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Gender Power and Language: Touring with the Gatekeepers of Union

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Gender, Power, and Language:
Touring with the Gatekeepers of Union

By

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of the requirements for
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ABSTRACT

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Tannen, Lakoff, O’Barr, and Atkins suggest connections between gender, power, and language. However, it is unknown if these patterns persist in our society today. Lakoff argues that women are uncomfortable with power and speak in such a way as to avoid sounding authoritative. Tannen argues that women try to be friendly and egalitarian and to use conversations to create relationships. Thus, inadvertently, women lack authority in speech. O-Barr and Atkins say speech styles are not linked to gender but to relative power. Campus tour guides hold a unique position in society in that they must be authoritative leaders, but friendly ambassadors of the college community. This study analyzes the use of power-laden and powerless language among both male and female tour guides on the collegiate campus through the analysis of speech patterns, tour content, and body language. Through this analysis, I suggest that both men and women use language in similar ways, while gender influences body language. So-called “powerless” speech is really a way of creating a friendly informal atmosphere in appropriate contexts, used by both men and women.

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Introduction

This study will focus on the relationship between gender, language, and power among tour guides on the collegiate campus. I argue that language which was once believed by scholars to be both “feminine” and “powerless” is in fact “informal” language and is equally available for use by both genders. This language can be manipulated by both males and females to modify their authority in terms of their environment. For collegiate tour guides, this includes the size and demographics of each individual tour group. Furthermore, I will argue that modern stereotypes and gender socialization cause differing body language use by males and females. While there is a wide range of body language and coinciding vocal intonation available for use by all, individuals are constrained to behaviors which are gender appropriate. Therefore, males and females differ in terms of body language use. However this does not affect perceived authority. Furthermore, through the manipulation of body language and vocal pitch, individuals can manipulate perceived authority in the same way that authority can be manipulated with spoken language.

I became interested in gender, language, and authority during the spring of my junior year at Union College. After studying the works of scholars such as Deborah Tannen, Robin Lakoff, William O’Barr, and Bowman Atkins, I wondered if their theories were consistent with language use in contemporary times. I began to pay attention to how the people around me used language, and started to wonder if the differences I was hearing were caused by gender, as Tannen and Lakoff would say, power, as O’Barr and Atkins claim, or a mixture of both. I decided to delve deeper into this topic through participant observation on campus with the Gatekeepers of Union (the campus tour guides).

My decision to study the Gatekeepers of Union was based off of the fact that campus tours are relatively constant. In general, each tour guide must talk about the same essential elements of Union College, take groups into the same buildings, and answer the same common questions on each and every tour. Because of this, I would be able to eliminate content as a factor influencing style in my analysis. In other words, I wouldn't have to compare someone talking about weekend sports highlights to another person discussing quantum physics. This left me with two essential variables in my analysis of language; gender, and relative authority over a group. Tour groups are also interesting because some are large and some are small, thus I would be able to see whether people sounded "powerless" or nervous in front of different sized groups. Furthermore, I found the unique social position of "tour guide" to be fascinating. As I will explain later, Gatekeepers must be able to maintain a proper balance between being the authoritative leader and the friendly ambassador.

In order to study the language of the Gatekeepers of Union, it was necessary to complete fieldwork with the Gatekeepers themselves, as well as an analysis of the Gatekeeper program with a member of the admissions staff at Union. This study was conducted over the period of two ten week academic terms at Union College; one in the fall and one in the winter. After preliminary research, I attained permission from the staff of the Admissions Office on campus to shadow tour guides throughout both academic terms.

Tours depart the Admissions Office at 10:30, 12:30, 1:30 and 3:30 each day of the week, and twice on Saturday mornings. Just because tours are scheduled, however, does not necessarily mean that a tour will take place. More often than not, nobody is present to take a tour of campus during weekday hours. Tour guides must wait fifteen minutes past their assigned "tour time" for visitors to arrive before they can declare that there will be no tour. The most common days for

tours are on Mondays and Fridays, which tend to see the greatest amount of prospective students visiting campus for interviews during a long weekend. Most students will take a tour of campus either before or after a scheduled interview with an admissions officer. These tours tend to be small, with one to three prospective students and their parents.

Holidays, open houses, and accepted students day events tend to bring the largest crowds onto campus for tours. On these days, tour groups are much larger, and often times more guides are needed to accommodate guests. Weekends also see a larger number of visitors wanting to tour the campus, thus these tours are also slightly larger than weekday tours. In each of these cases, the tours are deemed “special tours”. Each tour guide is required to sign up for a “special” tour, thus the guides leading these groups are the same as the guides leading smaller weekday tours. Therefore, training for these two situations is the same, and the likelihood of catching any of the Gatekeepers on a larger tour is equally the same.

I began my fieldwork about half way through the fall term of 2012. I first obtained permission from the director of the Gatekeeper program at Admissions, explaining my research project, and my goals in observing the guides. Thus, the administration knew the details of my project, and just what I was studying in the tours before my fieldwork began. For my preliminary tours, I just asked each guide individually if they were comfortable with me shadowing the tour as part of my thesis. Each guide said yes without asking for any further information; most are used to being shadowed by Gatekeepers in training anyways. For the first week or so, I simply shadowed tours, paying attention to the body language and spoken language of both the groups and the guides themselves. This helped me to get some preliminary theories, and formulate a more detailed plan for my fieldwork.

After a few weeks, I picked up a small handheld audio recorder, and began to focus more on language. Before each tour, I explained to the guides that I was working on an anthropology thesis project regarding tour groups, and asked if they minded if I recorded their tour for my personal data. I ensured that their names would not be published, and that recordings would not be made public, but used for personal analysis only. Following the trend of my preliminary guides, each Gatekeeper agreed without any further questions, and generally didn't seem to mind being followed or recorded in the slightest. I proceeded by recording each tour in the same fashion. I recorded only when the tour guide or members of the group were speaking, pausing my recording during long walks, or periods of silence inside buildings (ex. when groups look at a freshman dorm room). If at any point during the tour anybody seemed uncomfortable with my recording, I stopped, put the recorder away, and continued along, remembering as much detail as I could for a post-tour write up. During each recorded tour, I continued to observe body language as well.

During tours, I spent time in all different sections of the group. I walked in the front, along the sides, lingered in the back, and held doors open. I allowed the Gatekeepers to decide whether or not I was introduced to the group, and I did not speak or contribute to the tour unless I was asked to do so. As a fellow Union student, some guides asked for my input or help with answering questions which they were unsure of. Many times, parents in the back of groups began to ask me questions halfway through tours, using me as a resource for information without having to interrupt the guides themselves. In these instances, I politely answered questions, but tried to refocus attention back on the tour guide as quickly as possible. I remained with the groups for the entirety of the tour, even if they were longer than one hour.

Using the recordings from each tour, I transcribed everything said by each guide as well as prospective students and parents. I did my best to keep each transcription consistent, marking rising intonation, pauses, and other elements of language the same way throughout. I was sure to transcribe at least ten minutes of each tour, and often transcribed twenty to thirty minutes. Using these transcriptions, I was able to analyze many specific elements of language, including elements highlighted by both Tannen and Lakoff. The following is an example of a completed transcription:

Whats nice about that is it **kinda** gives you **really** close to your class right off the bat, **I mean**, I always talk about, **you know**, *me being from Indiana, but I didn't actually know anyone when I came here* so its was nice to **kinda** see the same faces day in and day out... and **you know** you can see people from **like** Webster... *we would always come in these big groups and go to you know brunch on, on Saturdays and Sundays*. Um, it's a great way to get to know your class **really** well.

