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10

Understanding Gender Differences in Amount of Talk: A Critical Review of Research

DEBORAH JAMES
and
JANICE DRAKICH

When both husband and wife wear pants it is not difficult to tell them apart—he is the one who is listening. —Anonymous

The belief that women talk more than men is firmly entrenched in Western culture. However, the investigation of gender differences in amount of talk has not supported this widely held stereotype: the bulk of research findings indicate that men talk more than women. Results have, however, been far from consistent on the question of which gender talks more: some studies have found that women talk more than men, at least in some circumstances, and a number of studies have found no difference between the sexes in amount of talk. In this chapter we examine the inconsistent research findings and attempt to demonstrate that they are, in fact, more consistent than they might initially appear. We argue that in order to make sense of these findings, it is necessary to consider carefully the context and structure of social interaction within which gender differences are observed.

The Research Findings on Amount of Talk

Sixty-three studies that we know of which appeared between 1951 and 1991 have addressed the question of gender differences in amount of talk

in adult interaction.¹ Fifty-six of these studies, the great majority, deal with mixed-sex interaction (see Table 10.1); in addition, ten of these fifty-six, plus a further seven studies, have compared male and female talk in same-sex interaction.² Our review focuses on those studies which have examined mixed-sex interaction. Virtually all of these have used as their subjects middle-class English-speaking Americans; consequently the conclusions we report can only be viewed as holding for this group, although we contend that our consideration of the context and structure of social interaction can also be applied to explanations for observed behavior in other cultural groups.

Studies have varied as to how amount of talk has been measured; these measures have included the total number of words, the total number of seconds spent talking, the number of turns at talk taken, and the average length of a turn. In the case of six studies different measures produced discrepant results; in these cases the measure used to classify the study in Tables 10.1–10.4 is that of the number of seconds spent talking or words

Table 10.1 An Overview of Studies Dealing with Gender Differences in Amount of Talk in Mixed-Sex Adult Interaction

Studies in Which Men Were Found to Talk More Than Women Overall

Argyle, Lalljee, & Cook 1968
Aries 1976
Bernard 1972
Caudill 1958
Doherty 1974
Eakins & Eakins 1976
Eubanks 1975
Heiss 1962
Hilpert, Kramer, & Clark 1975
Karp & Yoels 1976
Kelly, Wildman, & Urey 1982
Kenkel 1963
Latour 1987
Mulac 1989
Parker 1973
Sayers 1987
Simkins-Bullock & Wildman 1991
Smith-Lovin, Skvoretz, & Hudson 1986
Strodtbeck 1951
Strodtbeck, James, & Hawkins 1957
Strodtbeck & Mann 1956
Swacker 1976
Wood & Karten 1986
Woods 1989

(continued)

Table 10.1 (Continued)

Studies in Which Men Were Found to Talk More Than Women in Some Circumstances, But No Difference Was Found in Other Circumstances

Boersma, Gay, Jones, Morrison, & Remick 1981
Brooks 1982
Cornelius & Gray 1988
Cornelius, Gray, & Constantinople 1990
Craig & Pitts 1990
Edelsky 1981, this volume
Kollock, Blumstein, & Schwartz 1985
Nemeth, Endicott, & Wachtler 1976
Soskin & John 1963
Sternglanz & Lyberger-Ficek 1977

Studies in Which in Some Circumstances Men Were Found to Talk More Than Women, But in Others Women Were Found to Talk More Than Men

Dovidio, Brown, Heltman, Ellyson, & Keating 1988
Hershey & Werner 1975
Kajander 1976

Studies in Which Sometimes Men Were Found to Talk More, Sometimes Women, and Sometimes Neither, Depending on the Circumstances

Leet-Pellegrini 1980

Studies in Which Women Were Found to Talk More Than Men Overall

Aries 1982
Askinas 1971

Studies in Which No Difference Was Found Between the Genders in Amount of Talk

Bilous & Krauss 1988
Case 1988
Crosby, Jose, & Wong-McCarthy 1981
Crouch & Dubois 1977
Duncan & Fiske 1977
Frances 1979
Hirschman 1973
Hirschman 1974
Leffler, Gillespie, & Conaty 1982
Manber 1976
Markel, Long, & Saine 1976
Martin Craig 1983
McLachlan 191
McMillan, Clifton, McGrath, & Gale 1977
Robertson 1978
Shaw and Sadler 1965

uttered. The only exception is that of Edelsky (1981, this volume), which examined only number of turns taken and average length of a turn. Since this study found no gender difference in number of turns but that males' turns were longer (in one type of "floor"), and this would presumably lead to males' taking up more overall talking time, we have classified this study as finding males to talk more (in that type of floor).³ Some comments will be made on problems associated with the use of different measures of amount of talk, and on the cases in which discrepant results were found for different measures.

To summarize, of these fifty-six studies dealing with adult mixed-sex interaction males were found to talk more than females overall in twenty-four, or 42.9%, of the studies. In a further ten studies (17.9%) it was found that males talked more than females in some circumstances, with there being no difference in other circumstances. In three studies (5.4%) sometimes males and sometimes females talked more, depending on the circumstances, and in one further study sometimes males, sometimes females, and sometimes neither talked more, again depending on the circumstances. Sixteen studies (28.6%) found no difference between the sexes overall in amount of talk; only two studies (3.6%) found females to talk more overall. The interesting questions here are, then, first, why have the majority of studies found males to talk more than females, either overall or under at least some circumstances? Second, how is the variation in the findings of different studies to be explained? And third, why does the stereotype that women talk more exist, given that there is extraordinarily little empirical support for it? We will concentrate here on the first and second questions and will return to the third at the conclusion of the chapter.

The Approach to Understanding the Research Findings

We begin by reviewing the main explanations which have been proposed within the language and gender literature as to why most studies have found men to talk more than women in mixed-sex interaction. Many researchers have attributed this in a straightforward way to the fact that men have greater status and power than do women. Holding the floor at length, it is held, is a way in which men exploit this greater power and exercise dominance over women. Dale Spender argues (1980) that men control language and determine the norms by which it can be used, and that they attempt to prevent women from speaking from lack of respect for women and as a way of legitimating their own primacy. "In a male supremacist society where women are devalued, their language is devalued to such an extent that they are required to be silent" (pp. 42-43). It has further been suggested that men use specific mechanisms to discourage women from speaking, such as interruptions and inattention to the topics women raise (Spender 1980:87, Thorne, Kramarae, & Henley 1983:17). (It might be noted, however, that the majority of studies dealing with gender

differences in interruptions have not, in fact, found males to interrupt females more than the reverse; see James and Clarke [this volume].) This approach makes a contribution to our understanding of gender differences in talk but offers no explanation for the fact that many studies have found no difference between the genders in amount of talk, or for the fact that a few studies have found women to talk more.

