

THE HEIM Line

Happy Holidays!

We hope that your journey this year has been productive and has provided opportunity for growth.

It seems growth occurs most often through our contact with people, usually people who see things differently than we see them and/or whose cultural reference is not ours. Let's face it, such contact can be uncomfortable or even frustrating, but if we take time out from the hurried rush and consider the different approach or idea, we often come away with a new attitude, a new way of seeing things, even value for what previously seemed strange or even – wrong.

Once again we offer this gift of information to you and as you read through this Holiday edition of **The Heim Line**, we hope you will be intrigued by the diversity of humanity, inspired to become familiar with the differences, and grow in understanding.

Best Wishes from The Heim Group! ■



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"The Narrow Bands of Acceptable Behavior"

The Double Standard by Pat Heim, Ph. D.



Early on in my career I worked in a Fortune 500 company and ran an executive trainee program. Each year I received about 120 applicants for this Staff Associate program and each had 3 letters of recommendation at-

tached. One day while perusing these letters on a plane I realized that the adjectives in the men's letters were significantly different than the women's—dynamic, go-getter, rainmaker vs. helpful, kind, trustworthy. I was so amazed at the consistency in the differences of the descriptors I asked my seatmate, a total stranger, if he could identify the gender if I read just the adjectives and sure enough he could.

But there was one word "Super-Word"; it was in virtually all the male letters and in *none* on the female letters. Can you guess what it was? "Aggressive"! All the men were aggressive but *none* of the women were. If it was so important for men to display this quality why weren't the women flaunting their aggressive-

ness front and center? Maybe because it's code word for, well you know, bitch.

The Center for Creative Leadership helps us understand this dilemma with some of their great research. They found that both male and female executives must be aggressive BUT men can display aggressiveness in a wide variety of ways. Women must be aggressive but within a narrow band of acceptable behavior and it's when a woman gets outside this narrow band of acceptable behavior that the problems begin. Then women ask to me to just tell me where the narrow bands are "So I won't get myself in trouble". That's a problem though because those bands are in a different place in New York City vs. Idaho, in the health care industry vs. construction, in one corporate culture vs. another. So successful women must push up against the bands but not go over them or risk getting the damaging label.

The reality is we do have a double standard. ■

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Men Plus Women Create Powerful Teams

by Susan Murhpy, Ph D.



It just happened again. Twice in 3 years studies have shown that when women are represented in significant numbers in key positions in Fortune 500 companies, financial performance is higher in some key areas. In 2004, one study found much higher return on equity when more women held senior positions that when few did. In October 2007, similar results were found when the Board of Directors had more women than when Boards had few women.

I think it has a lot to do with the ways that male and female brains can complement each other. This dawned on me last week as I was preparing for a panel on Innovation and Leadership at The International Alliance for Women (TIAW) Conference.

Innovation is the new imperative for successful organizations, according to experts. And how we think can affect our ability to be innovative. Ruben Gur, a neuroscientist, has found that blood flow differs in male and female brains. When compared to the male brain, female brains have 15% greater

blood flow, blood is more likely to go to both hemispheres, and blood flows upward to a greater degree to the 4 lobes for complex thought and relational processing. These are some reasons women seem to “process” and “think things out”. In males, more blood flows down to the brain stem area where the action-oriented “fight or flight” instinct is found. Plus, the bundle of nerves that connects the right and left hemispheres is 25% larger in women; this enables many women to multi-task using both sides of their

brain while men often prefer doing one thing at a time.

So, with men’s focused, goal-oriented ability to take an idea, focus on it and run with it; plus women’s complex thinking ability and talent for building relationships on teams, both men and women are important to an innovative team. The next time you want a high performing team, consider including a significant number of both men and women. ■





The Gender of Sender:

He-Mail and She-Mail
by Connie Glaser

Since the publication of my book *GenderTalk Works* earlier this year, a wide range of companies have used it to help bridge the gender communications gap at work. The main point of the book is that neither men nor women have a *better* way of communicating, but simply *different*. And just as there are different communication styles involved in negotiating and decision making, gender differences also surface when it comes to email.

Communicating via email, by its very nature, presents challenges. The differences in how men and women communicate add to the potential land-mine surface of business emails. Even as children, gender differences are obvious: girls tend to be collaboration-oriented; while boys tend to be competition-oriented. What this means is that girls

(and later, women) tend to use language to create rapport, closeness, and friendship. While boys (and later, men) tend to use language as a way to establish status or authority among themselves.