In this transcription, key words which I analyzed are highlighted in bold and those phrases or sentences coded in blue are the guides' personal experiences or opinions. In other transcriptions, rising intonation was marked with a (^), and false starts or fillers were coded in red. Each transcription was marked at the ten minute point in the tour. Using this mark, I was able to count how many times each guide utilized these specific elements of speech, ultimately allowing me to compare guides to one another numerically. This allowed me to see how many words each guide spoke in a ten minute period as well, which helped provide ratios for comparison. For example, one guide may have said "like" 20 times in ten minutes while the other said "like" 7 times. While this seems like one guide used the word much more often, the transcription may have shown that the first guide spoke 1,000 words in 10 minutes, while the other spoke only 400 words. Thus the guides actually used the word "like" in proportionately similar amounts.

Along with transcriptions, I provided a detailed summary of each tour after completing it. In these summaries, I described body language, as well as the general reactions and behavior of prospective students and parents. This allowed me to see how each guide individualized their tours, and how groups reacted to each. Furthermore, it allowed me to analyze body language, such as smiling, acting nervous, acting nonchalant, and showing passion for the school through gestures or enthusiastic body language. These behaviors correlate with authority in tour guides, so this really helped me to analyze gender, language, and authority further than just spoken language.

The tours which I shadowed were selected randomly. I arrived at admissions when I was free from classes or other obligations and waited for tour groups. Usually, nobody was present to take tours, so when tours did happen, it was randomly. On “special tour” days, I was able to select which group I wanted to shadow. In these cases, I selected guides which had the largest groups, or guides whose gender I had less tours from at that point. I chose large groups because most tours on regular week days are small to medium, and I wanted a range of sizes in my data. Furthermore, I chose the sex which I had the least amount of tour data because I wanted to study an equal number of male and female guides. In the end, I had a total of two large and two small/medium male-led tours, and four large and four small female-led tours. The lack of male-led tours reflects back on the fact that there are currently more female Gatekeepers than male, and that selection was usually random (I followed many more weekday tours than special tours).

Lastly, in order to grasp a complete understanding of the Gatekeepers and what is expected of them before, during and after campus tours, I obtained a copy of their official manual, and sat down to discuss their role on campus with the program’s director. The official gatekeeper manual is over 90 pages long, containing anything anyone could ever want to know

about Union College. The most important sections, which I discuss in the following chapter, direct guides on how to present themselves, what to talk about at specific points on the tour, and how to answer difficult questions. After skimming the manual, I discussed the Gatekeeper program with its director. I was able to record the conversation, which lasted about 30 minutes before staff members from a different department arrived for a meeting. During this meeting, we discussed everything from the recruitment of Gatekeepers, to what is expected of them throughout the year, and how they influence the future of the student body. Both the manual and the interview helped me to grasp the context in which Gatekeepers perform, which helped me to better analyze their language and behavior.

The following is an analysis of my discoveries on gender, power, and language throughout this study. I begin with a brief review of literature, which includes many of the articles which sparked my original interest in this topic. Here I discuss the implications of gender on society, followed by theories on how these gender differences affect spoken language from scholars such as Lakoff and Tannen. Lakoff argues that women are uncomfortable with authority and therefore purposely speak timidly, while Tannen believes that women focus on relationships in conversation, and thus speak with emotion rather than authority. I continue on by highlighting how authority comes into play, and its effects on both gender and language. This includes O’Barr and Atkins’ argument that “women’s” language, as defined by Lakoff is actually “powerless” language. Lastly, I touch on why tour guides are an ideal subject in the study of gender and authority, highlighting some literature on both collegiate and international tour guides.

In chapter two I will introduce the Gatekeepers of Union College. The Honorary Gatekeeper Society is a unique facet of the Union College Admissions Office, and is comprised of the most outstanding and well rounded students on campus. Gatekeepers are selected to guide

tours for their passion and love of Union, and are driven solely by that passion; they receive no pay or compensation for their time. Gatekeepers endure a strict selection process, followed by tedious and time-consuming tour guide training. They must abide by strict guidelines, and uphold the highest standards of Union College as they play a key part in recruiting new students. They hold a unique position in society and serve as an interface between campus insiders and prospective students and parents.

Chapter three marks the beginning of my analysis of gender, language, and authority among the Gatekeepers of Union. In this chapter, I discuss the implications of the composition of each individual tour group on how guides utilize language. I discuss why the size and age demographics of a group effect how guides speak, regardless of gender. I use this analysis to show that the use of language which was once deemed “women’s” language is not dependent on gender or power, but instead on the kind of atmosphere that a guide wants to create. Guides use so-called “women’s” or “powerless” language to create an informal, friendly atmosphere in small groups.

Chapter four discusses the use of generational words. Spoken language is constantly changing, and with that change, old words die out and new ones become more popular. In this chapter, I analyze the modern use of the words “like”, “really”, and “actually” by Generation Y. These are three words which are increasingly popular with younger generations. I discuss their function in language, and how they directly relate to power and formality in the Union Gatekeepers, again regardless of gender. I began looking at these words because I believed them to be amplifiers, which are elements of “women’s” language. I found that both male and female tour guides use all three words to create an informal atmosphere within their groups. At the same

time, I found that men often replace the word “like” in conversation with “you know” in order to show authority.

Chapter five discusses the use of body language and related elements of conversation by the Gatekeepers. I argue that due to modern stereotypes and gender socialization, males and females utilize body language differently. However, this does not affect perceived authority because it is expected. I discuss the use of personal stories to modify solidarity where body language is too authoritative, as well as changes in vocal intonation which coincide with gendered body language.

Chapter six ties each of these ideas together to illustrate my overall argument. By analyzing the Honorary Gatekeeper Society of Union College, I was able to analyze changes in the contemporary use of language according to gender. I argue that gender is no longer a determinate of spoken language, and has been replaced by authority and formality. I found that both males and females used so-called “women’s” or “powerless” language in casual small group settings in order to create a friendly informal atmosphere. At the same time, stereotypes and socialization cause body language to differ among genders, however individuals can still modify their body language to manipulate authority.

Chapter 1 **Review of Literature**

Scholars such as Tannen (1995) and Lakoff (1975) have suggested that women are socialized to avoid authoritative language and to sound friendly while men are encouraged to be authoritative. But it is unclear whether these patterns still exist in our society today. Furthermore, there are disagreements over the reason for these patterns. Tannen (1995) argues for instance, that in many contexts women use egalitarian conversational strategies to create social connections and wield authority in their own gendered ways. That is to say, women may feel pressured to avoid sounding bossy or authoritative, but comfortable issuing orders to others by creating friendly connections. Lakoff on the other hand suggests that female styles are linked to society's disapproval of powerful women.

Gendered language can also change according to context. For instance, men may avoid authoritative language in some contexts while women may adopt it in others. I decided to examine these issues by studying campus tour guides since their role is somewhat neutral. A guide must be authoritative in order to maintain the respect and confidence of the group, yet friendly in order to foster a community among prospective students as well as serve as a "model" for the type of student desired by the college. Do women and men adopt different strategies in this context? What does this reveal about gender, authority and context? By studying the use of gendered and power-laden language by both male and female tour guides, I will try to shed light on debates about gendered styles of communication by examining the way that males and females deal with a situation where both friendly egalitarianism and a measure of authority are required. Do females and males adopt a similar style showing that both genders are in command

of a similar repertoire of styles and use them in order to wield authority in the most effective way in the context at hand? Or are there gender differences among guides showing different social expectations of males and females in positions of authority? In order to examine these issues, it is first important to review the existing literature on gendered styles of communication and on the constraints shaping the behavior of tour guides.

