it. Pilkington's conclusion was that the competitive style is part of a male culture that is built on challenge, risk, and power and it is also seen in a range of male leisure activities. She openly declared her own prejudices against such a communicative style but admitted that her informants themselves found it reassuring and considered it a sign of comradeship. Thus, both women and men were aware of and preferred their own in-group style and considered it a part of identity and community building.

In-depth research in male speech communities and male in-group communication has been carried out by Coates (2003). We briefly describe the study and then elaborate below. The study was conducted over several years

and in different contexts, and it reports not only on talk among groups of male friends of different ages and professions in Britain but also on talk in mixed-gender groups (couples), focusing in particular on storytelling. Coates confirmed the central thesis of the two-culture model and maintained that the assumptions shared both by scholars and the public at large, namely, that “men either don’t talk much [strong and silent] or talk compulsively and competitively about sport, cars and drinking exploits” (Coates, 2003, p. 1), still holds empirically, even though they must be challenged. Thus, Coates found that such talk is still relevant even if it is mixed with other topics, formats, and renegotiations of current masculinities and is now to be understood as a means of “in-grouping” and thus as a particular kind of sociability and joint enterprise.

During the 1990s, research in gendered stylistics tended to become even more sophisticated and reflective, questioning its own premises. A good example is the above-mentioned discussion of who gossips, how, and for which purposes, which was taken a step further by Deborah Cameron. Cameron (1997a) agreed with Pilkington that boys and men both chatter and gossip but also found that gossip among men can be constructive and even cooperative. Reverse examples were given in documentations of competitive strategies in women’s talk, such as conflict management (Sheldon, 1990/1993), teasing (Eder, 1993), disagreement and independence (Eckert, 1990/1993), and tactical uses of stories (Goodwin, 1990/1993). In a study on the use of politeness among Mayan Indian women in Tenejapa, Mexico, Penelope Brown (1990/1993) even found that politeness in this particular speech community and within particular speech situations created a “patina of agreement” that emphasized disagreement, revealing sarcasm and competition. Such studies contributed to the questioning of standpoint theory.

### *Mixed Interaction*

During the 1980 to 1990s, the second main focus of feminist communication research from the perspective of standpoint theory was cross-gender communication. In this type of research, the dominance and deficit approach was once again abandoned in favor of the gendered stylistics approach. Even though the question of power was still in focus when it came to how imbalances are created in and through the structuring of discourse, cross-gender communication was now primarily understood in terms of cross-cultural communication, and hence neglect or conflict were understood as miscommunication.

One of the most significant documented variables in cross-gender communication was the private/public distinction. The most frequently reiterated

finding was that women talk less in public settings and more in private settings (Crawford 1995; Tannen, 1990). Most scholars further agreed that women talk less than men in public settings, whereas it was highly debated whether they talk more than men in private settings (James & Drakich, 1993; Tannen, 1993b). Research using the difference and identity approach has further documented how women tend to follow the procedures of the situation, the etiquette of the setting, and the roles of their position, whereas male participants challenge such schemes (Holmes, 1995). The overall pattern is completed by the following features: In public, women tend to speak only when it is expected of them, in accordance with the format, or when asked; they tend to keep their contributions short, often ask for others' opinions, and express support of others' contributions (Crawford, 1995; Talbot, 1998). In short, they carry out what is understood in the paradigm of dominance and deficit as the "shitwork" of interpersonal communication. Difference and identity scholars understand women's ways of handling cross-gender communication in terms of co-optation and as valuable competencies for adjustment—keeping things going and people working together, for example, within educational or organizational contexts (Crawford, 1995; Talbot, 1998). Moreover, conflict is understood more as an example of miscommunication than of dominance, even though dominance is still a central issue. The findings in private settings are similar, except that in this context, women seem to play a more initiating role, for example, when introducing topics.

Deborah Tannen (1986, 1990) has delivered some of the most elaborate research on interaction in intimate heterosexual relationships. Her main thesis is that miscommunication between the sexes occurs because of different approaches to communication, which she equated with two different languages or, in the context of intimate communication, two different conversations running on parallel tracks. Thus, women do "rapport" talk (about internal affairs, such as home, close relationships, and intimacy), whereas men do "report" talk (about external affairs, such as sports, politics, and women/sex) (Tannen, 1986, 1990). According to Tannen, one of the driving forces behind the miscommunication between rapport and report talkers is that women tend to see intimate communication as a mirror of the relationship and also want to discuss intimate affairs, whereas men tend to see even intimate communication as means of factual exchange and want to keep it there. Therefore, women look for the more subtle meanings of men's words, the "subtext," whereas men do not look for the implied statement and tend to take women's contributions at face value.

One of the main questions within this overall framework has been whether the supplementary discourses of power and solidarity, found in much classic ethnomethodological work, may be seen as gendered articulations. Several

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feminist researchers from the 1980s argued that this is reasonable. Tannen (1993b) has also addressed this question and directed attention to social interaction analyses that have documented the ambiguity of communicative strategies and, in particular, the polysemy of power and solidarity. On this ground, she claimed that the ambition of consensus in women's talk may be a way to gain power, for example, by not allowing disagreement, and vice versa (Tannen, 1993b, p. 169). She went on to underscore that the final evaluation depends on the total picture and may be related to other central sociolinguistic topics, such as the control of floor, management of turn-taking, length of turns, interruptions, and topic raising.

Carole Edelsky (1981/1993) has done research in cross-gender interaction and has critiqued underlying assumptions, such as the implicit schema for the "right" conversation: the norm of turn-taking, the rules for facilitating shifts of turns by circulating the right to speak, the standards of sequencing and adjusting, and the dynamics of face-keeping. Whereas the schematics have been considered universal within ethnomethodology, feminist researchers from a standpoint of view have seen it as characteristic of the collaborative style—and undermined by the competitive style. Edelsky, however, questioned whether particular discursive practices can or should be seen as elevated or understood as univocal. In her own study, she demonstrated how "taking a turn" and "having the floor" cannot be equated, because several floors often coexist, not least in cross-gender conversations. In the cross-gender interaction in a standing committee meeting, she identified two distinct floors, a collaborative (collective) floor and a single floor, that were continuously interacting and striving for legitimacy. She found that women dominated the first floor and were dominated on the second, both relatively and quantitatively, but she made a point of not claiming greater legitimacy for one than the other. Furthermore, she underscored the importance of context, task, and format, for example, the fact that the context is a formal meeting and that the task and format are given (Edelsky, 1981/1993, p. 219).