At the office, these differences can result in emails that have a distinct gender bias, as men and women use language for different purposes. One of the most obvious distinctions is that men's emails tend to be terse and laconic, while women's tend to be more voluble and detailed.

Researchers have found that when online, men tend to provide information or an answer, then end the conversation as quickly as possible. Women, on the other hand, tend to provide more details and often make things more complex by adding additional questions or information. Men tend to be more direct; women tend to be more concerned with people's feelings.

Here's some advice on how to send messages that may help win the "battle of the genders" and reduce misunderstandings at work.

HE-MAIL:

- Acknowledge e-mail response with at least one complete sentence. Otherwise, you risk coming across as brusque or too busy to listen.
- Answer e-mails promptly. If you don't, people may assume that they are low on your priority list.
- Skip the sarcasm. Even when you're just joking around, a person who can't read your body language may take offense.

SHE-MAIL:

- Use a professional tone in your e-mail and avoid getting too personal. Tentative language or online lingo ("lol" for instance) can make you appear cute or unsure of yourself.
- Cut to the chase, particularly when emailing men. Make your message direct and to the point.
- Avoid using smiley faces and excessive exclamation marks (!!!) that can prevent you from being taken seriously. ■

Easing Gender-Related Frustrations

by Tammy Hughes



A question I'm often asked by people who have been through our *GenderSpeak* workshop, or my keynote on gender differences is, "How can I help ease some

of my co-workers gender-related frustrations when they haven't had the opportunity to learn this stuff?" I believe the best answer is...be the mentor and set the example. The invisible rules can cause a great amount of discomfort in the workplace, so when *you* bump against gender-related conflict, demonstrate to your team how to most effectively manage the differences.

Our workshop, *GenderSpeak*, provided you with information on how to use the 3 levels, *Reinterpret Intent*, *Flex*

Style, and *Talk It Over*, to ease gender related conflict. You also had the chance to practice using these tools in a simulation. I encourage you to apply what you learned in real life – live these out in a real everyday way. Not only will your co-workers *see* what you do, but by allowing yourself to occasionally reinterpret intent verbally, they'll *hear* you say things such as, "Oh I understand why he/she did that. This makes sense when I consider their gender-culture," and that should help ease their frustration, even though they haven't been through the Workshop.

Negativism toward gender differences in the workplace can become airborne or contagious just like germs, allowing the employee's attitudes to become stuck at the lowest common denominator. Your teammates may not *fully* understand the steps you take, but I believe that just by presenting a positive attitude toward gender differences and demonstrating how to navigate them, you may be able to introduce the remedy or cure, helping to make the workplace more relaxed for everyone. ■



The most recent GenderSpeak train-the-trainer in Newcastle, England

We now have Certified *GenderSpeak* Facilitators in the following countries around the world:

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5 Steps to Mine Perspective Gold for a High Performing Team

by Robin Denise Johnson, Ph.D.



One of the most common mistakes leaders make with multicultural, mixed-gender teams is trying to “homogenize away” the differences. Well-meaning people often make this

mistake. They think they should be color or gender blind, and all colors and genders may make this mistake, thinking that it’s best to treat everyone exactly the same way. However, research shows trying to avoid or wipe away important aspects of people’s identity makes it more difficult to bring up, discuss, resolve, and learn from different ways of seeing the world.

*Robin J. Ely*¹ of Harvard Business School continues her research into the conditions that make it probable that demographic diversity and multiculturalism will deliver their promise of high performance in work teams. Her research provides powerful support for the idea that learning from different perspectives is

THE key factor in creating high performing mixed-gender multicultural teams. Rather than report the details from Ely’s most recent research report, I will organize her findings into 5 steps you can take to mine perspective diversity gold on your team.

1. Use both types of learning available on your team.

1a. Mine the specific learning that comes from the team members’ gender identity and cultural knowledge.

Actively seek and use information that comes from members’ cultural knowledge, especially when there is an obvious link between identity knowledge and task. An example would be asking Latinos/Spanish speaking team members to investigate issues related to the pursuit of a Latino target market.

1b. Encourage and support the learning that comes through the interaction of people with different perspectives when performing generic interpersonal management tasks such as giving feedback, managing conflict, or coaching people.

For example, a team member complains that a male member is ‘rude’. Ask them, “what did that member do or say that you saw as ‘rude’”. The response might be, “he interrupted everyone”. You could offer an alternative interpretation of that behavior, such as, “In the masculine culture interrupting may signal passion and commitment to ideas.” At the same time you affirm that you can see

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His and Her Brains

By Serge Lashutka



In the past decade researchers have been studying male and female brains at the microscopic anatomic level and discovering some intriguing gender differences.