Gender as a Performance

First, it is essential to understand the constraints of gender on American society. In the words of Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell, “gender is so deeply engrained into our social practice, in our understanding of ourselves and others, that we almost cannot put one foot in front of the other without taking gender into consideration” (Eckert & McConnell 2003). To fully comprehend gender however, one must distinguish between sex and gender. Sex is the biological categorization of a human based on reproductive anatomy and potential, while gender is the social elaboration of that biological sex. Gender is an exaggeration of biological differences and is capable of carrying these differences into domains which are completely irrelevant to biological sex differences (Eckert & McConnell 2003). For example, society attempts to match up ways of behaving with biological sex assignments, thus wiping out any similarities and elaborating on differences between sexes (Eckert & McConnell 2003). Thus unlike sex, gender is not possessed, but is a performance of socially constructed standards according to sex. Gendered performances are available to everyone, but with them come social and moral constraints on who can perform what (Eckert & McConnell 2003).

Gender is an element of identity that is engrained into our sense of being beginning at birth. By simply choosing a name, parents mark their children with a gender, and by dressing

them according to sex (pink for girls, blue for boys) they mark the importance of gender to identity (Eckert & McConnell 2003). Most individuals tend to believe that sex is attributed to nature, while gender is attributed to nurture. In other words, the mannerisms which children learn from their parents and surrounding adults while growing up affect their subsequent gendered acts in life (Eckert & McConnell 2003). Studies have shown that children learn to pitch their voices according to gender even before their vocal chords develop any physical differences (males speak more deeply, women in a higher and softer tone) (Eckert & McConnell 2003).

Furthermore, parents have been shown to treat boys and girls differently according to gendered expectations. That is, boys are seen to be tougher, more physical, and more powerful than girls, who are timid, delicate, and emotional (Eckert & McConnell 2003). Thus in a 1976 study by Condry & Condry, it was found that adults watching a film of a crying child were more likely to believe that it was an “angry cry” if they thought the child was male, and a “plaintive or fearful” cry if the child was a female (Eckert & McConnell 2003). Additionally, male adults seem to enforce gender roles on children more than adult females do. Just think of the stereotypical father who wants his son to be a sports star, not a ballerina, while the mother cares only for the child’s happiness (Eckert & McConnell 2003).

When speaking to children, parents also differentiate linguistic styles according to gender. It has been shown that when addressing a female, parents use more diminutives such as kitty and doggy (rather than cat or dog), and more state words like happy, sad, or angry (Gleason et al 1994). When addressing boys, parents are more direct and emphatic, using phrases such as “don’t do that!” or “no! no! no!” (Eckert & McConnell 2003). What’s more, adults tend to treat male infants more playfully, and females more delicately. These differences in treatment eventually result in differences in behavior (Eckert & McConnell 2003).

As children enter elementary school and adolescence, gender differences become more stratified. Studies have shown that when children begin to talk, they tend to mimic their same-sex parent. That is, boys mimic their father's speech patterns and behaviors, while girls mimic that of their mothers (Eckert & McConnell 2003). Upon entering school, pupils are often segregated by gender. I don't think it would come as a surprise to anybody to see a class of first graders walking through the school hallways in two lines; one for girls, and one for boys. On top of this, education at the elementary level is defined by teaching oppositions; teachers distinguish between good/bad, happy/sad, and boy/girl, using these oppositions as metaphors to display difference. For example, vowels will often be introduced to children as feminine, while consonants are considered masculine (Eckert & McConnell 2003). In kindergarten, my class learned about Mr. H with the horrible hair, Mr. M with the munching mouth, Ms. I with the itchy itch and Ms. U with the upsy-daisy umbrella. This helps to drive home the idea that the male and female genders are opposite, and separate.

Children themselves tend to divide into same-sex play groups even when teachers do not emphasize gender differences. This division of the sexes at such a young age leads to two different peer cultures; one among the males, and one among the females. These peer cultures form their own norms along with their own verbal cultures (Eckert & McConnell) Among the boys, competition, aggression, and power are what spurs friendship and camaraderie, while for girls, it is group cooperation, equality, and compassion for one another which drives friendships (Tannen 1996). As children move through adolescence, they will become a part of the heterosexual market, in which interactions between male and female blossom, and during which genders learn how to communicate with one another. Here a hierarchy is created through which individuals will base their intra-gender communication in the future (Eckert & McConnell 2003).

As adults, individuals develop a *gender ideology*, which is defined by Eckert and McConnell as a set of beliefs which govern people's participation in gender order, and by which they explain and justify that participation (2003). In other words, this is a set of ideas which effects how individuals believe males and females should think, act, and speak according to their gender. These beliefs are often governed by stereotypes:

There is a considerable difference between the gender stereotypes that are available to us all and the behavior of real people as they go about their business in the world. But the relation between stereotypes and behavior is in itself interesting, for the stereotypes constitute norms – rather extreme norms – that we do not *obey*, but that we *orient* to. They serve as a kind of organizing device in society, an ideological map, setting out the range of possibility within which we place ourselves and assess others. [Eckert & McConnell 2003, p.87]

What then are these stereotypes? The traditional Western Industrial Man is said to be strong, brave, aggressive, sex-driven, impassive, rational, direct, competitive, practical, and rough among other things. The female counterpart to this man is weak, timid, passive, relationship-driven, emotional, irrational, indirect, cooperative, nurturing, and gentle (Eckert & McConnell 2003). These stereotypes lead to gender oppositions in the workplace, where men are expected to have societal and public power, while women control the domestic and private realms. Women are seen as the bearers and nurses of children and men as the providers (Eckert & McConnell 2003). This leaves a power discrepancy between genders in the public realm. Attempts by women to equalize gender have actually caused more of a stigma; an example being the uses of Miss, Ms, and Mrs, which has only caused more hassle and confusion, and negativity towards feminism.

Gender, Power, and Language

“Gender is... a system of meaning – a way of constructing notions of male and female – and language is the primary means through which we maintain or contest old meanings, and construct or resist new ones” (Eckert & McConnell 2003). Among gendered acts, one of the most significant, which affects each individual’s everyday lives, is the use of language. According to linguists such as Robin Lakoff and Deborah Tannen, there are differences in the ways men and women use language.

In the early 1970’s, linguist Robin Lakoff proposed that women, in an attempt to conform to the societal and stereotypical “weakness and emotion” of their gender, tended to “soften and attenuate” their speech and opinions through devices which she dubbed “elements of women’s language” (Lakoff 1973). These elements include tag questions (its cold, isn’t it?), rising intonation on declaratives, hedges (kinda, probably), amplifiers/boosters (*really* sad), indirectness, diminutives (kitty, doggy), euphemism (piffle, heck), and an overuse of conventional politeness (Lakoff 1973). In general, Lakoff considered this “powerless” and “weak” language, which was used to avoid commitment as well as strong opinions and conflict. Using this language, women were seen as inferior and lacking force and power in comparison to men (Eckert & McConnell 2003). Thus women are socialized sound friendly in conversation, agreeing and creating emotional connection rather than being authoritative and commanding – they are supposed to be meek and frail.

In the 1980’s researchers O’Barr and Atkins published an intensive study regarding language use in the courtroom setting. This study found that it was the speaker’s relative socioeconomic status as well as their familiarity and comfort in the courtroom, not necessarily their sex, which determined their use of these “elements of women’s language” (Eckert & McConnell). What these researchers suggested, was that what Lakoff referred to as “women’s

language” was in truth “powerless language”. The use of this powerless language rendered the speaker ineffective and less believable by a panel of jurors (O’Barr & Atkins 1980). When presented with essentially the same testimony, given in both a “powerless” and a more direct, less-hedged style (authoritative), individuals were much more likely to believe the latter as trustworthy. At the same time however, O’Barr and Atkins did find that women used this powerless language more, and that men in the study overall were found by jurors to be more credible than women (O’Barr & Atkins 1980).