Deborah James and Sandra Clarke (1993) have investigated interruptions in cross-gender interaction. They have stressed the multifunctionality of interruptions and claimed that these may function to prevent others from completing their talk and allow the interrupter to take over the floor, but that this is only one of various functions (see also Greenwood, 1996). According to James and Clarke, a central problem is that there is no simple, objective way of determining function; on the contrary, it is necessary to consider a range of contextual aspects and ways of embedding speech. Along these lines, James and Clarke (1993) maintained that the use of interruptions in mixed-gender interaction seems equally complex and that the results do

not indicate the stable pattern that has often been put forward—that men interrupt women more than the reverse (pp. 246–247). However, they admitted that there seem to be different types of interruptions that can to some extent be related to gender: The competitive (often abrupt) interruption aims to take over the floor, while the cooperative interruption (often in the form of back-channel responses and simultaneous speech) functions to signal solidarity and joint discourse. They further underscored that the function of the interruption depends on embedding, for example, whether conflict or competition prevails, as well as context, for instance, whether the communicators' status is even. If that is the case, the competitive way of interrupting can also be used to collaborate and may serve to promote community building, whether the group in question is all male or all female.

Much like research on same-sex settings, research on mixed interaction has increasingly questioned the initial assumptions of a gendered stylistics by differentiating between situations, participants, contexts, and so on. Thus, researchers have also argued for a reformulation of the relatively simple model of communication, which much communication scholarship, also from a feminist standpoint, has drawn on. This model implies that you can identify a speaker (or writer), who encodes her ideas and feelings into messages (combinations of words); a hearer (or reader), who decodes the message/text and understands the ideas/feeling; and a message/text, to be en- and decoded without “noise” (mimesis) or, rather, without noise that cannot easily be traced and treated as miscommunication (Mills, 1995a, p. 27). Mills is one of the feminist communication scholars who has both provided a critique of the model and elaborated on it in different ways, specifying parameters such as the genre of the message (e.g., poetry or irony); the channel of the message (e.g., conversation in real life, TV, or on the Internet); the background of speaker/hearer (e.g., personal history, education, social conditions, political conviction); and the material as well as immaterial circumstances of the communicative event in question. Mills has stressed that it is particularly important to feminist standpoint communication scholarship to maintain *the dialectics of text and context*; in fact, according to Mills, this is what feminist standpoint communication scholarship is about.

## Differences Within and Among Women

During the 1990s, two perspectives became of particular importance to standpoint communication scholarship: (a) the study of differences between women (and men) according to either more steady social categories, such as class, ethnicity, and sexuality, or more flexible categories, such as taste and lifestyle and different intersections hereof and (b) the study of differences

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within every single woman (or man) in terms of the multiplicity of identity itself, along the above-mentioned distinctions but also due to unique personal experiences or the uniqueness of the situation in question. However, these new perspectives also tended to lead to a questioning of the difference and identity concept (Bergvall, Bing, & Freed, 1996; Mills, 1995a; Wodak, 1997). "Femininity takes different forms, so we should really use it in the plural and speak of femininities," said Mary Talbot (1998, p. 188), and stressed the plurality of differences between women, whereas Jennifer Coates talked about "the construction of differing femininities" (1996, p. 232) and "competing discourses of femininity" (1997a, p. 285) and asserted the range of femininities at hand for every single woman.

Jennifer Coates (1996) has most explicitly dealt with the topic of differences within individuals and pointed out that women (and men) participate in a range of contexts in a lifetime or even daily and change their performances accordingly, just as they are able to manage multiple identities during a conversation. Analyzing her informants' talk, she spotted quite a range of femininities (p. 239). She also claimed that her informants not only expressed their authentic experiences through their communication styles but also used available discourses to explore and express different types of femininity: "The talk we do in our everyday lives gives us access to these different modes of being, these different versions of femininity" (p. 239). Deborah Cameron (1997b) went even further, suggesting that instead of looking for how women and men express themselves in and by language, we should look for how we construct gender in and through discourse. Such considerations, however, indicate that we are now on the verge of post-structuralism and the performance turn, which we discuss in detail in the next chapter.

The critique of the difference approach from within has been found especially in scholarship on differences *among* women according to class, race/ethnicity, sexuality, and other significant social categories. During the 1980s and 1990s, working-class, Black, and lesbian feminist scholars challenged the interests and results of "classist," "Whitist," and "heteronormative" feminism. In her landmark essay *Talking Back* (1989), bell hooks directed our attention to the importance of language and communication to Black feminism (and to her, this term includes women of color):

Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited . . . a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is the act of speech, of "talking back," that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice. (hooks, in Houston & Davis, 2002, p. 15)

In Black feminist communication studies, the basic power of voice and speech has been a key subject, together with struggle, sisterhood, and community among Black women (Houston & Davis, 2002). Mary Bucholtz (1995, 1996a) and Karla D. Scott (2002) have argued for Black feminist scholarship in communication and have emphasized the importance of language to ethnic research since William Labov's studies during the 1960s and 1970s on African American vernacular English. Labov has been criticized for excluding women or considering them less authentic, more middle class, and Whitist ("indirect speech") than young, male, working-class Blacks ("counter-language"). However, Bucholtz and Scott have both claimed that it is necessary to rethink his findings in a Black feminist context. Historically, characterizations of language use in the Black community have focused on the inability of this group to speak or use language correctly. Quite often, differences in language use have been attributed to the inherent inferiority of Africans and their descendants. One exception was Geneva Smitherman's (1977) work on the language of "Black America," where she made reference to Labov and contended that "Black English" (or "Ebonics") is not a kind of "anti-language" or "counter-language," but rather a legitimate form of speech with a distinct history and origin. Smitherman identified uniqueness in three areas: grammar and pronunciation, specialized vocabulary or lexicon, and the use of oral tradition. Whereas proficiency in standard English (SE) had hitherto been considered an important mark of credibility, she suggested that Blacks may choose not to speak SE in order to mark their Black identity and to serve certain purposes. Both Bucholtz and Scott further hypothesized that due to the "double consciousness" that follows from their position as "other Others" in terms of both gender and race/ethnicity, Black women can be skilled in both language styles and may switch freely between language style or code as a means of asserting their position in-between or across cultural worlds (Buchholz, 1996a, pp. 271–272; Scott, 2002, p. 58).