Another approach to explaining why most studies have found men to talk more than women, first proposed in Maltz and Borker (1982), focuses on the idea that women and men tend to learn, through socialization, to approach conversational interaction with different goals and to use different verbal strategies in interacting with others. Much evidence suggests that men learn that it is important for them to assert status and to appear a leader in interactions, while women learn to concentrate on using talk in such a way as to establish and maintain harmonious relationships with others. It has been suggested that taking and holding the floor for long periods follows logically from this as a male speech strategy, since this can function as a way of gaining attention and asserting status, while by contrast, being careful not to take up a disproportionate amount of talking time follows logically from the female speech style, since this emphasizes cooperation, support, and equality among interactants. Thus, Coates (1986:117), for example, comments that "the differences between the competitive, assertive male style and the co-operative, supportive female style mean that men will tend to dominate in mixed-sex interaction."⁴ Moreover, Tannen (1990) proposes reasons why men might not always talk more than women, from the point of view of this approach: she suggests that men tend to talk more than women in "public" situations, whereas women tend to talk more than men in "private" situations. In a public situation, she suggests, there are typically more participants than in a private situation, they know each other less well, and there are more status differences among them; therefore, participants are more likely to feel that they will be appraised by others in the group. Men will thus talk more because they feel the need to establish or maintain their status in the group, whereas women will talk less because they do not use talk to assert status and because they fear that their talk will be judged negatively. In a private situation, on the other hand, one is with individuals with whom one feels close; since women view talk as crucial in maintaining close relationships whereas men do not, women will tend to talk more than men in private settings. This approach, too, has played a dominant role in our understanding of gender differences in talk.

We propose here, however, an alternative approach to making sense of the findings in the area of amount of talk which we will argue is a particularly fruitful one. This approach offers, we suggest, significant further insights both into why so many studies have found men to talk more and into why there has been so much variation in the findings in this area. In this viewpoint, careful consideration is taken of the exact context and structure of social interaction. Berger, Rosenholtz, and Zelditch (1980),

among others, argue that differences in behavior result primarily from differences in expectations and beliefs about oneself and others. This approach, we suggest, is crucial to an understanding of gender differences in amount of talk. Differences in how much women and men talk in different contexts, we maintain, can be explained in terms of the differential cultural expectations about women's and men's abilities and areas of competence—which are associated with the difference in status between women and men—in interrelationship with specific factors in particular situations which can affect these expectations. In taking this approach, we adopt the sociological perspective of status characteristics (or expectation states) theory (Berger, Fizek, Norman, & Zelditch 1977). Status characteristics theory provides us with a framework and a cumulative body of research which help us to understand the processes that connect gender to observable inequalities in face-to-face interaction. To clarify our subsequent discussion, we briefly introduce the central concepts of status characteristics theory—"self-other performance expectations" and "status characteristics."

Status Characteristics Theory

Status characteristics theory focuses on how status differences organize interaction. The theory argues that in social interaction individuals evaluate themselves relative to the other individuals with whom they are participating and come to hold expectations as to how, and how well, they will perform in relation to every other participant in the interaction. These "self-other performance expectations" provide the structure of the interaction which then determines subsequent interaction. The formulation of these "self-other performance expectations" is based on the "status characteristics" possessed by the participants in the social interaction. A status characteristic is any characteristic that is socially valued, is meaningful, and has differentially evaluated states which are associated directly or indirectly with beliefs about task performance ability—"performance expectations." Examples of status characteristics are race, sex, education, or organizational office. People's social expectations as to how well and in what way the different participants in an interaction will perform are crucially associated with whether individuals possess the high or the low state of the relevant status characteristic (particularly when participants do not know each other well, so that other information which might override the influence of these status characteristics is unavailable to them). Thus, for example, individuals who have high status with regard to a status characteristic are viewed as being in general more intellectually competent and able than are individuals who have low status with regard to that status characteristic. Consequently the high-status individual is not only expected to perform better but is also given more opportunity to perform than the lower-status individual. It is important to note that status characteristics and their associated performance expectations are relational; that is, we do not speak

of performance expectations for women, but rather we speak of performance expectations associated with women in relation to those performance expectations associated with men. "Because status characteristics involve relational expectations females do not in this conception carry sex-related characteristics around with them in every situation; or, put in other words, sex-related characteristics are not assumed to be part of their character, they are assumed to be beliefs about certain kinds of situations" (Berger et al. 1977:35).

The power of this theory lies in its explanation of how external status characteristics structure the status hierarchy of face-to-face interaction. This theoretical approach for explaining the data, then, places particular importance on social structure, which sociologists have defined as patterned relationships.

The fruitfulness of this approach will become more evident as we analyze the findings. Let us now turn to a more careful examination of the research and research findings on amount of talk.

The Relevance of the Research Activity to Amount of Talk

The research on amount of talk focusing on face-to-face interaction has examined talk within the context of a variety of different kinds of activities. These activities, we argue, can be held to form a continuum. At one end are "formal tasks"; at the other are informal non-task-oriented activities. In between the two are "informal tasks" and activities such as interaction in a college or university classroom which occur within formal structures but are not task-oriented.

Formal task activities are defined in sociology as activities in which a pair or group of individuals come together to accomplish specific instrumental goals such as solving a problem together or making a joint decision. These tasks require participants to exchange ideas, to take each other's opinions into account as they work at the task, and to complete the task successfully by producing a single, collective outcome such as a committee decision. By comparison, neither informal task activities nor non-task-oriented activities require the accomplishment of a specific goal such as joint decision making or problem solving. An example of an informal task is a situation in which subjects have been brought together and asked by an experimenter simply to "get to know one another"; an example of a non-task-oriented activity is naturally occurring casual conversation. These different types of activity are associated with different rules, regulations, and requirements.

Since our position in examining the research findings is that the behavior observed is dependent on the requirements of the situation and the relative performance expectations that participants hold in a given situation, it is necessary to differentiate studies examining behavior within different contexts. For our purposes here we deal separately with the studies employing formal task activities, the studies involving informal activ-

ities (both task and nontask), and the studies involving formally structured but not task-oriented activities, such as college classroom interaction.⁵

Amount of Talk in Formal Task Contexts

Twenty-four of the fifty-six studies dealing with adult face-to-face interaction have employed formal task activities. As examples of these, three studies have examined talk in task-oriented committee meetings such as faculty meetings or hospital staff meetings (Eakins & Eakins 1976, Edelsky 1981, this volume, Caudill 1958); in two studies subjects were

Table 10.2 Studies Involving Formal Tasks

Studies Which Found Men to Talk More Overall

Caudill 1958
Eakins & Eakins 1976
Heiss 1962
Hilpert, Kramer, & Clark 1975
Kelly, Wildman, & Urey 1982
Kenkel 1963
Mulac 1989
Simkins-Bullock & Wildman 1991
Smith-Lovin, Skvoretz, & Hudson 1986
Strodtbeck 1951
Strodtbeck, James, & Hawkins 1957
Strodtbeck & Mann 1956
Wood & Karten 1986

Studies Which Found Men to Talk More in Some Circumstances, But No Difference in Other Circumstances

Edelsky 1981, this volume
Kollock, Blumstein, & Schwartz 1985
Nemeth, Endicott, & Wachtler 1976

Studies Which Found Men to Talk More in Some Circumstances, But Women to Talk More in Others