In the 1990’s, linguist Deborah Tannen agreed with elements of both Lakoff and O’Barr and Atkin’s theories, but suggested a difference in origin for these elements. Tannen believed that female speech did not reflect feelings of powerlessness but instead was a part of a female culture of communication stressing equality and connection. This style was learned from other girls in childhood peer culture rather than imposed by adults (Tannen 1996). According to Tannen, “the approach to studying gender and language often falls into two categories; the “cultural difference” approach, or the “power” or “dominance” approach” (p.9). Tannen believes that the aforementioned peer cultures which form during childhood result in a cultural difference between male and female language. In other words, women speak powerlessly because they were taught to do so, not because they feel powerless.

Tannen theorizes that women’s speech focuses on egalitarian principles and equality. Women are socialized to be conversational, involving back-and-forth communication between members in discourse. She claims that women are not interested in fighting to obtain the floor, but listen to others with the knowledge that their own turn to speak will come in time. Their main goal in speech is to engage the audience and maintain that engagement successfully. Typical women’s speech is full of compliments, politeness, and timidity. Thus, women are focused on

the emotions in conversation; they tend to be supportive rather than conflicting, and focus on equality rather than outdoing others (Maltz & Borker 1983).

Men's speech, on the other hand is strikingly different according to Tannen. She believes that men are oriented towards competition. They are socialized to be aggressive and authoritative. Most importantly, men actively try to avoid the one down position in speech, maintaining a hierarchy in socialization. She claims that aggressive jokes, challenges and insults are among the most typical language of men. Thus, the focus of men's speech is hierarchy and authority (Maltz & Borker 1983).

Tannen also points out that many elements of language have ambiguous functions. This means that they can be used to mean either one thing or another. For example, if a woman were to ask her co-worker "Where is your jacket?" while walking outside on a cold day, that question could be interpreted in two ways. First, the co-worker could see this question as a question of solidarity; the woman is being friendly, and intimate towards him/her. On the other hand, the woman could be using this question as an assertion of power; it could be condescending, as if she is the mother of the co-worker telling them to get a jacket on (Tannen 1996). When women speak, they attempt to draw people together and include them as equals. Because men are not socialized to speak this way, it is easy for them to misinterpret this speech as hierarchical or challenging. The same goes for women interpreting men's speech. While each can use their own style to wield authority within their own gender, problems arise when one gender is attempting to be more authoritative than the other.

On the same level, Dubois and Crouch (1975) discovered that tag questions are used by both men and women, but in different contexts. According to a studies by Holmes (1982) and Cameron et al. (1989) tag questions are used in one of four functions; conformation-seeking,

facilitative, softening, and challenging (Eckert & McConnell 2003). Conformation-seeking tags are most often used by powerless individuals, as well as women, and indicate uncertainty by the speaker (That's not right, is it?). Facilitative tags help to spark conversation, such as "Great game, wasn't it?". Challenging tags assert dominance and often elicit silence (You won't do that again, will you?) while softening tags are used to diminish the negativity of criticism (you didn't do a very good job, did you?). Studies have found that men, along with powerful individuals, are more likely to use challenging tags, while women are most likely to use the other three. What's important here is that we realize that the context of each element of language must be considered before we categorize it as "mens/womens" or "authoritative/powerless". The same speech device can have very different functions across context.

What can be determined from these studies is that both men and women have access to and knowledge of many forms and uses of language, including authoritative and powerless speech. However, the socioeconomic status, hierarchical position, and gender of these individuals contribute to the linguistic tendencies that they will follow. "Both gender order and linguistic conventions exercise a profound constraint on our thoughts and actions, predisposing us to follow patterns set down over generations and throughout our own development" (Eckert & McConnell 2003). For example, men tend to swear more in speech, while women have the tendency to back-channel (uh-huh, yeah, etc.) in order to provide vocal reinforcement (Eckert & McConnell 2003), though not all men and women follow these behaviors. In addition, it was found that women tend to smile more than men (Tannen 1996). Smiling, according to Eckert & McConnell is not appropriate for someone in a position of power, who should be calm, collected, and controlled, not emotional (2003).

In general, then, women do tend to use more powerless speech, especially in the presence of men (Tannen 1996). Furthermore, women engage in cooperative or supportive talk where “[they] pick up and build on each other’s themes... they engage in supportive overlap... they provide plenty of backchanneling” (Eckert & McConnell 2003). Women also tend to be more linguistically polite than men, apologizing in situations which do not require one to do so. For example, if someone misunderstands what a woman says, she may say “I’m sorry, you may have misunderstood me, that’s not what I meant” (Eckert & McConnell 2003). Women also compliment others more often than men, and tend to take the subordinate or equal position in speech. That is, rather than saying “go over there”, a woman might say “let’s go over there” or “can you go over there?” (Eckert & McConnell 2003). This is also considered indirect speech, for which women are better known than men. Women are more likely to imply what they want than to state it directly. Lastly, women tend to speak in a hypercorrect manner, over-pronouncing consonants like the /t/ in “often” to sound more educated and sophisticated, along with using more standard and proper grammar (Eckert & McConnell 2003).

On the same level, men tend to follow specific linguistic patterns in speech. Men are more information-focused in their speech, and are not concerned with emotions or equality in the sense that women are (Eckert & McConnell 2003). Men foster hierarchy in their speech, and are more commanding and direct than women. It is for this reason that it is more likely and easier for men to dominate women in the workplace whether they are attempting to or not (Tannen 1994).

Language and Authority

In 1994, Deborah Tannen published an extensive study of men and women’s speech in the workplace, where authority and hierarchy play a dominant role. In this study, she found that

women have a more difficult time dealing with authority and status because of their egalitarian peer culture, while men are used to trying to gain the upper hand in speech (1994). Tannen states that girls are taught not to be overly self-confident, pointing out that a common insult toward females (usually from other females) is “she really thinks she’s great”. Because of this, women are often reluctant to reveal their confidence publicly or in the workplace, especially before their superiors (Tannen 1994). Some women adjust by censoring themselves or acting shyer, using tag questions and rising intonation to sound less confident (Tannen 1994). Tannen claims that “the very notion of authority is associated with maleness” which makes it difficult for women to adjust to positions of power (1994).

Eckert and McConnell point out in their 2003 book that women often use conversational facilitation, or “nice, cooperative behavior” when speaking in groups. This is also common in powerless speakers and is used “in order to construct the other as authoritative and to demure from assuming authority oneself. However, Eckert & McConnell also found that someone who is trying to come off as non-arrogant and respectful or open to others may adopt this weak or vulnerable position, and may even be unwilling to support their own positions (2003). Tannen notes that in group conversations, women will often wait for agreement from others before moving on to the next topic. Furthermore, she notes:

When females and males get together in groups, the females are more likely to change their styles to adapt to the presence of males – whether they are adults or children... when women are with men, they become more like men: They raise their voices, interrupt, and otherwise become more assertive... there is also evidence that they carry over some of their well-practiced female style behaviors, sometimes in exaggerated form. Women may wait for a turn to speak that does not come, and thus they end up talking less... they smile more than men do, agree more often with what others have said, and give nonverbal signals of attentiveness to what others are saying [Tannen 1994 p.119-120]

As stated earlier, women are also more likely to speak using the High Rising Terminal (HRT), or rising intonation on declaratives. By raising one's voice at the end of a statement, one indicates a willingness to continue conversation on the topic. This is more common among females because it results in equal control over the conversation. The opposite, or "low-rise", is most often used by males and indicates an end to the conversation, and control over the conversation by the "low-rise" speaker. Researchers are now finding that HRT is more commonly used by younger generations today than those older than them (Eckert & McConnell 2003). Furthermore, Tannen has found that HRT is interpreted in females as uncertainty and incompetence, yet the same is not true for males (1994).