Furthermore, Bucholtz (1996a) studied a radio panel discussion convened in response to the nationwide uprisings in the United States in 1992. She found that the two Black women, who were both university professors, carried out what she called a "creative adaptation" to the particular context and format. Thus, they did not directly hinder the discussion, but rather took it over by subverting the role of the moderator (asking questions themselves), creating political alliances with listeners (using features of African American vernacular—phonological, morphemic, or lexical—in an emblematic way), and by supporting each other (back channeling, minimal responses, and so on). Instead of concluding whether or not these findings testify to a certain identity/community/politics and discussing which elements should be ascribed to gender and which to race, Bucholtz (1996a)

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chose to argue that “the result of such strategies is to challenge the power differences that inhere in institutional and social subject positions—that is . . . the strategies are designed as a challenge to hegemonic discourse” (p. 284). This study is an example of how women’s identities are constituted in intersections of differences and how this affects their ways and means of communication in terms of multilayered communicative practices and even ambiguous messages.

Scott (2002) did focus group interviews with young Black women (students at a midwestern university) and focused on the informants’ rhetorical use of, on one hand, “girl,” and on the other, “look.” She found that both techniques contributed to creating a self-conscious rhythmical stress placement and marked intonation pattern during the talk, and simultaneously served as contextualization cues, which, again, allowed the person doing the switching to embed an in-group message and signal ethnic identity. Thus, Scott’s case serves as an example of how women, in this case Black women, rework their identities in and through communication and thereby also challenge more fixed communication models. To understand the way these students communicate, you need a very dynamic communication model that accounts for the play with identity, message/text, and context.

Bucholtz (1995, 1996a) has emphasized that the intention of Black feminist scholars to indicate Black women’s unique language and their position as the “other Others” may easily slip right back into stereotyping. This is the paradox of the difference approach, be it in terms of gender or of gender and class, race/ethnicity, sexuality, and so on. It has, for instance, been expressed in assumptions that working-class women are more conservative, correct, polite, and underachieving or that they use slang and resistant language in particular settings much the same way as working-class men (Foster, 1995). Thus, making class, race, or women’s ethnic culture the central organizing concept remains an ambiguous project. However, such a project does acknowledge that gender is both racialized and classist and that race and class are both gendered and sexualized. Moreover, it makes it necessary to realize that women are enculturated to a gendered communication ideal within specific ethnic/social groups and that they learn how to communicate as women in the context of particular ethnic/social experiences (Scott, 2002, p. 56). In the next chapter, we focus on the complications that arise in the case of multiethnic backgrounds and identities and on the phenomena of passing, “verbal cross-dressing,” and “cross-expressing.”

Scholars of color such as Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989) and bell hooks (1981, 1989) have initiated the development of colored/third-world (Minh-ha) and Black/African American (hooks) feminist standpoints. However, they have also maintained that they see this only as a necessary step toward a more



advanced theory of multiplicity. They have challenged the very notion of difference and underscored the conceptual ambiguity of identity politics. In continuation of the work done by Minh-ha and hooks, American linguists Victoria Bergvall and Janet M. Bing (1996) have introduced the term *diversity* to feminist communication studies as a possible alternative to the concept of difference, in order to denote differences both *within* and *among* women and to multiply the axes of differentiation (pp. 17–18).

### The Masculine Mode?

Far less research has been carried out on male communication strategies, partly because, as discussed in Chapter 4, “male” has been the genderless norm, whereas “female” has been the deviance in need of explanation. Feminist research in the 1980s and 1990s created a reverse story of the opposition of the communicative styles of co-optation and competition, in which the former is positively invested, the latter negatively.

Jennifer Coates’s study in *Men Talk* (2003) focused on male narratives in different settings, but within an all-White, middle-class, and adult (British) context. As mentioned above, it confirms some of the central themes from the difference paradigm, such as men’s in-group positioning according to hegemonic/heterosexual masculinity and the avoidance of intimate/emotional topics. However, it also documents new findings, such as collaborative storytelling among heterosexual couples and some men’s way of handling in-group conversation by introducing more openness and vulnerability.

Deborah Cameron (1997a) elaborated on empirical research undertaken by one of her students in the United States in a group of five young men (White, middle-class, American suburbanites in their early 20s). The student titled his report “Wine, Women, and Sports” in order to relate his findings to other research on men’s talk in all-male groups. He documented typical male topics, roughly dividing them into, on one hand, “serious” matters, such as sports and politics and, on the other, women and sex. The point of Cameron’s revision is that this may not be a false interpretation of data. However, it is an interpretation that is very much in accordance with cultural assumptions and that therefore overlooks any data that point in other directions, as well as the complex embedding and multifunctionality of linguistics features. First, she estimated that the young men also talk a lot about daily life and domestic arrangements. Second, she found that they do gossip in the sense that they have a discussion of several persons not present but known to the participants, with a strong focus on critically examining these individuals’ appearance, dress, social behavior and sexual mores. Lending yet another twist to this interpretation, she noticed that the individuals

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talked about were all suspected or known to be gay and that the whole conversation could be reinterpreted as coping with this issue. In that case, the in-group talking functioned as a mechanism for coping with sexual and gender deviance and thus constitutes an excellent example of jointly produced discourse, hitherto exclusively reserved for the co-optation style. However, Cameron also found examples of face-threatening interruptions, put-downs, the use of jokes and witty remarks to “capture” a turn, and so on, that have been attributed to all-male groups and the competitive genderlect. Her conclusion was that some of the participants did occasionally dominate the conversation, compete, and try to establish a hierarchy in the group. Thus, their exchange cannot be said to be egalitarian. Nevertheless, there are also collaborative moments and “sidetalks” that mark another intention and drive (Cameron, 1997a).