Hershey & Werner 1975

Studies in Which Sometimes Men Were Found to Talk More, Sometimes Women, and Sometimes Neither, Depending on the Circumstances

Leet-Pellegrini 1980

Studies Which Found Women to Talk More Overall

Aries 1982

Studies Which Found No Difference Between the Genders in Amount of Talk

Bilous & Krauss 1988
Crosby, Jose, & Wong-McCarthy 1981
McLachlan 1991
McMillan, Clifton, McGrath, & Gale 1977
Shaw & Sadler 1965

members of a mock jury who had to decide on the guilt or innocence of a defendant (Strodtbeck & Mann 1956, Strodtbeck, James, & Hawkins 1957); in one study small groups were asked to solve a murder mystery (McMillan, Clifton, McGrath, & Gale 1977); in another married couples were asked to come to a decision on such matters as how to spend money won in a lottery (Hershey & Werner 1975); and in still another small groups had to reach a consensus on the advisability of a doctor's prescribing amphetamines to a trusted student who wanted the drugs to help improve his or her performance on a medical school admission test (Aries 1982).

Of these twenty-four studies (see Table 10.2) thirteen found men to talk more than women overall, and three found men to talk more in certain circumstances, with there being no difference in other circumstances (in one of these, Edelsky [1981, this volume], men can in fact be presumed to have also talked more overall; see note 3). One study found that sometimes men and sometimes women talked more, depending on the circumstances; one study found that sometimes men, sometimes women, and sometimes neither talked more, again depending on the circumstances; and five studies found no difference between the genders in amount of talk. Only one study found women to talk more than men overall.

Understanding the Results

The analysis of these results begins with the question, Why did the great majority of these studies find men to talk more than women, either overall or in at least some circumstances?

Previous research has indicated that those who have high status with regard to a status characteristic such as race, organizational rank, or occupation participate more in task-oriented dyads or groups than do those who have low status with regard to that characteristic (e.g., Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch 1980, Stein & Heller 1979, Slater 1966, Capella 1985). Thus, if gender is also a status characteristic, it is not surprising to find men talking more than women in such contexts. Why, however, should those of high status talk more than those of low status in formal task-oriented interactions? The answer to this question can be found in status characteristics theory; in fact, the finding that men talk more than women follows precisely the predictions of the theory. As was noted earlier, the theory holds that individuals who have high status with regard to some status characteristic will be viewed both by themselves and by others as more intellectually competent, and therefore likely to perform better, than individuals who have low status with regard to that characteristic. Higher-status individuals, then, since they feel more competent, will be more willing to contribute to the interaction than will lower-status individuals. They will also tend to be less tolerant of, and less willing to wait for, contributions from lower-status individuals, since they perceive those individuals as less competent at the task. Lower-status individuals, on the

other hand, expect higher-status individuals to be more competent than they are themselves. Thus, they encourage the participation of the higher-status individuals, they tend to wait for them to make contributions, and they are less willing to contribute to the interaction themselves. The effect is, of course, that higher-status individuals make significantly more verbal contributions and consequently take up significantly more time talking.⁶

As a further point, studies of role differentiation in groups have shown that those of higher status in a group are normally assigned to and accept a specifically task-oriented role, while those of lower status are normally assigned to and accept instead a primarily (positive) socioemotional role (in performing a positive socioemotional role, one supports others, shows interest, works to relieve tension in the group, etc.) Occupants of task-oriented roles are expected to make more task-oriented contributions than are occupants of positive socioemotional roles, and moreover, task-oriented contributions (typically, information, opinions, and suggestions) normally take up more talking time than do positive socioemotional contributions (e.g., agreeing and giving indications of interest). This latter point is confirmed by research documenting that the majority of group interaction consists of task-oriented behaviors (Anderson & Blanchard 1982). This pattern of role differentiation, then, also contributes to the overall result that those of higher status talk more in a task-oriented setting than do those of lower status. (And indeed many studies have found men to give more information and opinions than women in mixed-sex dyads or groups [e.g., Piliavin & Martin 1978, Fishman 1983, Wood & Karten 1986] and have found women to perform more socioemotional acts in interactions [e.g., Fowler & Rosenfeld 1979, Burleson 1982, Wood 1987].)

Support for this general explanation of why men talk more than women in mixed-sex formal task-oriented settings is provided by the following. First, the theory would predict that women would talk more in same-sex than in mixed-sex interaction in such settings, since their status (all else being equal) would be equivalent to that of their coparticipants, and further, that the distribution of task and socioemotional behavior would be similar for both female and male same-sex groups. Two studies, Bilous and Krauss (1988) and Mulac (1989), have compared amount of talk in same-sex and mixed-sex formal task-oriented interaction; both found that women did indeed talk more in same-sex than in mixed-sex interaction.⁷ In addition, Yamada, Tjosvold, and Draguns (1983) and Lockheed (1976) both found that females and males did not differ in number of task-oriented contributions in same-sex formal task groups, but that males produced significantly more such contributions than did females in mixed-sex groups.

Second, support for the theory is provided by Eskilson and Wiley (1976), who examined three-person groups performing a formal task. For half of these groups leaders were assigned by the drawing of lots. For the other half a test related to the task was administered, and one member of

the group was announced to have performed best on this test. (In fact, however, s/he was selected at random). This individual was assigned to be the leader of the group and was in addition given information relevant to the task which other group members did not have. Status characteristics theory would predict that the women leaders in this second group would have high status in the group, regardless of its gender composition; would both perceive themselves and be perceived by others as relatively highly competent at the task; as a result would participate verbally to an extent similar to that of the equivalent male leaders; and would participate more than female leaders who were chosen by the drawing of lots. These were indeed the results found.

Thus when gender and associated expectations are nullified, males and females behave similarly with regard to amount of talk in task-oriented groups; it is only when gender influences the interaction that differences in amount of talk appear.

At this point we turn to the following question: Why, then, is it that eleven of these twenty-four studies dealing with amount of talk in formal task-oriented interaction did *not* find men to talk more than women overall?

An examination of these eleven studies in comparison with those which did find men to talk more overall reveals two methodological differences between them which help to explain the inconsistency in the findings: differences in the way in which amount of talk was measured and differences in the variables examined.