In general, Tannen states that men are more focused on information, while women are more focused on emotions and perceptions of others. However, this does not mean that men are entirely oblivious to emotions (1994). The perfect example is men refusing to ask for directions, or information about something. Socially, men try to avoid the one-down position, and by asking for directions, men place themselves as a subordinate in the conversation. Thus these men are concerned over how others perceive them than acquiring the information they need (Tannen 1994).

When evaluating others, women tend to use more positive terms than men. In addition, women have a much more difficult time offering criticism than males, and often soften their harsh words by complimenting other aspects of what is being analyzed first (Tannen 1994). Tannen claims that males also tend to compare things to sports, and physical aspects of life, while women compare things to cooking or elements of parenting. In addition, studies have shown that men talk more during structured segments of meetings, showing more comfort in a formatted environment, while women tend to speak more during "free-for-alls" where there is no

structure or set definition or structure to the conversation (Tannen 1994). This once again shows that men are more comfortable in a hierarchical or structured social situation, where women are more adapted to boundless and unstructured chat.

Overall, research says that women have a more difficult time conducting themselves in a position of authority, while it comes more natural to men. A woman who is too authoritative is looked at by both her peers and subordinates as cold and uncaring (Tannen 1994). At the same time, many women in authoritative positions do not adjust their speech, resulting in confusion and a social disconnect between themselves and their subordinates. Tannen uses the example of a female boss telling her male subordinate that his report was good, but needed some changes. He understood that to mean that he only needed to change one minor thing, while she wanted him to make some major changes. Had she been more direct and authoritative in her speech, this would not have happened (Tannen 1994). Lastly, Eckert & McConnell point out that both men and women (but women more often) use the term “you know” to place themselves as equals with the listener, and show some vulnerability.

Tour Guides

In order to study the differences in language according to gender, I have decided to examine students on a college campus who are in a neutral position of authority. Tour guides are unique members of the college community whose job it is to not only convey historical and logistical facts about the school, but also to establish a sense of community within the tour group. “Not only does [the tour guide] provide concrete, uncontested campus information such as application deadlines, names of buildings, and graduation rates, but he subtly conveys numerous cherished values of the institution and its expectations for its members” (Magolda 2000). Tour

guides must have authority over the group, leading them through a pre-planned and formal tour while conveying a sense of campus community, equality, and unity at the same time.

In Peter Magolda's 2000 study of the campus tour at Miami University, he found that the tour guides job is essentially a performance through which they guide, recite history, and act as an admissions coach. "Tour participants concentrate on [the guide's] every move and spoken word. Likewise, tour participants involve themselves in ritual performances as they assume the role of respectful campus guests. That is, they listen attentively to [the guide], seldom speak (when they converse, they whisper), and follow the guides recommendations" (Magolda 2000). In other words, they submit to the guide's directions, placing him or her in an authoritative role, yet they listen to the guide as if they were receiving advice from a friend.

Magolda discusses how campus tour guides exploit some rituals of campus life while hiding the "hot button" issues in order to present the campus in the best light possible. The particular guide in his study talked about campus rituals such as avoiding stepping on a particular stone, which helped to facilitate a communal bond among the group when they followed suit. However in another part of the tour, he diverted attention away from a party scene - another prominent ritual on campus, but one which carries negative connotations. According to Magolda, the guide gave off a "sense of vibrancy, solidarity, opportunity, and conformity" and subtly conveyed to the prospective students what the University's concept of the ideal or "normal" student is (2000).

Throughout the tour, the guide employed a "dual oratory style", using both formal and conversational language (34). Magolda noted that when introducing himself or talking about different elements of campus, the guide used a more relaxed and conversational style of language. When he recited historical facts or campus legends, however, he "did so in a serious,

more formal tone” (2000 p.25). These dual styles could account for the discrepancy in positions of authority that they guide is supposed to hold. Perhaps the more serious and formal language accounts for the guides authority over the group during informational segments of the tour, while the relaxed tone helps to facilitate that sense of community which is so important for prospective students to feel.

Some other elements that Magolda pointed out was that the tour guide always walked backward, facing the group and making eye contact often. He also told brief stories which conveyed “seminal campus values and ideals” (2000). The guide took the group through a very small classroom in an attempt to show that classes are close-knit communities where students can work on a personal level with professors (Magolda 2000). He also attempted to conjure up romanticized images of campus life with “nostalgic beauty, and old fashioned values of safety, civility and homogeny, with modern touches” (Magolda 2000). It is my thought that this may have been an attempt to gain the parents’ interest and acceptance of the school. At the same time, he gained the prospective student’s interest by talking about drinking in code, by saying “It’s where you take dates to *socialize* on the weekends” (28).

This brings about another element of the tour guides job as “the local”, or one who provides an insider’s perspective on the university, and has a “particular sense of place, a specific way of life, and a certain ethos & worldview” (Salazar 2005). In a study of foreign tour guides, Nicole Salazar found that guides use their knowledge of “outsider” culture to exaggerate the differences among their own “insider” culture. In fact, many hide their knowledge or experience with the outside world to seem more authentic (Salazar 2005). In the case of tour guides on college campuses, they could use their own experience of being a prospective student to reflect on what both parents and students want to hear. Furthermore, their knowledge of other

campuses can help them to point out differences which they see as advantageous and preferable, thus promoting their own institution and shedding a negative light on others.

Lastly, both Salazar and Magolda point out that the most important part of the tour is the tour guides themselves. “Often it is the human contact, the close encounter with people, which remains strongly etched in tourists’ minds and keeps surfacing in anecdotes of their trips” (Salazar 2005). It is for this reason that big groups are often split into smaller ones; so that the guides can establish rapport among their groups (Salazar 2005). The intention of the campus tour is to “accomplish instrumental tasks” such as identifying campus buildings, and “subtly convey symbolic messages” such as what the ideal student would be – how they would act, or think (Magolda 2000). Thus it is of utmost importance that the tour guide is able to accomplish this within the group, and since the prospective students and parents are so focused on the guide’s spoken word, the study of linguistics in tour guides is important.

Although there is a great deal of literature on both tourism and linguistics in relation to gender and authority, there is little research on the use of language by tour guides. Since tour guides have the most interaction with prospective students and parents, and because human interaction makes more of an impression on tourists, it is essential to the university system to have guides who are an exemplary display of the ideal student and of the university’s values. On top of this, interactions between guides and prospectives are almost entirely verbal, thus it is important that they speak properly and make a good impression. If a guide is too relaxed and friendly, those in the group may think that the school is relaxed, and not overly academic. If a guide is too authoritative, many could perceive that as arrogance, and overconfidence in the university itself.

This study will attempt to shed more light on gendered language within the campus tour guide community. Both Tannen and Lakoff completed their studies over ten years ago, and O'Barr and Atkins' work was published thirty two years ago. I will study these same issues in a modern context to determine if their findings still hold true, or if there has since been a shift in the dynamics of power and gender in language. Is modern language determined by gender, power, both gender and power, or something else entirely?

Chapter 2 **The Gatekeepers of Union**

One of the most crucial aspects of a college admissions office is that they are able to present the best features of the institution during a student-led campus tour. When selecting a college, the tour is one of the most influencing factors in the decision process. It allows prospective students to get a feel for campus life, meet a current student, see the buildings and facilities in person, and ultimately envision themselves as a student at that institution.