Although this was only a rather small study, Cameron (1997a) used it to warn against oversimplification in communication research, identifying cooperative versus competitive conversational styles and applying them to gender. She suggested that most conversations in most contexts may be said to contain elements of both co-optation and competition and that the different features that have been ascribed to these two conversational styles can have different meanings in different contexts. Ascribing them in any simple way to gender is problematic because of the danger of binary reductiveness, which indicates multiplicity and complexity. There are diverse repertoires and a range of different approaches available to women and men (whose boundaries qualify as legitimately gendered), as well as heterosexual subjects in a given context. Thus, Cameron ended up agreeing with Coates, that “being a man” in Western culture still is “not being a woman” and that men are still under pressure to constitute themselves as masculine linguistically by avoiding forms of talk that associate primarily with women/femininity. Moreover, in the young men’s talk, “being a man” was defined using “the antithesis of man,” that is, being homosexual. “What is being established as ‘shared’ here is a view of gays as alien” (Cameron, 1997a, p. 51). She hypothesized that both men and women tend to construct differentiation through discourse more than they express differences in discourse, once again mirroring Coates (1996) and introducing the performance turn, the focus of Chapter 6.

The relational construction of gender identity through discourse is discussed in all the contributions to *Language and Masculinity* (Johnson & Meinhof, 1997) and also highlighted in a range of primarily British studies of boys’ interaction during the 1980s and 1990s, now often framed as “boy-centered research” (Frosh, Phoenix, & Pattman, 2002). Most of these studies were conducted in cross-ethnic, educational settings and demonstrate how gender identity is constructed among boys in a complex mixture of sexuality,

class, and ethnicity. Frosh, Phoenix, and Pattman have studied young White and Black men from different social backgrounds regarding school, friends, families, and so on. They have argued that among White boys from the working or lower classes, masculinity is constructed in opposition to femininity, which is attributed to “other Others” such as homosexuals, upper-class boys (“the real Englishmen”), school-achieving middle-class boys, or Asian boys. “The real Englishmen,” however, differentiate themselves from the “macho lads” because of their “macho” attitudes toward and ways of talking about girls and women. The “macho lads,” finally, differentiate among themselves according to, for instance, age, and reportedly develop different types of masculinity by means of diverse heterosexual performances, such as “fashionable heterosexuals” versus “explicit heterosexuals” (Frosh et al., 2002, p. 54).

When it came to Black boys, Frosh et al. (2002) drew on a series of studies by other researchers, who reported that Black boys locate themselves in “a phallogocentric framework,” much like White boys, except that they position themselves as superior to both White and Asian students in terms of their “sexual attractiveness, style, creativity and hardness” (p. 55). Furthermore, Black boys reportedly refer to White boys as “pussies” (female) or “batty man” (homosexuals) and speak of White boys’ fears of explicit performance (p. 55). Again, this approach may take different forms. The most radical is that of the so-called rebels who cultivate machismo styles, listen to “hard” rap, boast about their heterosexual prowess, develop specific body language, and so on. These rebels seem to resist racism, while playing with, or even reinforcing, White racist stereotypes. Conversely, young, White, working-class men are reported to construct the African Caribbean man in terms of “the fear and desire couplet” and in contrast to, for example, Vietnamese men (p. 55).

The research on young masculinities challenges not only the concept of the dual stylistics but also the scope of standpoint theory by reflecting on the premises and purposes of the approach and situating the research as well as the researchers themselves. Studies like these illustrate how the difference and identity approach needs greater nuance in order to adequately describe and theorize multicultural societies and hybrid identities that put gender on the agenda in new ways and in obvious intersection with class, ethnicity, sexuality, and age.

## Settings of Difference

Standpoint research in gender and communication has been undertaken within various settings during the 1980s and 1990s, not least in media and organization. In those days, focus shifted radically in both contexts. Feminist

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media studies moved from an interest in the sphere of male production/producers, the questions of access, and the (mis)representation of women in media and mediated texts to an interest in women's own traditions, productions, media and texts, and women's agency as audience and users. A similar shift took place within the field of feminist organization studies, where women's values, competencies, enterprises, and leadership became central themes.

### Mediated Differences

Researchers in gender and media have used a difference and identity approach to identify an alliance among mass communications, popular culture, and female audiences. On this basis, they have confronted the distinctions between "Enlightenment and Entertainment," and "Highbrow and Lowbrow," and also explored the meanings and pleasures involved in women's media reception (Ang, 1985; Modleski, 1982; Radway, 1984). In particular, they have reclaimed undervalued "women's media," such as gothic novels, magazines, film romances, soaps, sitcoms, and talk shows. And they have reinterpreted the genre of melodrama, which runs through them all, representing a domestic and emotional stand that is also a woman's perspective—albeit not unambiguously and uncritically so.

Ien Ang (1985) analyzed *Dallas*, one of the first big soap operas ("soaps") that peaked in the United States as well as in Europe during the 1980s. Ang defined the genre as a late-modern version of melodrama that is exclusively related to the gendered conventions of consumption, visual culture, and the TV serial. The genre thus derives its generic enterprise from the contract it is able to make with (segments of) the female audiences, for instance, in terms of particular (daytime) sending hours. From her analysis of *Dallas*, Ang further introduced a distinction between the thematic realism of the production, of which there is very little, and the emotional realism of the reception, which is rich, at least according to the (Dutch) informants who reported a lack of emotional support and social acknowledgment and an underlying sense of tragedy. That said, Ang (1985) also emphasized that the success of *Dallas* simultaneously derived from the visual effect of stylistic glamor (p. 47). Between these two extremes, she identified a range of minor pleasures attached to the serial repetition, extended suspense, and endless variation of the dramas of everyday life.

According to Ang (1985), the features of 20th-century melodrama are narrative excess and the continuous crossings between the trivial and the extraordinary in women's everyday lives: incest, rape, wife assault, child abuse, and so on. The so-called postmodern soap is concerned with social

issues such as the feminization of poverty and even takes up feminist issues such as sexual harassment, abortion, pornography, and discrimination. However, the purpose is merely to convince the audience that somebody else is worse off, to legitimate life's misfortunes, and to highlight the soap itself as the only real and secure source of pleasure in life.