First, one source of the apparent inconsistency in findings lies in how amount of talk was measured. In Aries (1982), which found women to talk more, and Shaw and Sadler (1965) and McMillan, Clifton, McGrath, and Gale (1977), who found no difference between the genders in amount of talk, what was measured was not the total amount of talk (measured in seconds or in words) produced by men and women, nor the average length of verbal contributions, but rather (in the cases of Aries and of Shaw and Sadler) the number of verbal acts initiated by each gender, and (in the case of McMillan et al.) the number of sentences produced. The first two and the last two measures, however, do not necessarily produce identical results. For example, Craig and Pitts (1990), in a study of university tutorials, found that male and female tutors did not differ in average number of verbal acts initiated, but that male tutors nevertheless took up more overall talking time; the same was true of male and female students in male-led tutorials. Presumably this was because males were producing longer utterances (although this was not explicitly measured). Similarly, three studies, Edelsky (1981, this volume), Frances (1979), and Duncan and Fiske (1977), found that men and women did not differ in average number of verbal acts in mixed-sex interaction, but that the average length of an act was significantly greater for men. In all probability the reason why these different measures may produce different results has to do with the consistent finding of mixed-sex interaction studies (noted earlier) that a greater percentage of men's than of women's speech consists of specifi-

cally task-oriented behavior such as giving information, opinions, and suggestions, whereas a greater percentage of women's than of men's speech consists of positive socioemotional and "facilitating" behavior, such as agreeing, giving indications of interest in what others are saying, and trying to draw out others. (Indeed, one of the findings of Aries [1982] was that this was the case for her subjects.) Acts of the former type tend to take up significantly more talking time than acts of the latter type. Thus it is possible for the genders to initiate the same number of verbal acts or even for females to initiate more, but for males nevertheless to take up significantly more talking time. In the case of these three studies which measured only the number of acts initiated or sentences produced men may in fact have taken up more talking time overall than women; we do not know. Thus, it is important to be aware that different measures can produce different results in comparing studies of gender differences in amount of talk; all too often, the results of different measures have been assumed by researchers to represent the same behavior, when in fact they represent different types of behavior.⁸

A second source of the apparent inconsistency in the findings lies in the variables examined in particular studies. Hershey and Werner (1975) provide one illustration of this. This study of decision making by married couples found that wives who were not associated with a feminist organization spoke for a significantly shorter length of time than did their husbands, but wives who *were* associated with a feminist organization spoke for a *greater* length of time than did their husbands. Thus, in contrast with other researchers, Hershey and Werner introduce the variable of feminism; this nullifies the impact of gender for feminist couples. For those couples who held more traditional expectations about the genders, the results conformed to stereotypic expectations. However, for the feminist couples the results did not conform to gender expectations. Feminists are not likely to accept traditional sexist values nor adhere to traditional gender roles in interaction and are likely to choose as marriage partners men who have similar views. Thus, we might expect these women to make, and be allowed by their husbands to make, more task-oriented contributions than would otherwise be usual.

Similarly, Kollock, Blumstein, and Schwartz (1985) in a study of communicative patterns in heterosexual and homosexual couples introduced the variable of "relative power," measured in terms of relative influence over day-to-day decision making (as determined by a questionnaire completed by each partner). It was found that in heterosexual couples in which the male was the more "powerful" member, and in homosexual couples in which one member was more "powerful" than the other, the more powerful member took up significantly more talking time when the couple worked together on a formal task. However, in couples in which the members were rated as equal in power, there was no significant difference in amount of talk.⁹

Leet-Pellegrini (1980) examined the contribution of "expertise." While

she found no difference between equally "nonexpert" men and women in amount of talk,¹⁰ she found that when one member of a mixed-sex dyad was supplied with topically relevant information such that s/he took on the role of "expert" in the task assigned, women as well as men talked significantly more than their uninformed partner of the opposite sex. Having expertise is likely to make women as well as men perceive themselves, and be perceived by their partner, as relatively high in competence. (However, male "experts" were found to occupy significantly more talking space relative to uninformed female partners than did female "experts" relative to uninformed male partners; this is unsurprising, since status characteristics theory would predict that individuals would combine the performance expectations associated with their gender and their expertise status characteristics [diffuse and specific, respectively]. That is, individuals will add the positive expectations and subtract the negative expectations to formulate an averaged expectation. Thus, here, individuals would add the positive performance expectations for the male "experts" who held high status on both gender and expertise, but for the women "experts" would subtract the negative performance expectations associated with being female from the positive expectations associated with being an "expert.")

Edelsky (1981, this volume) examined a rather different kind of variable. In this study of five committee meetings Edelsky argued that it was possible to distinguish two kinds of "floors" ("singly developed floors" and "collaboratively developed floors"), where a floor is defined as "the acknowledged what's-going-on within a psychological time/space" (Edelsky, this vol.: 209). Single floors, which were by far the most prevalent type of floor, were characterized by single speakers taking turns in sequence and were highly task-oriented. Here men spoke significantly more than women, as we might expect. In collaborative floors, which were of relatively brief duration, two or more people spoke simultaneously in seeming "free-for-alls" or "jointly built one idea, operating on the same wavelength" (p. 189). This included, for example, jointly sharing in building an answer to a question or joking together about some matter. In collaborative floors the interaction was "high involvement, synergistic, solidarity-building" (p. 221). Collaborative floors were clearly overall less task-oriented than single floors; for example, Edelsky notes that "managing the agenda," such as reporting on items and soliciting responses, was the predominant activity in single floors but not in collaborative floors; "time-outs from the agenda more often . . . coincided with collaborative floors." (p. 217) (for example, joking was much more common). In collaborative floors, there was no difference in the amount of talking time taken up by men and women. But indeed our theory predicts a difference in this direction between single and collaborative floors. Since collaborative floors are typically less task-oriented, there is a lessened demand for the status-associated intellectual competence than is the case in single floors, and moreover, because collaborative floors are jointly developed, making a

contribution is not perceived as an attempt to take single control of the floor. For both of these reasons, women are likely to feel less "on the spot" and thus more willing to speak in collaborative than in single floors (and men are likely to take a more tolerant attitude toward their contributions).

All of these studies point to the importance of social structure—the underlying pattern of social relationships and the underlying structure of self-other expectations—in explaining behavior.

Overall, then, we can conclude that the results of existing studies on amount of talk in mixed-sex formal task-oriented interaction are quite consistent with what one would predict if it is accepted that the expectations associated with high-status people are normally attached to men and the expectations associated with low-status people are normally attached to women, but that it is also the case that particular circumstances can affect or nullify the impact of gender on expectations.

Amount of Talk in Formally Structured but Not Formally Task-Oriented Interaction

Sixteen studies (see Table 10.3) have examined interaction in contexts which involve a relatively high degree of formal structure but are not formally task-oriented in the sense defined earlier: that is, in which there is no requirement that the group successfully complete a task by producing a single, collective outcome. Twelve of these studies have dealt with participation in college classrooms. The remaining four are Bernard (1972), a study of TV panel discussions; Swacker (1976), an examination of question-and-answer periods after papers were presented at three academic conferences; Woods (1989), a study of colleagues conferring at work; and Leffler, Gillespie, and Conaty (1982), in which subjects roleplayed being "teacher" or "student." Of these studies six found males to talk more overall; six found males to talk more in some circumstances, but no difference in other circumstances; one found males to talk more in one respect, but females to talk more in another; and three found no difference between the genders. None of these studies found females to talk more overall.

These results are consistent with those found for the studies involving formal tasks: the great majority of studies found men to talk more than women, either overall or in some circumstances. Since, as in the case of formal tasks, the contexts involved here are ones in which intellectual competence is perceived as important, it is to be expected that the results would be similar to those of the formally task-oriented studies.