I chose to analyze the language of campus tour guides because of their unique social position. Guides are expected to be the ideal representation of their University. They must be able to authoritatively lead a group, presenting them with accurate information throughout the tour, while maintaining the friendly and welcoming manner of a campus admissions office. The goal of a campus tour guide is to give out as much information as possible on the school itself while inviting in prospective students and parents. Therefore making both feel at home on the campus, and ultimately persuading those students to apply for admission. Thus, the guide must speak in a manner which is friendly and welcoming as well as authoritative and educated.

Furthermore, tour guides were the ideal demographic on campus to study because each tour covers the same general material. Each tour guide must point out the same buildings, discuss the same general topics, and answer the same frequently asked questions. This eradicates differences in language due to different topics of conversation, and provides a constant in my study. Thus, the two major factors which can affect the language of a tour guide are gender and authority, making them ideal for this study.

At Union College, campus tours are offered four times a day and twice on the weekends by members of the Honorary Gatekeeper Society. Gatekeepers are Union students who volunteer for the job out of a love for the school and a passion to show others that love (they are not paid or compensated in any way for their contribution to the admissions office). Gatekeepers range from freshmen to seniors, and come from a variety of backgrounds in terms of majors, minors, campus involvement, and general interests. Each guide is required to have one “tour time” per week, as well as signing up for two “special tours”. “Tour times” are the same each week, so each guide signs up for the same time slot every week for one term, and each time slot has three to four assigned guides. “Special tours” are tours which occur during admissions events such as Open House or Accepted Student’s Day. Usually these tours are larger, and at irregular tour times.

Selecting the Guides

Union students can apply to become members of the Honorary Gatekeeper Society in the winter term of their freshman year, and any subsequent year after that. Each candidate turns in an application to the Admissions Office staff, followed by an “audition”, where they must give a three to five minute presentation on anything related to Union. During this audition, admissions staff look for the ability to speak in front of a crowd as well as three main assets; a love for Union, self-confidence, and dependability. The admissions office also seeks the recommendations of professors in each department on campus. A list of final candidates is sent to the faculty with an open invitation to send feedback on individual students.

After students are selected to become Gatekeepers, they receive the official Gatekeeper Manual; over ninety pages of Union facts, history, statistics, legends, tour directions, frequently asked questions, notable alumni, and suggested tour topics among other things. It is

recommended that guides become familiar with as much of the manual as possible, and they are instructed to make sure that they know more about Union College than any visitor to campus. Next, they are required to shadow the tours of five current Gatekeepers, to see just what is expected of them, and to get a feel for the procedures of a tour. Each Gatekeeper is also required to attend nine training sessions with various members of faculty and staff on campus. Through these sessions they learn how to present different aspects of the campus and different academic departments to prospective students and parents. They are also educated on diversity, proper dress, and specific programs on campus such as AOP (Academic Opportunity Program) and LIM (Leadership in Medicine). Lastly, they must give a tour to an admissions staff member before they graduate on to become an official Gatekeeper. Once Gatekeepers commence giving tours, they are susceptible to review by prospective students and parents, which can be turned in to admissions staff. If tours are constantly too short, or if any complaints are made, Gatekeepers are re-evaluated by the staff.

The Ideal Gatekeeper

“My ideal tour guide would be a diverse female from a part of the country that I don’t get a lot of students from, whose involved in a lot but not too much that she doesn’t show up for tours... [I’m looking for guides that] love the school, are confident in themselves, and are dependable” - Admissions Staffer

When selecting tour guides, the admissions staff at Union looks for the students who will best represent the College and will best attract groups who are particularly desired by the college, such as underrepresented groups like “diverse women” from outside the northeast. They also search for well rounded students who have the time and passion to commit to recruiting prospective students and parents. By opening up the selection process to input from faculty, they ensure that Honorary Gatekeepers are in good academic standing, and that each department has

an opportunity to advocate for students whom they believe will accurately promote their department.

Coincidentally, students who are inducted into the Gatekeeper Society are strikingly similar to the target demographic of the admissions office for prospective students. In other words, the admissions office selects tour guides who are very similar to the ideal Union student. When recruiting prospective students, the admissions staff looks for involved students who are in good academic standing. It is no coincidence then that the Gatekeepers at Union tend to be the College's top students. They are involved in everything from Greek life, to sports, to the campus newspaper, to music ensembles, to student government. One member of the staff exclaimed to me that he spends most of the Steinmetz Symposium running around campus trying to attend all of the Gatekeepers presentations and performances, but that it is simply impossible. By choosing such students to lead campus tours, the admissions office hopes to attract more similar students. This will effectively increase the quality of students at Union, drawing in more involved, and academically excelling students.

When I asked the member of the admissions staff why his ideal guide would be female, he responded that right now, more males apply to be guides than females. This goes against the national average for college admissions offices, which usually see more females than males applying to guide tours. Thus, the admissions officer would prefer more female applicants just to even out the numbers. He really had no explanation for the rise in male applicants this year, but said that previous years did see more female guides than males at Union. In terms of guiding tours, he does not think there are any differences between male or female led tours since all Gatekeepers are put through the same training. Furthermore, he does not believe that prospective students or parents are any more likely to pick one gender over the other. In fact, prospectives

tend to go to the guide who is most similar to themselves in terms of academic major or involvement in clubs or sports on campus.

The Ideal Tour

*“While the beauty and academic reputation of the school often speak for itself, it is your job to enhance what people already know and to correct misconceptions. Most tours are very small and therefore will have the personal touch Union is famous for! **Strive for excellence on each and every tour!**”* – Official 2011 Union Gatekeeper Manual

As stated earlier, campus tours depart the Admissions Office on the North side of campus four times each day and twice on the weekends. If more than twelve individuals are present to take a tour, guides are directed to divide the group into two smaller tours with separate guides. This is so that groups can “have that personal touch Union is famous for”. Thus, guides are expected to be friendly, welcoming, and personable to their group right off the bat. On occasions such as open house and accepted students day, large tours are often unavoidable, and groups will grow larger than twelve individuals. Using the official Gatekeeper manual, as well as an interview with a member of the admissions staff, I have compiled the following “ideal tour” of Union College.

Tours begin with the guide introducing themselves to the group. This includes first name, major(s) and minor(s), class year, hometown, and involvement on campus in clubs or organizations. If groups are small, guides are instructed to ask the students to introduce themselves (name, hometown, possible major, and other interests) and encourage questions throughout the tour. This helps guides to modify the tours to the students’ interests, again offering “that personal touch”. Guides then lead their groups south, toward the center of campus. During this walk, they introduce Union College. This includes Union’s founding in 1795 as the first non-denominational school in the country, along with demographics such as majors and

minors offered, male/female ratio, and number of total students. They introduce the school's colors and mascot, as well as demographics on sports and clubs. They are also asked to point out and discuss the Becker Career Center, as well as Health Services and the Registrar's office.

Next, tours head past Memorial Chapel, where guides mention past and future performances and speakers at the venue, often telling about specific events they have attended there. After this, they head towards Beuth house, and begin explaining the Minerva System on campus. Inside Beuth, they must highlight the amenities provided by each Minerva house as well as the unique balance between social and academic life that the Minerva system provides. Before departing the Minerva house, guides usually ask if anyone has any questions thus far. Upon leaving, guides head towards the library with their groups. On this walk they can talk about a variety of topics, but it is recommended that they talk about term abroad opportunities on campus.