During the 1980s, the soap format was differentiated and turned into, for instance, the situation comedy ("sitcom"). Although the soap is rooted in tragedy, the sitcom represented a revival and often direct citation of comedy. One of the most popular American shows from the 1980s in the sitcom format was *Roseanne*, which Roseanne Barr wrote, coproduced, and starred in. Jewish, working class, and overweight, she became the "mother goddess" of the multicultural United States of the 1980s (Lee, 1995). According to Janet Lee, Roseanne embodied late-modern female independence, universal maternity, and feminist consciousness, while also representing differences in and among women. Under the cover of humor and self-irony, she introduced a whole range of controversial issues to the American public. Nevertheless, there were limits to the issues that could be broached, not least in terms of racial and sexual questions. That the same goes for the British context is documented in an analysis of the concurrent show *Cagney and Lacey*, on female partnership and lesbian relations, which was revised several times and eventually turned down by British networks (D'Acci, 1995). Nevertheless, "queer sitcoms" became a success during the 1980s and 1990s, and they have since multiplied due to the segmentation of powerful audiences in the wake of modern satellite TV and electronic media technology (Gross, 1995).

During the 1980s and 1990s, Black women writers not only became fashionable in the United States, there was an almost aggressive commercial move toward adapting Black women's literature for film and television, a controversial example of which was *The Color Purple*, written by Alice Walker, in 1982, and produced by Steven Spielberg, in 1985. To Black feminist media scholars, this represents a highly ambiguous trend, as demonstrated in an analysis of the TV show *The Women of Brewster Place* (1989) (Bobo, 1995; Bobo & Seiter, 1997). *The Women of Brewster Place* is the television version of a novel by the African American writer Gloria Naylor, directed by independent White director Donna Deitch and starring the famous talk show hostess Oprah Winfrey. The show does remain true to the cultural history of Black women in that it emphasizes the sense of community among Black women rather than focusing on sexism, racism, and homophobia. It confronts issues of incest, rape, child abuse, and violence against Black women by Black men, as well as stereotypes such as the sexual Black woman, the domestic servant, and the dominating Black mother (Bobo & Seiter, 1997, p. 175). However, feminist criticism of *The Women of Brewster Place* has

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centered on the show's melodramatic "Black soap" character. Bobo and Seiter opposed this criticism, maintaining that melodrama, soap, and glamor were the basic conditions of mainstream TV in the 1990s and preferring to study how the genre was used to rework such visual schemata. Thus, they investigated how the show gratifies the Black woman audience, and they highlighted the emphasis on survival and grief, on family bonds beyond biology, and on women's lifelong friendships. Furthermore, they claimed that *The Women of Brewster Place* plays with the soap framework, especially the expectations of a Black soap, in subtle ways (Bobo & Seiter, 1997, p. 181).

The conventions of melodrama are further explored in an analysis of the controversial *Oprah Winfrey Show* (Squire, 1997). In the 1990s, around 20 million Americans watched the *Oprah Winfrey Show* on weekdays, making it the most-watched daytime talk show. Like others of its kind, it aims to entertain, inform, and encourage communication about difficult issues. The guests are often ordinary people telling their own stories, and the host and star, Winfrey herself, often mingles with the audience in the studio and involves them in the discussion. According to Squire, Winfrey's "brand" is identifying with Black women, which is evident in the fact that Winfrey often invokes the work of Black women such as Gloria Naylor, Toni Morrison, and especially Maya Angelou. She calls Angelou her mentor and claims that the author's account of growing up in the Black South describes her own life. The show can thus be said to "signify" on the texts of African American women writers, rewriting them in a different medium and for a larger, more racially diverse audience (Squire, 1997, p. 105).

The *Oprah Winfrey Show* has been criticized for neglecting or superficially representing both gender and race, for alleviating White guilt by presenting a rags-to-riches, unthreatening Black woman, and for "dissing" African American men. Squire (1997) contradicted such criticism, highlighting Winfrey's consistent involvement in Black women's causes and the difficult balance between having the courage to confront the problems of Black masculinity and giving voice to alternative Black male identities (p. 99). Squire admitted, however, that there is a continuous tension between the sensational and the Black/feminist project, making the show "an odd mélange" of "growth psychology, religious devotion, political analysis, and personal hubris" (p. 108).

The *Winfrey* show represents an extreme example of the common perception of television as the mass medium closest to interpersonal communication, especially of the talk show as the genre closest to personal, intimate conversation, or even a feminine conversational style. Squire (1997) hypothesized that the excess of emotion and empiricism disrupts the genre format and that the paradox of super-real excess (also known from "reality TV")

and exposed in the clash between the powerful emotions and the quick shift of commercial breaks) functions to make the talk show “a pastiche of a pastiche.” Thus, television culture and the interconnections between genre and gender are said to be reworked and “signified on” in an endlessly repeated suspension between fluff and gravity; psychology, social analysis and emotions; and realism and super-realism (Squire, 1997, pp. 109–110).

## Gender at Work

The theory of dual spheres and voices and many of the distinguishing features of what has been considered female-versus-male communicative styles have been researched in work settings as well. According to Janet Holmes and Maria Stubbe (2003), the literature on gender and communication in organizations during the 1980s and 1990s documents a “feminine” versus a “masculine” mode, distinguished by the features shown in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2** Gender and Working Styles

<i>Feminine</i>	<i>Masculine</i>
Indirect	Direct
Conciliatory	Confrontational
Facilitative	Competitive
Collaborative	Autonomous
Minor contribution (in public)	Dominates (public) talking time
Supportive feedback	Aggressive interruptions
Person/process oriented	Task/outcome oriented
Affectively oriented	Referentially oriented

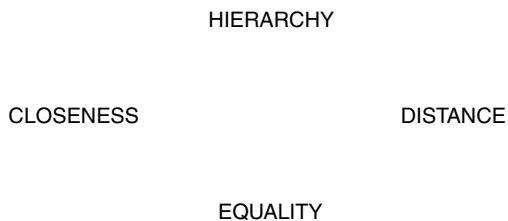
SOURCE: Adapted from Holmes and Stubbe (2003, p. 574).