As in the case of the studies examined earlier the presence of factors which serve to nullify the impact of the expectations associated with gender aids in explaining the variations in the findings. For example, in Leffler, Gillespie, and Conaty (1982), in which pairs of subjects roleplayed being "teacher" and "student" (and "teachers" were given extra

Table 10.3 Studies Examining Formally Structured, but Not Formally Task-Oriented Interaction

Studies Which Found Men to Talk More Overall

Bernard 1972
Karp & Yoels 1976
Latour 1987
Parker 1973
Swacker 1976
Woods 1989

Studies Which Found Men to Talk More in Some Circumstances, But No Difference in Other Circumstances

Boersma, Gay, Jones, Morrison, & Remick 1981
Brooks 1982
Cornelius & Gray 1988
Cornelius, Gray, & Constantinople 1990
Craig & Pitts 1990
Sternglanz & Lyberger-Ficek 1977

Studies Which Found Men to Talk More in One Respect, But Women to Talk More in Another

Kajander 1976

Studies Which Found No Difference Between the Genders in Amount of Talk

Crouch & Dubois 1977
Leffler, Gillespie, & Conaty 1982
Robertson 1978

relevant information), it was found that the status and expertise associated with the "teacher" role outweighed the effects of gender, with the result that "teachers" talked more than "students" regardless of the gender of the subject.

Considerable variation exists in the results of the studies dealing with amount of participation in college classrooms. There appear to be several variables which are relevant here. Chief among these are the sex of the instructor and the subject matter of the course in question. Unfortunately, however, studies have not been consistent as to their findings concerning the relevance of these variables. For example, Sternglanz and Lyberger-Ficek (1977) and Craig and Pitts (1990) found that males spoke significantly more, proportionately, than females in male-taught classes, but that there was no difference in female-taught classes; Karp and Yoels (1976) and Parker (1973) found that males spoke more than females in both types of class, but that the difference was greater in male-taught classes. In contrast with all four of these studies, however, Brooks (1982) found that males participated more than females in female-taught classes, but that there was no difference in male-taught classes; and Boersma, Gay, Jones,

Morrison, and Remick (1981) found that males made more comments than females in female-taught nonscience classes but that there was no difference in male-taught classes or in science classes, and also found that male students were significantly more likely than females to speak more than once per interaction with a female instructor, but that this difference disappeared with a male instructor. (Sternglanz & Lyberger-Ficek [1977] also found that male students were more likely than females to speak more than once per interaction with an instructor but did not find the sex of the instructor to be relevant.) In addition, Cornelius and Gray (1988) found that the highest participation rates were those of male students in female-taught classes in the arts and social sciences. Sorting out the effects of these and other possible variables is beyond the scope of this review; further research is clearly needed in this area.¹¹

Nevertheless, the fact that most of these studies found males to talk more than females, either overall or under some circumstances, is clearly consonant with what one would predict given the social structural factors discussed earlier.

Amount of Talk in Informal Task Contexts and Non-Task-Oriented Contexts

Let us now turn to those sixteen studies dealing with amount of talk which have not involved formal task-oriented activities or other formally structured interaction (see Table 10.4). Most of these studies have been experiments in which pairs or small groups of subjects were asked to "talk about anything" or "just get to know each other," or else were asked to discuss a topic such as how to grow vegetables (Dovidio, Brown, Heltman, Ellyson & Keating 1988) or who should control the money in a marriage (Eubanks 1975). Three studies, in addition, have involved the recording of naturally occurring speech: Soskin and John (1963) examined the speech of one couple for several days; Doherty (1974) observed a therapy group in a psychiatric hospital; and Case (1988) studied the speech of a group of managers at a management school who "worked together in an unstructured setting, observing and attempting to understand their own . . . behavior [as leaders], and coming face to face with issues of power, uncertainty, and normlessness" (p. 45). Of these sixteen studies five found males to talk more than females overall; one found males to talk more in some circumstances, and no difference in others; one found males to talk more in some circumstances, and females to talk more in another; eight found no difference between the genders in amount of talk; and one found females to talk more than males. (All the studies finding females to talk more or no difference measured the total amount of talking time, rather than the number of acts produced.)

Thus, even in these informal situations nearly a third of the studies found males to talk more than females overall. However, it is of interest to

Table 10.4 Studies Involving Informal Tasks and Non-Task-Oriented Activities

Studies Which Found Men to Talk More Overall

Argyle, Lalljee, & Cook 1968

Aries 1976

Doherty 1974

Eubanks 1975

Sayers 1987

Studies Which Found Men to Talk More in Some Circumstances, and No Difference in Others

Soskin & John 1963

Studies Which Found Men to Talk More in Some Circumstances, and Women to Talk More in Another

Dovidio, Brown, Heltman, Ellyson & Keating 1988

Studies Which Found Women to Talk More Overall

Askinas 1971

Studies Which Found No Difference Between the Genders in Amount of Talk

Case 1988

Duncan & Fiske 1977

Frances 1979

Hirschman 1973

Hirschman 1974

Manber 1976

Markel, Long, & Saine 1976

Martin & Craig 1983

compare these studies with those of formal task activities and other formally structured interaction: a much smaller percentage of these studies found males to talk more than females either overall or under some circumstances (37.5%, as opposed to 67% in the case of formal tasks and 75% in the case of formally structured but not task-oriented interaction; studies in which sometimes men and sometimes women talked more are ignored in this count). Thus, the amount that women talk appears to be much more likely to equal or exceed the amount that men talk in informal contexts than it does in formal task-oriented contexts or other formally structured contexts.

Understanding Talk in Informal Contexts

In attempting to account for these findings, we begin, as before, with a consideration of why men would be likely to talk more than women in informal task- and non-task-oriented interactions, from the point of view of status characteristics theory.

First, the kinds of cultural beliefs associated with gender which facilitate males' greater amount of talk in formal task-oriented groups can also affect informal interactions. In particular, we have observed that in formal task-oriented groups the nature of the task requires instrumental skills and competence at the task. If there is no objective information in the situation to assess participants, participants will rely on the status characteristics present in the situation, such as sex, to assess competence and to formulate self-other expectations. The differential evaluation of males and females is connected to the cultural belief that individuals who have higher status are more competent than are individuals of lower status. Given this, we might expect that even in informal interactions, men would tend to act, and be allowed to act, as "authorities" to a greater extent than women. Men would therefore make more statements, give more information, and offer more expressions of opinion than do women. And, as noted earlier, a number of studies have indeed found that men do give more statements, information, and opinions than do women, even in informal interactions (e.g., Fishman 1983, Aries 1976, Kaplan 1976). This will tend to increase the amount of talking which men do relative to that which women do.

Why, then, has there been a much lower incidence of findings of males talking more in studies of informal task- and non-task-oriented interaction than in studies of formal-task or other formally structured interaction? It would seem from this that informal situations must differ from more formal ones in significant ways. One important respect in which they differ is that while both types of interactions require instrumental and socioemotional skills, informal interactions require more socioemotional skills. The success of informal interactions is based on facilitating and maintaining harmonious interpersonal relations rather than on completing a task. To achieve this end, socioemotional rather than instrumental skills are required. The cultural beliefs and expectations associated with the relative competence of males and females in these skills are that women would be socioemotional experts. Therefore, both men and women in informal interaction would expect women to engage in talk which would move the interaction along.