For years science has known that on average human male brains are larger than female

brains. Therefore are males generally smarter? This appears to not be the case. The neurons in the cortex of female brains are actually packed closer together and female brains possess as much as 12% more neurons than males. This may explain how women are able to demonstrate the same level of intelligence with a smaller brain.

The human cortex has 6 layers of neurons. Specific functions have been isolated in different parts and layers of the brain. For example, perception and memory are associated with the

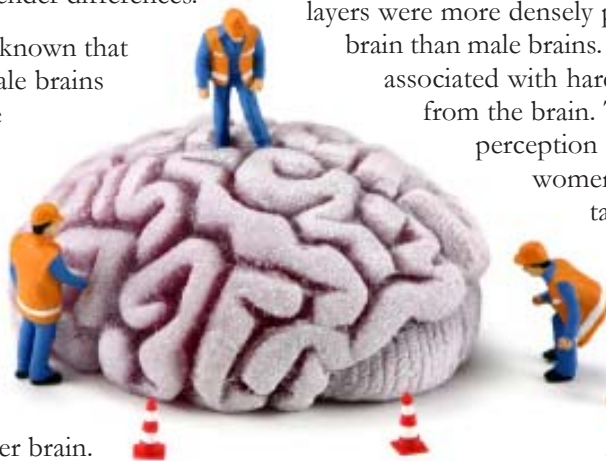
temporal lobe. Research by Dr. Sandra Witelson found that the increased neural density occurred in only 2 of these 6 layers. These 2 layers are associated with the hard wiring for managing incoming signals to the brain.

When Dr. Witelson examined the prefrontal cortex, 3 different layers were more densely packed with neurons in the female brain than male brains. Interestingly, these 3 layers are associated with hard wiring for outbound signals from the brain. This is the region responsible for perception and speech. Might this explain why women score more highly than men on tasks involving language and communication?

Are these differences a result of nurture or nature? The jury is still out as to why these differences, and others, exist.

But exist they do. And these differences do influence how men

and women perceive the world, process information and respond. Some of our gender-culture appears to be more hard wired than we may have thought. ■



◀ 5 Steps continued

how interrupting might be construed as rude when people expect others to offer their ideas and then shut up while others take their fair share of air time (as many women do). You are simultaneously managing impending team conflict, providing feedback to the interrupter about how that behavior could be seen, and educating team members about some common gender-culture behavior differences and interpretations.

2. See cultural and social identity as a team resource.

People's gender and cultural identity are a source of insight, skill, and experience that are valuable potential resources to the team. Having a climate where identity is seen as a resource for learning makes a positive difference for creating and sustaining high performing multicultural teams.

Ely's research is specific in demonstrating how avoiding gender or culture discussions, avoiding conflict around social identity, trying to homogenize away differences, or have a culture where aspects of identity are invisible, all contribute to low performance on diverse teams.

It is better to treat cross-cultural experiences as opportunities to learn - even negative experiences like discrimination - than to avoid or to suppress them. If you try to minimize, avoid, or suppress differences due to culture or gender, you end up making the potentially negative experiences un-discussable. And then it is just a matter of time before unresolved conflicts infect your team.

3. Understand how culture and gender identity dimensions are axes of power in society.

Ely's research demonstrates that race, gender, and culture matter in teams, because they are axes of power within many societies. We all learn in teams by experimenting, by seeking, using and giving feedback, by asking for help, and generally taking a risk to put our ideas out there. However, because of the way demographics work, numerical minority team members risk their careers in climates where stereotypes abound or where people pretend to be ethnicity or gender blind.

If those with less power feel the leader and some or all of their teammates are closed minded, then that diverse team is likely to under perform.

If people with less power in society are not operating in an inclusive, respectful climate at work, then lower-power minorities are less likely to open up – and are even less likely to share with their teammates how they are feeling about the climate.

When team members found the climate closed to learning and disrespectful of any of its member's ideas, then the entire team performed poorly.

4. Create and sustain a positive diversity climate.

A positive view of the climate and learning behaviors from all team members made for more effective diverse teams. The behaviors associated with an open-to-learning-from-different-perspectives climate include:

- A team leader who encourages different styles and approaches to solving work problems,
- Team members and leaders who actively seek, value, and use different perspectives,
- Team members who are encouraged by the leader, and each other, to offer new and better ways to do things.