These features reappear in research on a range of organizations, institutions, and work places, and the so-called masculine style of interaction is usually considered to be in line with the workplace norm. However, as Holmes and Stubbe (2003) have also pointed out, the list does not take into account the variations, the communicative embedding, and the contextual framing of the communicative events in question and the nuances in many of the reported studies. Thus, the list may actually obscure more than it reveals. Holmes and Stubbe have emphasized that when they speak of “feminine” and “masculine” communicative strategies or workplaces, they do so in terms of cultural perceptions and dimensions that are a matter of degree.

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Thus, different communication strategies or workplaces may be considered more or less feminine or masculine in different respects. In their own research, Holmes and Stubbe (2003) have investigated the common prejudice that women as well as “feminine” discourses and workplaces are less humorous. They found that “in a number of ways, then, women played a proactive positive role in contributing to the humor” (p. 578) and, moreover, that “‘feminine’ workplaces do not lack humor and that women’s contributions to workplace humor are typically frequent and collegial in orientation” (p. 578).

Shari Kendall and Deborah Tannen (1997) have taken a similar journey through the literature on gender, professions, and workplaces from the difference and identity approach and have reached rather similar conclusions. They have found that men are more inclined to claim attention and seek credit for their contributions, use an oppositional format to accomplish a range of interactional goals, and view challenge and debate as a kind of ritual opposition. Women, on the other hand, often begin with a disclaimer, try to be succinct so as not to take up more speaking time than necessary, and find it impossible to do their best in what they perceive as a competitive environment (Kendall & Tannen, 1997, p. 84). The consequence is that when women and men interact in work settings, a stylistic mismatch is likely to produce unbalanced participation, so that men end up having proportionately more influence. However, the authors also drew attention to the many missed nuances in the reported studies and called for caution in terms of conclusions. Kendall and Tannen have suggested yet another (structuralist) model that provides a scale of evaluation in terms of gender, workplaces, and communication strategies along the lines of hierarchy/equality and closeness/distance. The model suggests a sliding scale along two sets of parameters, instead of a fixed set of categorizations (Kendall & Tannen, 2003, p. 98). The model can be outlined as shown in Figure 5.2.




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**Figure 5.2** Gender and Work Mode



In commenting on the model, Kendall and Tannen (1997) referred to a growing bulk of literature on women's organizational skills and leadership during the 1980s and 1990s (see also Acker, 1992; Mills & Tancred, 1992). The point here is to highlight what is now understood as women's facilitative style and the way it matches the competencies that are required in new public and private management, since it fosters a type of power that involves the ability to accomplish one's own goals and to help others achieve theirs while doing so.

To nuance the picture, research on gender in different professions shows that women manage in intricate ways to conform to the usual (male-generated) norms, while succeeding in projecting new standards. For example, in one study on women police officers, women employees were found to substitute the traditional, authoritarian and patriarchal image for a more middle-class image of police work as professional and efficient (McElhinny, 1998). Several studies on women health care professionals and doctors have found that women seem better equipped to establish an evenly balanced relationship with patients and to minimize status and authority by using fewer directives and more appreciative inquiry, which is much more in accordance with the demands of information-oriented public service (Coates, 1995; West, 1998).

As Marta B. Calás (1992) and Calás and Linda Smircich (1992) have pointed out, research on gender and organization has been relatively sparse, but there is even less research on race/ethnicity and organization, not to mention on the intersections of gender and race/ethnicity and other differences on various levels in institutions and workplaces. However, as general demographics and certain organizational conditions in Europe and the United States in the new millennium render the discourses of globalization and diversity pivotal to innovation, change is afoot (see, for instance, Buzzanell, 2000). We return to this important discussion in Chapter 6.

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### **Case Study: Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA)**

As discussed in Chapter 2, feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) aims to reveal connections between language, power, ideology, and gender and to describe the ways in which power is produced and transformed in engendering discursive practices (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 2003, p. 13). FCDA is especially concerned with mapping this process: "Different identities are discursively constructed according to context, that is according to the audience to which they are addressed, the setting of the discursive

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act, the topic being discussed, and so on" (Wodak, 2003, p. 678). Wodak (2003) pointed to attention given to the relation between discourse, situation, and context and the complex interactions of producers and receivers of discourses through practice. Although she did not herself explicitly mention feminist critical discourse analysis, she did talk about combining theories of gender, feminist theory, and methodology with critical discourse analysis. According to Wodak, this combination is distinguished by a circular process of (a) empirical and theoretical elaboration, (b) macro- and microlevel investigation, and (c) multidisciplinary approaches and "toolboxes."

We have chosen a relatively recent case study by Ruth Wodak (2003) about the constitution of identities through discourse in the context of "the multinational, multilingual, and multicultural" European Union (EU) (p. 674). The study is part of a bigger research project on the EU and its institutions and organizations (including the European Parliament, the European Commission, and the European Council of Ministers, etc.). The purpose of the study is to examine how national, organizational, and individual identities are invoked and addressed in this context and how gender identities in particular are displayed and enacted in the midst of this complexity. The public domain in question is seen as particularly complex and characterized by intercultural, ideological, ethnic, national, and gender conflicts. The aim of the study, therefore, is to ask what strategies women employ to present and promote themselves and to guarantee that they are taken seriously (Wodak, 2003, p. 673). The part of the study referred to here is based on qualitative interviews conducted in Brussels with 14 delegates to the European Parliament (EP), and it concentrates on the interviews with the 5 women members (MEPs). The interviews focus on the issue of unemployment, the purpose of the primary organizational bodies of EU, day-to-day working life, and the personal history of the interviewees.

The context of the study is that equal rights are now anchored in laws of equal opportunity in most Western European countries and also in the legislative framework of the EU and its institutions. Moreover, the European Commission has introduced a strategy of "gender mainstreaming" to promote long-lasting changes in family structure, institutional practice, and organizational work and to establish a balanced distribution of resources and positions between women and men. However, there is a dearth of social structures and political institutions behind all the fine words, particularly in the EU. Even if women constitute 47.5% of the employees of the European Commission, only 5.9% are found at the highest level of the hierarchy. When it comes to the European Parliament, the 27% of the members who are women are unequally distributed among the member states. The Scandinavian countries and Luxembourg take the lead in terms of highest percentages of the total number of employees.