It is not surprising, then, that many studies have found that women's speech is significantly more "affiliative" and "facilitating" than is men's (toward both sexes). As noted earlier, women contribute more positive socioemotional acts, such as agreeing and showing support (e.g., Aries 1982, Leet-Pellegrini 1980, Piliavin & Martin 1978, Wood & Karten 1986). Women work harder than do men at keeping conversations going and keeping them running smoothly (Fishman 1983, McLaughlin, Louden, Cashion, Altendorf, Baaske, & Smith 1985). More specifically, compared to men, women have been found to give more indications of interest in and attention to what other people are saying. For example, women make supportive remarks, explicitly acknowledge what has been said by others, and make comments which develop or elaborate on what others

have said (Kalčík 1975, Jones 1980, Roger & Schumacher 1983, Coates 1989). Women tend to be more likely to try to draw out another person's opinions or feelings, for example, by asking questions or using tags (Fishman 1983, Holmes 1984, Sayers 1987, Cameron, McAlinden, & O'Leary 1989). They are more likely to take up and build on topics introduced by someone else and to initiate new topics when a conversation flags (Fishman 1983).¹²

This is relevant to amount of talk in that the "facilitative" types of speech function just described do in themselves take up a certain amount of talking time, and that certain types of interaction require them to a greater extent than other types. Fishman (1983:99) notes that "sometimes women are required to sit and 'be a good listener' because they are not otherwise needed [to work at keeping the conversation going]. At other times women are required to fill silences and keep conversation moving, to talk a lot."

In particular, these types of speech function are required more in informal conversations than in formal task ones or in other types of formally structured interaction. In formal task interaction, participants (especially, of course, male participants) are expected and are well motivated to make contributions, and therefore it is less necessary for someone to talk simply to keep the conversation going or to try to draw out others. Similarly, in situations such as a college classroom or a panel discussion, where participation is governed by formal rules, these speech functions are called for far less than in informal conversations. Probably, also, the more casual the conversation and the fewer the participants, the more these "facilitative" uses of speech are required.¹³ This then is one factor which might help to explain why males have been more frequently found to talk more than females in studies of formal tasks and formally structured activities than in studies of informal activities.¹⁴

Another related factor which may contribute to the social structure of interactions is the topic of conversation. Men and women differ in the areas in which they are expected to be knowledgeable and in which they consequently tend to be knowledgeable; for example, if the topic of discussion were how to build a table, men would be expected to, and would thus be likely to, know more, but if the topic of discussion were how to set a table, women would be expected to, and would be likely to, know more. It is reasonable, then, to conclude that in mixed-sex interaction, the topic may have an effect on the verbal output of each gender depending on the gender bias in topic competency. And indeed, there is evidence from studies that this is the case. For example, in Dovidio et al. (1988) it was found that when mixed-sex dyads were asked to discuss either a neutral topic (vegetable gardening) or a topic in which males are expected to be more knowledgeable than females (automotive oil changing), males spoke more than females, but when they were asked to discuss a topic in which females are expected to be more knowledgeable than males (pattern sew-

ing), females spoke more than males. As another example, in Kelly, Wildman, and Urey (1982) small groups had to reach a decision on two issues, one involving a male-oriented topic (cars) and one involving a neutral topic (travel). While men talked more than women on both tasks, the difference was significantly greater in the case of the task involving the male-oriented topic. (This was also true in the case of the neutral versus male-oriented topics in Dovidio et al. [1988].) Similarly March (1953) found that in political discussion the more local the issue, the more women talked, presumably because local issues were seen as more female-appropriate. It is reasonable to suppose that topics in which females are expected to be more competent than males (and perhaps neutral topics as well) are more likely to arise in informal conversations than in formal task activities or formally structured interaction such as a college classroom. Researchers have tended to pay little attention to topic as a factor affecting amount of talk, and we suspect that in some studies, the findings may have been in part a result of the topic of conversation. One example of this has been given earlier with reference to Leet-Pellegrini (1980) (see note 10). As a further example Askinas (1971) found that in mixed-sex groups of college students from coeducational residences, women talked more than men when discussing coeducational versus single-sex housing. Women may have talked more because this topic involves a discussion of interpersonal relationships with others, and since women are expected to be the socioemotional experts, they are in general more likely and willing to discuss such matters than are men (e.g., Aries & Johnson 1983, Davidson & Duberman 1982, Levin & Arluke 1985). In addition, women have more of a vested interest in this topic than men because of women's greater vulnerability in coeducational living in light of the prevalence of violence against women by men and the social stigma that may be attached to single women sharing residence with men. And, to take another example, in Hirschman (1973), a study of dyads in which no difference was found between the genders in amount of talk, the discussion topic assigned was "love, sexuality, and marriage"; although this is of course a topic of significant interest to both genders, its high level of socioemotional content may have encouraged more talk by women than might otherwise have been the case.

More generally, contexts which involve in any way an area where one gender is believed to be and is likely to be more competent than the other can be expected to affect amount of talk. For example, Golinkoff and Ames (1979) and Stoneman and Brody (1981) found that when parents were asked to play with their child with a set of toys (both parents being present), mothers talked significantly more than fathers. Since mothers are given more responsibility for child care and since dealing with children is thus generally viewed as a female area of expertise, it is not surprising that women talked more (and were allowed by the men to talk more) in this situation.

Differences in cultural expectations about the areas in which men and

women are competent determine men's and women's actual performances and, consequently, the amount of talk.

Conclusions

Research indicates that men and women often behave differently with regard to the amount that they talk in adult face-to-face interaction. Frequently men talk more than women; however, they do not necessarily do so. We have argued here that these behaviors are best explained in terms of the social structure of the interaction; this is informed by the difference in status between the genders and the differential cultural expectations about men's and women's abilities and areas of competence. As the social structure of the interaction changes, so also do expectations and consequently behavior; hence the apparent inconsistencies in the results of studies on amount of talk.

This review of the literature on amount of talk shows that in order to understand gender differences in interactional behavior, it is important to take into account the full range of findings in the area examined, and it is vital that the complexity of the contribution which social structure and social context can make to behavior be appreciated. Most previous accounts of gender differences in amount of talk within the language and gender literature have concentrated only on the common finding that men talk more than women in mixed-sex interaction. The reason most commonly suggested for this finding has been simply that men talk more as a way of exploiting their greater power and exercising dominance and control over women, and that they tend to attempt to prevent women from speaking because they devalue women. We hope to have shown here that such an account is limited. While it takes into account the emergence and maintenance of the status hierarchy of social interaction, it fails to appreciate the subtle interplay between the social structure of the interaction and the beliefs and expectations associated with the social context of the interaction. Our work complements and extends the power explanation by moving the discourse from gender dispositions of power to the shared set of performance expectations which differentiate individuals, and as a consequence both give rise to power differences and maintain and perpetuate status hierarchies in social interaction. An alternative approach to explaining gender differences in amount of talk has focused on the idea that women and men are socialized to have different goals in interactions and to use talk in different ways in order to attain these goals. While it takes account of the impact of social context on the amount of talk produced by each gender, and certainly contributes to our understanding of gender-related differences in amount of talk, this approach fails, in particular, to appreciate the importance of the status difference between the genders as a factor affecting expectations about females and males and consequently affecting their socialization and subsequent behavior.

