**CHAPTER 9**

**COMMUNICATING GENDER AT WORK**

1. Introduction
   1. Feminism is more than a single, unified, collective movement – there are many feminist perspectives.
   2. Feminist approaches all seek to understand, explain, and critique the relationship between gender and power.
   3. Answers to questions of oppression and gender change over time:
      1. First Wave – mid 19th through early 20th centuries – focused on women’s rights to vote.
      2. Second Wave – early 1960s – concerned with issues of reproductive freedom, domestic violence, rape, and women’s participation in domains previously “reserved” for men.
      3. Third Wave – 1980s forward – criticizes second wave for privileging middle-class, white voices
2. Feminist Perspectives on Organizational Communication
   1. Liberal Feminism: Creating a Level Playing Field
      1. Based on 18th and 19th century liberal political theory, most associated with Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill.
      2. Critique *and* extension of Enlightenment project – believes in the rights of man *and woman*.
      3. **Women’s suffrage** was a key manifestation of liberal feminism in first wave feminism.
      4. Second wave feminism expanded oppression from the rights to vote to the rights of fuller participation in public life – equal employment opportunity, sexual harassment, domestic violence, reproductive rights.
      5. **“The personal is political”** was the second wave’s rallying cry, which meant that those “individual” experiences in patriarchal societies (like domestic violence, child care, etc.) were *political.*
      6. From an organizational standpoint, liberal feminism is concerned with:
         1. Expanding access to work and career opportunities for women (1964 Title VII and affirmative action and Equal Employment Opportunity laws).
         2. Investigating the **glass ceiling**, when women seem to reach a certain unsurpassable level in organizational hierarchy.
         3. Women’s concentration in “pink collar” professions (secretary work, teaching, nursing, pediatrics, etc.).
         4. Pay disparities when women enter typically male-dominated fields.
         5. **Glass escalator** phenomena, when *men* who enter typically-female dominated fields (teaching, nursing, etc.) *advance much faster* than women in the same fields.
      7. Factors that prevent women from advancing in organizations (Kanter, 1977):
         1. **Tokenism:** when someone finds herself identified as a minority in a dominant culture.
            1. Tokens are visible because they *look* or behave different from other organizational members.
            2. Tokens are seen as representative of *their culture/group* as a whole.
            3. Tokens are often under tremendous pressure and set up to fail because of their “token” status and high visibility.
            4. Tokenism is a communicative phenomenon because organizational communication processes shape tokens to have:

High organizational profile

Significant contrasts with the dominant culture

Full assimilation into the stereotype of his or her token group, not permitted to be an individual

* + - 1. **Homosocial reproduction:** the way in which organizational members reproduce themselves because they prefer working with people like them.
    1. **Entryist approach** to organizational communication – liberal feminists strive to create equal opportunity and support for women.
    2. Has done much to draw attention to barriers women face in organizational and professional life, yet misses a things:
       1. Leaves basic construction of organizational life unquestioned.
       2. Places the onus on women to adopt to male-dominated organizational environments.
       3. Primarily a “women in management” approach, favoring “professional” working women (typically white, middle-class) and not “blue-collar” working women.
       4. Tends to treat gender as a variable, looking at masculinity and femininity as unproblematic categories.
  1. Radical Feminism: Constructing Alternative Organizational Forms
     1. Like the second wave of liberal feminism, **radical feminism’s** roots are in the political movements of the 1960s and their inherent sexism.
     2. Radical feminism is “radical” because it is **woman-centered**. Unlike liberal feminism (putting women in male institutions), radical feminism places women and femininity at the center.
     3. Critiques patriarchy and upholds femininity (liberal feminism tends to downplay differences between genders).
     4. Supported establishment of women-based groups and organizations structured around different organizing principles – a utopian project, really.
     5. Collectivist organizations formed as alternatives to/rejections of bureaucratic organizations, with the following features (Rothschild-Whitt, 1979):
        1. Authority resides in the collective, not in individual offices
        2. Minimal rules
        3. Social control based on shared values vs. supervision or sanctions
        4. Social relations are personal and valuable vs. the rule- and role- based relations of bureaucracy
        5. Recruitment and advancement based on friendships/shared values vs. specialization and formal training
        6. Individual incentives based on further the organization’s values and goals vs. individual economic gain
        7. Egalitarian power sharing
        8. Division of labor *minimized*; most members participation in most jobs and functions
     6. Utopian project of radical feminism went unrealized for a several reasons:
        1. Essentializes gender issues
        2. Separatist philosophy
        3. Closed off from the environment (closed systems) eventually died
  2. Critical Feminism: Viewing Organizations as Gendered
     1. Gender as neither variable (liberal feminism) or a natural, stable feature of women (radical feminism) but as a **socially constructed phenomenon**.
     2. Gender not as an organizational variable that can be studied apart from the rest of an organization; gender is seen as an **integral and constitutive feature** of daily organization life.
     3. Organizations *as* gendered.
        1. *Jobs* are gendered, which isn’t to say that a man can’t be a teacher, but rather that the work of teaching is feminized.
     4. Critical feminism looks at ways organizational members **do gender**.
        1. **Gender accountability:** Each of us is held accountable for our “success” at performing “adequate” gender, and are judged in terms of the social context in which that performance occurs.
     5. Views gender as an **ongoing accomplishment** of both men and women.
        1. Liberal feminism sees gender as a “woman question” while radical feminism sees men as the problem – critical feminism looks at the ways men and women are implicated in the gendered organizing process.
        2. Enables us to look at the ways in which gender is encoded and communicated in complex ways in daily organizational life.
     6. Provides insight to the relationship between gender and organizing (power, organizational communication, and gender).
        1. Interrogates the ways in which men and masculinity largely shape the gendered identities available for men and women.

1. Masculinity and Organizational Communication
   1. Feminism typically equated with “women’s issues.”
   2. Assumption that women “have” gender and men do not.
   3. **Masculinity**: term popular in the early 20th century to describe appropriate male behavior and identity (Bederman, 1995).
      1. Economic and industrial changes in the late 19th century/early 20th centuries meant that ideas of “manliness” shifted – middle-class men strove to re-create their sense of manhood.
      2. “Masculinity” emerged as the term to describe a new, virile sense of manhood: aggressive, strongly heterosexual, assertive, independent, individual.
      3. **Hegemonic masculinity**: not a *natural* description of men, but a reproductive set of *expectations* about what men “should be”
      4. Masculinity and hegemonic masculinity refer to a **set of scripts** that one enacts, not particular, individual *men or women* in the workplace.
   4. Masculinity is important to consider because we often take it for granted, yet it shapes many of the expectations for how men and women communicate (and perform gender).
   5. Looking at masculinity as a socially constructed phenomenon means that it might change (see Anderson’s (2009) notion of “inclusive masculinity”).
2. Conclusion
   1. Masculinity and femininity are bigger than *individual men and women*, dealing more with systems of power, communication, reification, and ongoing accomplishments of our participation in everyday organizational life.
   2. Unpacking femininity and masculinity helps us to see the complex ways that both are interconnected with power, organizational communication, and gender.