To clarify the premises of her critical discourse analysis, Wodak (2003) takes a quick tour of the different approaches to identity inherent in the tradition of critical theory and their later applications. These approaches correspond to the theoretical concepts of identity outlined in Chapter 2 under the heading of structuralism, but they

are further inspired by poststructuralism and in particular positioning theory and analysis (see Chapter 6). Wodak emphasizes the fact that she draws on the tools of critical linguistics and social semiotics, but she focuses particularly on storytelling as a means to approach the discursive construction of identity in interaction (p. 682).

In the following, we examine interviews with two Swedish MEPs and follow part of Wodak's (2003) analysis. Sweden and Finland were among the last three member states to join the EU at the time of the survey (1997), and in Sweden, only a small majority of the population voted yes. Furthermore, Sweden and Finland have a long tradition of Scandinavian-based political associations, for instance, in the Nordic Council (together with Denmark, Norway, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands). This means that the Swedish people have very complex regional and national affiliations to refer to. Wodak does not seem to know that for historical reasons, Finland does not belong to Scandinavia. Scandinavia consists of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, whereas the Nordic countries comprise Scandinavia, Iceland, and Finland. However, this is not crucial to her analysis.

According to Wodak, it is characteristic of the two Swedish informants that they draw on quite a range of identities, such as woman, Green/left, Swedish/Scandinavian/Nordic, European Unionist/(North) European, mother, political outsider, and so on. But when is one identity highlighted on behalf of the others, and how do the informants themselves relate these different identities? In the transcript below, a colon indicates extension of sound, a dash indicates abrupt cutoff, emphasized syllables/words are underlined>, words in single parentheses were difficult to understand and transcribe, and double parentheses indicate paralinguistic features:

- [1] it/ it's quite *simple*. - why we have this - high - unemployment rate no
- [2] and it's because we are changing *soti/* society
- [3] I mean we had a - highly in/ industrial society and now we are *changing*
- [4] so. - so: eh - this is completely *new* for us
- [5] and-/ and then we are trying - to *amend that*
- [6] and try to - eh: help that up
- [7] with-/ with - kind of *old -/ old structures:* and - *old - answers.* -
- [8] eh: and - we don't want to *face* that we really *have* to -
- [9] adjust a *lot of* - *thinking*
- [10] I mean that/ that's-/ what it is *about.* - and -/ and -
- [11] we have to - *reconsider* -
- [12] eh what is full employment and what is
- [13] what is eh: -/ to have a eh/ eh - a *work for salary:* -
- [14] and a lot of that so/ sort of things. -

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- [15] because I don't think that - we will *ever* -
- [16] *ever have* what called -
- [17] usually in Sweden
- [18] and -/ and -/ and *my* solution to that and/ and
- [19] *the Green group* is of course that
- [20] for the *first* you have to see: -
- [21] we have a/ had a -/ eh have another - eh eh another eh: - *approach*
- [22] and another - *view*: of - full employment. -
- [23] just to say that - okay. - this is - nineteen ninety. - *seven*
- [24] and h -/ we have had so many f/ people in -/ unemployed.
- [25] so the *first* thing we should *do*: - is of course to *reduce*: - the *working time*. -
- [26] because - eh forty hours:
- [27] a week as we are *working in Sweden* now
- [28] it was not - eh institution of *god*. -
- [29] it/ it was - decided of with/ us ((*laughs*))/
- [30] the/ the time when we -/ when we *needed* a lot of people to *work*
- [31] so - re-/ reduction of working time of course
- [32] and *also* - to change the attitudes in society against
- [33] the people that *have* work and *don't* have work
- [34] . . .
- [35] and eh: -/ and *then* also of course we have to - *support* and/
- [36] and say that *flexibility* in that sense
- [37] you could work the hour that you *like*
- [38] and you could have a half-time *jo:b* and so on
- [39] and have a small company in size
- [40] so all these *taxations*
- [41] and all - the regulations
- [42] has to be: - sh -/ *changed*
- [43] and *altered also*. - to make this *possible*
- [44] eh: and of course - the *taxation* or the/ the: -
- [45] you don't say *taxation* you say - eh: -
- [46] the tax on *labor* -/ on *labor*. -
- [47] *it's* it's quite *high*

- [48] I s:uppose it's - eh: - all the same in the European Union  
 [49] but *in Sweden* - eh which I/ know most of course ((*laughs*))/  
 [50] in the North West  
 [51] there eh -/ there we have - *really high*  
 [52] percentage of tax *on* - labor. -  
 [53] and that should be *s:witched* and *changed*  
 [54] of course so you put it on - *as I'm a Green* -  
 [55] *eh MEP* - on energy:  
 [56] and non resourceable -  
 [57] eh: eh:m - *ninedren/ non*  
 [58] *renewable resources* and energy and so on  
 [59] so - *this*: should be *switched* of course.

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SOURCE: Wodak, R., Multiple personalities: the role of female parliamentarians in the EU parliament, in J. Holmes & M. Meyerhoff (Eds.), *The handbook of language and gender*. Copyright © 2003. Reprinted with permission of Blackwell Publishing, Ltd.

In this first extract from MEP10, concerning the issue of unemployment, the national (Swedish) and political (Green) identities are foregrounded and used as contextual markers. However, Wodak claims that whereas it is not quite clear why MEP10 refers to national identity in lines 17 and 27, it is explained in line 49, where it is clarified that she estimates unemployment to be worse in Sweden than in the rest of the EU due to the extraordinarily high taxes on labor. Or rather, MEP10 estimates that this is the case in the "North West" (line 50). Unlike Wodak, we understand this phrase not as reference to a Swedish region (as regional differences in taxes in Sweden are only very small and regional taxes only a minor part of state taxes), but as a reference to Sweden as part of "North Western" Europe and this again as distinct from the EU. Wodak herself later on refers to the fact that a relatively large number of Scandinavian MEPs in the study distinguished between being European and being a European Unionist. In contrast to her national self-identification, MEP10's reference to her membership of the Green Party is unambiguous and immediately made relevant in terms of delivering a politics of full employment by reducing the standard number of hours worked per week (19–26) and a shift in taxes from labor to energy (53–59).