This chapter has shown, then, that the range of results found by studies

with respect to amount of talk, which cannot be adequately understood either from a power perspective or from the perspective of differential gender-based interactional styles, can be explained in a reasonably consistent and satisfactory way when given a careful analysis from the perspective of social structure and social context.

Epilogue: Stereotypes Revisited

As a final note, let us consider again the widely held stereotype that women talk more than men do. Why does this stereotype exist? One commonly cited suggestion is that of Spender (1980): "The talkativeness of women has been gauged in comparison not with men but with *silence*. Women have not been judged on the grounds of whether they talk more than men, but of whether they talk more than silent women" (p. 42). Kramarae (1981) expresses the same idea when she says, "the long tradition of male control of language, determining both the symbols that are developed and the norms for usage for women and men, means that women's speech will not be evaluated the same way as men's speech. . . . Women may talk less, but they still talk too much" (p. 116).¹⁵

Another suggestion has involved the fact that women and men tend to discuss different types of topics (e.g., Aries & Johnson 1983, Levin & Arluke 1985), along with the idea that men tend to judge "women's" topics as trivial or unimportant; Coates (1986:103), for example, comments, "The idea that women discuss topics which are essentially trivial has probably contributed to the myth of women's verbosity, since talk on trivial topics can more easily be labelled 'too much.'"

We suggest that a further useful approach to the question of why the stereotype exists is as follows. Because of the differential cultural expectations about women's and men's abilities and areas of competence, women and men use talk in different ways. In particular, women are expected to use and do use talk to a greater extent than do men to serve the function of establishing and maintaining personal relationships (this is not surprising, as the responsibility for interpersonal relationships primarily rests with women); for example, as we have observed, women, to a greater extent than men, are expected to talk, and do talk, simply in order to keep the interaction flowing smoothly and to show goodwill toward others, and they are expected to talk, and do talk, about personal feelings and other socioemotional matters relevant to interpersonal relationships to a greater extent than do men. (These types of talk are both more likely to occur in informal interactions; thus, one contributory factor to the stereotype is probably the fact that men have more frequently interacted with women in informal than in formal interactions.) Therefore, men have experienced women as talking at times when they would be less likely to choose to talk themselves, and about matters about which men would be less likely to choose to talk about themselves.¹⁶ In addition, men may perceive women as more talkative than men as a consequence of observing women's inter-

actions with other women. A number of studies have found that what is particularly important in female friendships is the sharing of intimate feelings and confidences through talk, whereas in male friendships the sharing of activities is more important (e.g., Caldwell & Peplau 1982, Aries & Johnson 1983, Lowenthal, Thurnher, & Chirrboga 1976). The fact that women spend significantly more time than men "just talking" with each other may be perceived by men as constituting unusual (and therefore, excessive) talkativeness. Moreover, as noted by previous researchers, because of the association of "women's talk" with talk which has socioemotional functions and consequently less value than instrumental talk, men may fail to appreciate the social value of this talk. Thus, women may be perceived by men as talking at times when no talk is necessary, and thus as talking too much.

NOTES

1. We ignore here studies which have dealt with interaction between children or between parents or teachers and children, and studies in which the genders were not compared within the same interaction (for example, those which examined the behavior of interviewees in separate interviews or which compared subjects' descriptions of pictures or other objects).

2. Thirteen of these seventeen studies—Aries (1976), Borgatta and Stimson (1963), Crosby (1976), Duncan and Fiske (1977), Frances (1979), Lamb (1981), Leet-Pellegrini (1980), Markel, Long, and Saine (1976), Martin and Craig (1983), McLachlan (1991), Mulac (1989), Simkins-Bullock and Wildman (1991), and Street and Murphy (1987)—found no gender differences in amount of talk between same-sex pairs or groups. Bilous and Krauss (1988) and Dabbs and Ruback (1984) found females to talk more than males in same-sex informal interaction, and Ickes and Barnes (1977) found female pairs to produce more utterances when left alone by the experimenter prior (as subjects believed) to the experiment. Rosenfeld (1966) found that when asked to pretend that they disliked and did not want closer acquaintanceship with their co-participant, female pairs spoke less than male pairs.

3. Since Edelsky reports that the type of "floor" in which males talked more was far more prevalent than the type of floor in which they did not (see further discussion later in the text), it is presumably also the case that males talked more overall in this study. Since she does not actually state this, however, we have included this study only under the heading "men talked more under some circumstances."

4. It should be commented here that analyses in which differential socialization has been invoked to explain gender differences in behavior have often in the past implicitly treated these behaviors as inherent properties of females and males; it has been assumed that sex-typed behaviors are absolute. Such analyses are fundamentally flawed in that they fail to recognize the importance of social structure to behavior; and as a consequence, behavior that does not conform to gender-role socialization goes unexplained (or, more seriously, the behavior is interpreted as spurious or a result of methodological weaknesses). Such assumptions constitute a disservice to intellectual inquiry and at the same time perpetuate stereotypical

images of women's and men's behavior. However, it should be noted that work within the language and gender literature since the 1970s which has ascribed gender differences in behavior to learned differential speech styles and strategies is not subject to this type of criticism; researchers have normally viewed these different styles/strategies as explicitly grounded in social context and social structure (e.g., "speech is a means for dealing with social and psychological situations. When men and women have different experiences and operate in different social contexts, they tend to develop different genres of speech and different skills for doing things with words" (Maltz & Borker 1982:200); "Women's speech strategies—for example, their "interaction work" . . . and styles of "politeness" . . .—may be understood, at least in part, as ways of coping with greater male power" (Thorne, Kramarae, & Henley 1983:15).

5. Most of the research on amount of talk has examined the behavior of subjects in a controlled experimental setting. One concern sometimes expressed by researchers is that behavior in such a setting does not constitute an accurate guide to natural behavior. Smith (1985:155), for example, suggests that no elicited conversation in an experiment can be characterized as informal, and that experimental studies in general are more likely to elicit a disproportionate amount of male speech than are studies of naturally occurring talk: "I personally doubt . . . that the relatively formal and task-related norms of laboratory settings in which people are aware of being observed and recorded can ever be overridden by simple instructions [e.g., 'just get acquainted']. If they cannot, then formal observational settings will always favour the display of control-related behaviours, and the apparent dominance of those for whom these settings have a facilitative effect—in this case, men." Whether the fact of being observed and recorded makes subjects particularly self-conscious is a debatable point; Wiemann (1981), for example, found that after the first minute, tape-recording did not make subjects self-conscious. In any case, we compared those studies out of these fifty-six which involved experiments with those which examined naturally occurring speech, with a view to seeing whether there was a systematic difference in the results along the lines suggested by Smith. In fact the differences were the opposite of those predicted by Smith: proportionately, more studies which examined naturally occurring speech found males to talk more, either overall or under some circumstances (fifteen of twenty-one studies, or 71%) than did studies involving experiments (twenty of thirty-five studies, or 57%). It is also the case, however, that a far higher proportion of the studies of naturally occurring speech dealt with a formally task-oriented or formally structured situation than was the case with the experimental studies (eighteen of twenty-one studies of naturally occurring speech, as opposed to twenty-three of thirty-five experimental studies). We present arguments in the text that formally task-oriented and formally structured settings are significantly more likely to elicit more speech by males than by females than are informal speech situations; thus, we propose that this is why the studies of naturally occurring speech and the experimental studies produced somewhat disparate results. (We do not dispute, however, that the ways in which an experimental setting may affect speech behavior would be a useful subject for future research.)