Inside the library, guides take the group straight to the back stairwell, where they will be least disruptive to working students. Here, they discuss library hours, study spaces, the writing and language labs, as well as the resources available at the reference desk (interlibrary loan, Connect New York, etc.), volumes available, and journal access through the online catalog. After asking if there are any questions, guides lead their group quietly back outside. Between the library and the new Wold building, guides are again free to talk about a variety of topics. One suggestion from the manual is to mention the Ramee Plan, which involves the layout of the campus buildings and paths. Inside the Wold building, guides are instructed to emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of the building by pointing out the sound recording studio (Phaser Lab), the super computer, the elements of sustainability involved in the construction, and the aerogel

labs. Furthermore, it helps to point out the student lounge/work areas provided and the Starbucks Kiosk, which foster a sense of community among students in the building.

From Wold, tours proceed into Olin, where guides are instructed to first introduce the building and then go through the general education curriculum at Union as well as cluster requirements, mini-terms, and the availability of summer research and internships on campus. This section of the tour often brings about a lot of questions, so guides normally have a question and answer session about classes, class size, and student/professor ratios before leaving the building. Next, tours travel into Reamer Campus Center, the hub of student life during the day. Due to the noise in Reamer, many guides don't linger long, but each is instructed to point out a number of things. First, each guide directs the groups' attention toward the campus calendar, explaining how many clubs and organizations there are on campus, and how many events we have each term. Next, guides point out Dutch Hollow, the C Store, and Upperclass dining, explaining the meal plan on campus. Guides then explain where offices are on the three floors of the building, before pointing out the campus movie poster, and the bookstore. They are also instructed to talk about the mailroom, as well as WRUC and the Concordy, two of the oldest student-run organizations on campus.

Tours then proceed outside to the Chester A. Arthur courtyard, where guides are instructed to point out Jackson's Garden, and explain how its 8 acres comprise the longest standing cultivated garden on a college campus. Many guides take this opportunity to discuss notable Union alumni, including Chester Arthur himself. Next, groups head into the Arts Building. While walking through, guides discuss practicum courses as well as performing groups on campus such as the Dutch Pipers and the various dance ensembles. In the gallery, guides discuss art classes, as well as student and visiting artists' galleries both within the building and in

the Nott Memorial. Tours then proceed into the Taylor Music Center, where guides mention that Union is an all Steinway school before pointing out private practice rooms, including the harpsichord room. Lastly, they show off the auditorium and its adjustable curtained walls. Guides then ask if there are any questions before proceeding back outside.

On the walk from Taylor Music Center to Richmond, guides are again able to discuss a variety of topics ranging from safety on campus and the blue light system, to sports, to activities which take place on the Rugby field and West Beach such as Springfest, Ultimate Frisbee, and Men's and Women's Rugby. In Richmond, prospective students are able to look into a freshman room while the guide discusses R.A.'s, laundry, room features, lounges, ID cards, and the freshman meal plan. Again, prospective students and parents are allowed to ask questions before leaving the building.

From Richmond, tours head back towards admissions, across the flagpole pathway. On this walk, guides are instructed to discuss campus housing options, pointing out West College, Davidson and Fox, as well as the Theme Houses and Senior Apartments on Seward Place. Guides must also mention Webster Hall as well as the Minervas and Greek houses on campus, explaining that housing is guaranteed all four years, and that most students opt to stay on campus. Heading towards the Nott, guides again are given the option of discussing various topics. It is recommended that they talk about the services provided by both the Becker Career Center and Health Services if they haven't previously.

The Nott Memorial serves as the final stop on the tour. After explaining the significance of the building's three floors and often tricking the group into believing that Gatekeepers are able to tell time by looking at the ceiling, guides open the floor to any last questions before heading back to admissions. After this, prospective students and parents are welcome to branch off onto

campus on their own, and guides are encouraged to recommend places to eat either on campus or in town. Many prospective students simply walk back to the Admissions office with the guide, asking any last questions, or specific questions that are more personal. Upon arrival back at admissions, guides hand out business cards and encourage prospective students to contact them for questions, wishing them the best of luck on the rest of their college search.

What's most important to note from this "ideal tour" is that guides are given specific topics to discuss in specific places on campus, and are given free rein in other sections of the tour. This allows guides to customize tours to their groups as well as to the guides own interests. Each guide is given opportunities to talk about what they think are the best aspects and offerings of Union College, and this makes each tour of campus unique. It also presents an opportunity where guides are not told exactly what to say, so they must be able to improvise under pressure.

In the official Gatekeeper manual, guides are given some specific directions on what to do and what not to do on tours. Most importantly, it is stressed that they should not make up information during tours. If a question is asked that they do not know the answer to, they are directed to either consult the manual, or find someone who knows the answer upon arrival back at admissions. Furthermore, they are advised not to use campus slang such as "frat" and "poly sci", but the full words "fraternity" and "political science", which are more official. Negative happenings on campus (such as Greek organizations getting disciplined) as well as negative opinions about certain departments, clubs, sports, or organizations are taboo. Guides are instructed to "accentuate the positive". They are also told never to wear clothing from other schools or universities, and to dress accordingly; "look neat and pulled together, you are representing the College in an official capacity and should [look] presentable." Lastly, guides are

told not to compare or contrast Union with other schools, but to be positive in all respects, so as not to downgrade other colleges and universities.

While the Gatekeepers are educated on everything from diversity to special programs on campus, they are not taught how to adapt tours according to group size. This is something that they are expected to “learn as they go”. However, according to the manual, all tours are supposed to have a personal touch. Another interesting section of the manual states “Don't let overbearing parents monopolize a tour. Try to tactfully direct comments to students in such cases. In general, try to give equal attention to both students and parents.” The Gatekeepers must be in control of their tours at all times, and not let questions side track them from the main points. They are given a list of frequently asked and difficult to answer questions with suggestions of tactful, honest answers on topics ranging from alcohol to safety on campus. This helps them to have well prepared answers that won't get them off topic or catch them in an uncomfortable situation.

With over ninety pages of Union facts in the manual, guides are given more than enough information to lead an hour-long tour. They are encouraged to talk about a good mix of things on campus, including the tour essentials such as admission statistics and education requirements, as well as campus traditions, legends, notable alumni, and fun events. The purpose of the tour is to show how much Union has to offer, and how much the students enjoy life on campus. The admissions staff prefers that guides are audible and are able to answer questions confidently and tactfully. They also encourage guides to avoid using words such as “um”, “uh”, or “like”, as they believe that this makes the guide seem less confident and like they are unsure of what they should say. Part of Gatekeeper training is a seminar on how to properly and effectively engage with prospective students and parents. Lastly, guides are encouraged to tell personal stories, but

not to make the whole tour about themselves. Personal stories help to add “that personal touch” that is memorable to prospective students and parents. Too many personal stories, on the other hand, result in the tour being more about the guide’s experience, and lose the focus on the school that is so necessary.

As you can see, being a member of the Honorary Gatekeeper Society requires very specific skills and training. Gatekeepers must be knowledgeable about all things Union, and must be able to answer questions about specific programs and aspects of the campus itself. They must be able to effectively maintain the attention of both prospective students and parents for the hour long duration of the tour, while maintaining authority over the group and the tour topics in general. They must be friendly and welcoming to prospectives, and able to give their tour that unique personal touch that is so important to the admissions office. They must be passionate, organized, confident, and dependable. They must present themselves properly, and speak eloquently, avoiding slang and improper speech as much as possible. Lastly, they must be able to present Union in a persuasive manner, encouraging prospective students that it is the right choice for them, and promoting applications to the school. Gatekeepers are the face of Union College, and their unique position in society as friendly but authoritative leaders makes them a perfect target for a study of language and gender since they are supposed to display both stereotypically male and stereotypically female styles. Do males and females handle this task differently indicating that gender differences in language use persist?