In another excerpt, MEP3 says that her fellow citizens are stubbornly bound to thinking of themselves as opponents of the EU even if they are now members, which is illustrated in the following anecdote:

- [1] I know that we are a very stubborn country  
 [2] Most of the people ah: are now: ah well  
 [3] A ha./ mo/ most of the people

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- [4] At least when was it fifty-one point four percent or something like that
- [5] Voted in the referendum for entering the European Union
- [6] But today we - almost never meet anyone who did -
- [7] I don't know what they did
- [8] Yeah because everybody said - do/ they said "no: I voted no:" and
- [9] Ye said "well I really do I re - I really do regret" ((*laughs*))
- [10] Aha: - so it (happened) ((*laughs*)) okay
- [11] So I mean it's make/ it doesn't make the whole ah - /
- [12] The whole billing - easier.

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MEP3 tells this story in terms of a national "we"; however, she also tells it to *distinguish* herself from her fellow countrymen, and in so doing, she puts herself on the Unionist side. According to Wodak, this is an example of the highly complex identity *bricolage* in which different identities are either fore- or backgrounded depending on situation and context. In both cases, however, gender identity is overrun not only by (supra)national but also by political identity. Wodak directs our attention to the finding that both MEP10 (Green) and MEP3 (left wing) highlight both their national and their political identities. Furthermore, both seem to understand their identities as distinctly different from the mainstream of MEPs of continental Europe and from the political center. In their narratives, they construct themselves as belonging to distinct groups, and MEP3 further extends this format both to her professional role as a social worker and to her gender. Or rather, you may say that the semantics of being "a very special bird . . . everything's wrong" (Wodak, 2003, p. 689) builds up to a climax that culminates with a reference to her gender. From there on, it is possible to understand the row of deviations backward, now illuminated by this "prime" marker of difference:

- [1] I figure here the most common - eh civil - job. - for an MEP
- [2] is eh to be a lawyer.
- [3] me myself *I'm far from that*
- [4] the job I had doesn't even exist outside *Scandinavia*.
- [5] so: - it's a sort of a social teacher - so
- [6] so I'm/ I'm very in/ an:/ a very special bird in this a:
- [7] If mhm mhm so now you don't feel like you - fit into sort of a *typical* MEP eh

- [8] *Me no. no: no: I'm not. I'm left I'm a woman I'm Swedish and I'm also*  
 [9] *everything -/ everything's wrong. ((laughs))*

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In Wodak's analysis, MEP3 here points out many of the identities (social teacher, left, female, Swedish) that she associates herself with and that in her own perception mark her as different from the norm, by traditional/conservative/patriarchal European standards. Wodak considers the sequence a good illustration of how a successful woman has managed to come to terms with all her differences, which have served to marginalize her, and now emphasizes them on her own terms. She "turns the tables," in a manner of speaking, and strategically redefines the negative connotations into positive attributes: "a very special bird." In this way, she appears to solve conflicting ideological problems and dilemmas through self-irony, self-reflection—and, we might add, circumvention. To emphasize Wodak's analytical procedure and push it to its logical conclusion, we highlight the way it pinpoints the climax of the interview that is also the climax of suspense in MEP3's self-narration in lines 8 and 9. This is the turn of the screw of self-interpretation that makes MEP3 able to redefine her activity as politician:

- [1] I mean I know that - even on/ on a: national level  
 [2] I mean there are very many politicians all sorts in all parties -  
 [3] that *prefer to/ to meet the/ the - eh/ the citizens through - media.*  
 [4] *eh -/ so I know that I'm not that sort.*  
 [5] so I prefer to meet people. -  
 [6] *it/ it could be hard but it's more interesting . . .*  
 [7] and that's the way I learn at the same time - a lot.  
 [8] . . . and a (xx) of -/ I met so very many politicians - during my -  
 living 45 years  
 [9] *((laughs)) so: - and it's the -/*  
 [10] I mean do you really - when you've seen them in action  
 [11] when you were a child or  
 [12] all through the years - you say oh - how disgusting and -  
 [13] what behaviour they've done and instead I -/  
 [14] *for sure I will not be that sort of person that I always despised!*  
 [15] that means that if you go to a meeting  
 [16] you just don't go there. -

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- [17] and you just don't talk for forty-five minutes  
 [18] telling everybody how the situation really is  
 [19] and then you leave *off*. -  
 [20] mostly with the plane first a limo and then a plane and  
 [21] that's - not a boring life.

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Through irony and overt criticism, she again marks her difference from other MEPs and constructs her own unique identity as a responsible and visionary MEP who listens and is in close contact with the people she represents. In both lines 4 and 14, she explicitly dissociates herself from being "that sort," implicitly referring to the typical dominant male politician who is in fact uninterested in people and politics and aspires only to power.

Wodak concludes that she has identified three types of female gender role constructions, which seem to be successful in this context and at this level of politics: There is the assertive activist, the expert, and the positive difference (the "special bird"). These are very different from the roles often maintained in other contexts, at least in Austria. For example, there are woman principals in schools (where one prototype is the mother) or "big business" (where there is the new prototype of the female co-opter). One of the questions Wodak raises is whether the role of "special bird" may be compared with former articulations that make strong women leaders the exception.

From our view, the standpoint view, the significance of Wodak's (2003) contribution lies in her application of the difference and identity approach and her focus on women's multiple identities, on one hand, and the pertinence of a critical discourse analysis methodology, on the other. Of particular interest is her focus on the communicative practice of the informants and the way they storytell their multiple identities, thereby forming a coherent discourse of radical and productive otherness. It is important to note, however, in terms of Wodak's initial setting and the demands of FCDA, that she does not to any great extent consider the interaction taking place in the interview setup. What is going on in this particular situation, and how do the informants use it in terms of storytelling their own identities? Wodak could have more accurately analyzed the interview as a communicative event by studying the rhetorical strategies involved. However, we do not know whether she in fact does so in the extended study. To learn from the case, we would suggest the following list of items to consider when planning research from the perspective of FCDA:

1. What is the particular problem that you want to address?
2. Where do you ground your theoretically based thesis and core terminology?



3. How do you define the social practice in question and frame it as discourse in context?
  4. Where and how do you locate gender and see it related to power?
  5. What are your particular tools for collecting and analyzing data?
  6. How do you relate your own research to FCDA?
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