6. Tannen (1990) suggests that women tend to feel that a situation is more "public" when men (other than perhaps family members) are present, and that women are more likely to fear that their talk will be judged negatively in public settings than are men. Status characteristics theory provides an explanation for why the presence of men would tend to make women more concerned about how

their talk would be judged, since it predicts that women's lower status relative to men would cause them to view themselves as relatively less competent and knowledgeable.

7. The matter of whether men talk more when with women than when with other men in formal task-oriented interaction is complicated by the fact that there is considerable evidence that men tend to compete for status with other men; since holding the floor for long periods is one way of achieving this, this is likely to counterbalance the predicted tendency for men to talk more when with women than when with men. Mulac (1989) did find that men talked more when with women than with men, but Bilous and Krauss (1988) found that the sex of the partner made no difference to the amount of talk produced by men.

8. In Aries (1982:132) it is suggested that the reason why females were found to initiate more verbal acts than males has to do with changes in "the norms . . . regarding the acceptability and desirability of . . . verbal participation by women." We question this, however, since if this were the case, one would expect that an examination of the studies reviewed here in chronological order would reveal a gradual increase in the findings of no difference between the genders in amount of talk and in the findings of women talking more. However, no such pattern is discernable.

9. A further, more unexpected finding of this study was that in heterosexual couples in which the woman was rated as more powerful than the man, the man nevertheless talked more. Kollock, Blumstein and Schwartz note that other aspects of their findings "suggest that men are generally uncomfortable with role reversal in such realms as sexuality and income. . . . Perhaps this discomfort takes the form of increased loquaciousness. These men may feel it necessary to call attention to themselves as participants in the interaction, and to remind their partners that it is a dialogue" (Kollock et al. 1985:43).

10. The task assigned to subjects in this study was to discuss the negative effects of television violence on children and recommend ways for improving the quality of television programming. As will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter, the topic of conversation is another factor which can affect the relative amount of talk of the two genders; for example, when the topic involves an area which is expected to be of particular concern to women, women tend to talk more than they would otherwise. Since child care is seen as the particular responsibility of women, this may well explain why women talked as much as men in this study, as opposed to less than men as might otherwise have been expected, when neither partner was given extra relevant information.

11. For the information of the reader, Kajander (1976), which we have described as finding men to talk more in one respect but women to talk more in another, observed specifically that male students initiated more contact in the classroom, but that female students answered more questions, in particular "rote" questions. Kajander suggests that this is a result of personality differences between men and women which affect cognitive styles; she suggests that the cognitive style of males is predominantly characterized by problem solving, while the cognitive style of females is characterized by a more simplistic lesson learning, and that consequently males are more adept at handling material independently than are females. While we have no suggestions as to why females were found to answer more questions in this study (no other study found this result), we suggest that a social structural analysis offers a far more satisfactory explanation for why males would initiate more contact in the classroom than does Kajander's analysis.

12. Evidence indicates that even when women are functioning as leaders of a group, their speech is nevertheless more affiliative in orientation than is typically the case with men's speech. For example, Eskilson and Wiley (1976) found that while women leaders "showed intense involvement with the instrumental tasks of the group," they simultaneously "performed the expected encouraging and tension-relieving behaviour" (Eskilson & Wiley 1976:192). They conclude that women leaders do "double work" by meeting the instrumental expectations of their role as leaders and the socioemotional expectations of their role as women.

13. In addition, it has been suggested by some researchers that silence may sometimes function as a male speech strategy in informal conversations with women (particularly when the participants are intimate). Zimmerman and West (1975) and Fishman (1983) found that in informal conversation in male-female pairs silences and delayed minimal responses were much more commonly used by men than by women and argue that these function as ways of asserting a dominant role and controlling the overall direction of the conversation; similarly, Sattel (1983) notes that in disputes in male-female pairs, male silence and inexpressiveness—refusal to talk—can function as ways of controlling the situation. One consequence of such male silence would be that women would be forced to work harder and talk more in order to keep the conversation going.

14. As was noted earlier, Tannen (1990) proposes that women are likely to talk more in "private" contexts (which would presumably involve primarily informal activities) than in "public" contexts (into which formally task-oriented and formally structured activities would presumably tend to fall), and she suggests that one important reason for this is that women's socialization, to a significantly greater extent than men's, emphasizes talk as crucial to the maintenance of harmonious relationships. This conclusion is similar to the point made here. We might, however, note that status characteristics theory takes into account and helps to explain such gender-specific expectations. Berger et al. (1977:7) state that status characteristics are socially constructed and that what is learned is "translated into observable inequalities in face-to-face interaction." As noted earlier, research suggests that lower-status individuals are expected to engage in a greater amount of positive socioemotional behavior than are higher-status individuals. Thus, women's overall lower status in relation to men, together with the expectation that women will interact with men on a daily basis, leads to an expectation of greater involvement in positive socioemotional talk by women than by men.

15. Some evidence is provided for this hypothesis by Cutler and Scott (1990), who found that the contribution of female speakers to mixed-sex dyadic conversations was perceived by subjects to be greater than that of male speakers, although in fact the contributions were identical.

16. A similar observation has been made by Tannen (1990:78).

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Contributors

Penelope Brown is a researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in The Netherlands. She works in collaboration with the Cognitive Anthropology Research Group, which is currently engaged in cross-cultural and cross-linguistic research on language, cognition, and social interaction. She is the coauthor (with Stephen Levinson) of *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* and, in addition to her work on interactional style in Tzeltal, is the author of a number of papers on spatial language and spatial conceptualization in Tzeltal.

Sandra Clarke is professor of linguistics at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Her research interests span quantitative sociolinguistics and Algonquian linguistics as well as language and gender. Her publications include "Phonological variation and recent language change in St. John's English" and *A Grammatical Sketch of North West River Montagnais*. She is president of the Canadian Linguistic Association and a former member of the editorial board of the *Canadian Journal of Linguistics*. She is currently editing a volume on Canadian English.

Janice Drakich is a feminist scholar and activist. She has published on women in academe, violence in the family, and on family law issues. Her most recent work is on fathers' rights groups and women during World War II in Windsor, Ontario. She is engaged in a collective writing project on "writing a feminist romance." Most recently her report on the *Status of Women in Ontario Universities* (written with Dorothy Smith, Penni Stew-