The way to leverage the learning in diverse teams is actually to seek and use ALL the different perspectives. This is an inclusive approach that is actually good leadership for any team.

5. Use metrics to motivate and celebrate team achievement.

High performing teams get the job done (output), learn from each other (learning) and enjoy working together (satisfaction)². By calculating and sharing the performance results, and linking it to the contributions from all the team members, you reinforce the learn-from-differences norm within your multicultural team.

High performance metrics in Ely's research included:

- Revenue from new sales,
- Higher customer satisfaction ratings

■ Five weighted performance measures.

Ely's research is very powerful for a number of reasons. First of all, she examined 800 *real, diverse work teams*. This is not about people in labs. Nor is it about individuals aggregated together and called teams. It is rare in team research to have real teams.

Second, it is methodologically powerful. She was looking at dynamics in teams, and specifically at the interpersonal *interactions* and the resultant effects from those interactions. The research finding here is a function of group level dynamics – not an individual level phenomenon. This is rare in team research.

Third, this research found powerful interaction effects (the behaviors between members of diverse teams – especially learning from differences) that drive *actual performance outcomes* – sales, customer satisfaction, and performance. We've been waiting for this kind of research linking real diverse work teams to quantified performance outcomes. Brava Dr. Ely!

References / Resources

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¹ Robin Ely presented her research at the Anderson School at UCLA in 2007 attended by the author. The publication associated with this research is current under review in academic journals. Dr. Ely gave Dr. Johnson permission to summarize and share the results of her research with practitioners in audio and written media.

² J.R. Hackman's criteria for evaluating performance in teams. See references.

The Bully Girl

By Jeanie Litteken



Q: *My child is experiencing difficulty with another young girl in her group. The girl enjoys telling the group what to do, how to dress, what to say and how to think. She's organizing them in a manner that makes her "in charge" and the girls all seem to follow the directions of this self declared leader. My daughter and her friends feel angry and frustrated with her. Is this the same thing as the hierarchical structure GenderSpeak describes as more common in young boys and men?*

A: I've received this question more than once from participants in GenderSpeak Workshops and it deserves consideration.

Most young boys are raised in a Hierarchical Structure. Boys' games and activities are, in general, competitive team sports and as such are hierarchical in structure. Most young boys learn to relate with one another through the conflict and competition these activities provide. They also learn that in order to be successful, these games are organized with someone in charge (coach) who gives instructions to the participants (team members). This allows the group as a whole to reach the goal systematically and the participants learn valuable lessons regarding leadership.

Central to the Flat Structure in which most young girls are raised is Relationship and their common activities of playing dolls and house reflect this focus. Close inspection of these activities reveals that they are typically taught to avoid overt conflict. Goals are still reached but with everyone providing input into how to best proceed. When someone in the group tries to be the "boss" friendship often becomes the casualty.

The behavior the questioner is describing is more in keeping with what researcher Rachel Simmons, in her book *Odd Girl Out*, calls "female aggression". Since young girls' culture does not typically involve the lessons of leadership learned from conflict, leading can be seen as aggressive and negative. Ironically, what could be seen as natural leadership ability in a boy is experienced as problem bullying behavior in this girl. Such behavior will cost her friendships and she'll have to learn different behaviors with her girl friends if she is to have successful relationships.

GenderSpeak delves deeply into the two different cultures of men and women. The workshop's foundation of research shows that being familiar with the lessons men and women learn in their childhood can not only lead to better workplace communication, but understanding those childhood lessons can give parents and teachers great insight into the needs and struggles of children in our lives. ■

My Husband and I Can "talk it over"!

By Isabelle Pujol



How many times have I heard male GenderSpeak participants state that the program information helped them better understand their wives and female participants state they use the information to better understand their male bosses?

Last October, I ran the European launch of GenderSpeak in Brussels. The audience was wonderfully cross-cultural, with men and women of differing backgrounds, from England, Belgium, France, Spain and India. As I was keen to have a good balance of female and male participants, I asked my husband to join the workshop. He happily accepted and said, "This is a great opportunity to understand what my wife is doing in all these workshops!!", despite the fact that I shared with him many times the content of GenderSpeak (but of course, while he was driving or cooking...).

From the very beginning of this session, I saw he was really hooked by the topic and, step by step, he is now integrating a lot of clues about my gender-culture. I think he was positively surprised by what he heard and discovered about the other gender but also about himself. We have been married for 23 years and it is only now that my husband understands he doesn't need to give me all the solutions and answers! We can 'talk it over!' ■

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