Chapter 3 **The Group**

Linguists have long debated on the presence of gendered language, and the differences between men's and women's uses of this language. In my study of collegiate tour guides, I found that context overrides gender in shaping both language and behavior among guides. In smaller, more intimate tour groups, as well as strictly student groups, both male and female guides adopt language and behavior which is often deemed "feminine" by linguists. This puts them on an equal, less commanding level, therefore downplaying their authority over the group as a whole. In short, this "feminine" language and behavior is available to both males and females for use in specific contexts to create an impression of friendly informality that both males and females find appropriate in some contexts, and is not strictly limited to female use. Thus this style in contemporary Union College is neither "female" nor "powerless" but is instead "informal".

One of the most important aspects of the campus tour is the tour group itself. The make-up of the group has a significant impact on how the tour is conducted, both linguistically and logistically. I found that group size, and composition (number and gender of parents, interest of prospective students, and so on) have a large effect on the language used by the guides, as well as the content of the tour itself. I will attempt to break down different aspects of the group and explain how each has an effect on tour guide language, and the way that guides structured their tours.

Group Size:

The first and one of the most significant factors of the group that I will analyze is size. Tours of the college campus can range anywhere from a single prospective student on campus for an interview, to over thirty prospective students and parents touring campus for an open house. Each tour guide must be prepared to guide both types of tour, and any size in between. During my research period, I was able to follow about five large and four small tour groups guided by both males and females.

In small groups, both male and female guides made attempts to establish a friendly connection with people in the group; a behavior which Tannen says is more typical of females. Smaller tours are naturally more intimate than large group tours, where prospective students can just walk with the crowd, without asking questions or making any personal connection to the guide. In small tours (one prospective student accompanied by one or both parents), both male and female guides asked for the name of the prospective student, and what their interests were before beginning the tour. With this simple information, the guides were able to modify the tour to the student's interests, talking about what Union has to offer in those specific areas, and establish better rapport within the group.

With a small tour group, the tour is more like a conversation than a presentation. Imagine explaining how you did your math homework to a classmate, and then imagine presenting how you did your homework in front of your whole math class. Naturally, you would use different language and a different manner of speaking in each scenario. In the first, you would be more likely to include your classmate, getting feedback on whether or not they understand – a conversation. In front of the whole class, however, you would most likely just explain the process straight through, assuming that everyone will follow, and ask any questions later on when you allow an opportunity – a presentation. Naturally, in conversation, language will be

more informal than in presentation, as presentation in itself is a more formal manner of communication. The same is true for the campus tour; the smaller the tour group, the less formal the tour, and the more interactive the group becomes.

In both of my male-led small tour groups, the guides put themselves on an equal footing with their group, a strategy Tannen says is typical of females. They did this through devices such as walking alongside the prospective student and parents, occasionally walking ahead of them, but rarely walking backwards in front of the group. Walking alongside the group creates the impression that the tour leader is just one of the group members. I found that the guides seemed friendlier and more accessible when walking alongside the group than when walking backwards in front of it (as guides of larger groups did). Again, Tannen argues that females are more likely than males to seek feedback, minimize their authority, and draw out those with whom they are interacting.

Similarly, the language used by the small group guides was less authoritative than that of the larger group guides; the larger groups received much more official, formal tours while the smaller groups had more individual and informal tours. For example, this is how a large group guide began his tour, followed by how a small group guide began his (after introductions):

Union College is a undergraduate Institution, uh...we are about 22 hundred undergraduate students here. Um, you are actually standing on one of the oldest and most historic college campuses in the United States. We can trace our history all the way back to the year umm, 1779, when British general John Burgoyne was defeated in the battle of Saratoga... Soo... at the time, people realized 'oh, we're gonna... the country's being formed... what are we gonna do? And so they petitioned to the New York state board of regents to become kind of a school to educate the new, uh, generation of students in America. And so in 1795, we were founded as the first non-denominational college in the United States. And since then, we've really striven to provide a holistic and... and an interdisciplinary education for our students. What that implies is teaching our students how to be ethical and really engage with their peers in an increasingly globalized society, and so its not uncommon here to see people like you heard from all of our tour guides

who have multiple majors, multiple minors, interdisciplinary studies like I'm doing... Um... really what that speaks to is that our curriculum here and our faculty really stress the importance of being able to study things in different fields and be able to apply new fields in different ways. And so here, you have those opportunities to be able to kinda prepare yourself for you know, as everyone knows, the job market you know, for people that come out of union college, its very easy to get started in careers very quickly because they do have experience in more than one field and you know a lot of people really that ability to kinda cross fields in that way.

Small group: "I guess to start off, um... we're, we're like really, uh. A) we're really old, we're all, we have a lot of like, brand new buildings and stuff like that, so we have a good, a good mix of (???) and random things like that. Uh... Union was founded in 1795, its one of the oldest colleges in the , uhhh, theres a lot of history behind it. A lot of uhh, theres a lot of really cool alumni that have come through here. Umm, (??? Other tour group loudly talking in background – can't hear t.g.). But uhh, I guess the, the first kinda different thing about Union like, is, uh, the way our, uh, academic year is, uh, broke up^. Uh, normally, the normal college is semesters^. We run on trimesters here^. Um, so a little, a little weird, a little different, um, broken up into three terms."

As you can see, the guides presented the college to their groups in a very different light.

While the first was formal, presenting the Union campus as if he was reading about it directly from a history book, the second was much more casual, and gave a slower-paced tour. In ten minutes of transcribed recording, the first guide spoke about 2,350 words, while the second used less than half of that; about 1,120. (It is important to note that recording was stopped when nobody was talking – thus 10 minutes = ten minutes of speech, not 10 minutes of tour) This difference in itself resulted in the first tour containing much more information, with the guide seemingly attempting to fit as many facts as possible into the mere hour allotted for the tour. According to Tannen, males are more information-driven (2004), thus I would classify the first tour as more masculine than the second.

Keeping in mind that the large group guide spoke over twice as many words as the small group guide in the same amount of time, it is easy to count and compare the use of women's, or feminine language, by both guides. In ten minutes of speech, the large group guide used 72 of

what Lakoff would consider hedges and empty adjectives/amplifiers (actually, really, kinda, little, very, maybe). In the same amount of time, the small group guide used 31 of these literary devices.

While it seems as though the large group guide utilized more of these words in proportion to speech, I believe that the word “really”, which he used 25 times, has an ambiguous function (Tannen 1996). “Really” can be used as both an amplifier/empty adjective (It’s *really* cold outside!) or to better explain a point (“Really, what that speaks to is...”). In this case the word “really” serves as a grammatical function of showing that the next statement elaborates on the previous one. Thus it is not an empty adjective and “really” is not an adjective at all in this context. In the case of the large group guide, really was used 7 times in this manner. Thus both guides used these hedges/amplifiers at about the same rate.

Where the real difference between the guides’ language is evident is in the use of the word “like” as well as the use of false starts and fillers. As discussed in the next chapter, the word “like”, when used properly, is a verb or preposition. However, in contemporary speech, as with “really”, “like”, sometimes takes on a grammatical function of signaling that what follows is an example illustrating a preceding general statement or that what follows is quoted speech. “Like” however, is often also used as a filler, giving the speaker more time to formulate his/her thoughts. This use effectively weakens the speaker’s language, placing it on the feminine side of the gendered language debate. During these campus tours, the large group guide used feminine “likes” only 8 times, while the small group guide uttered 37. As the following example shows, the use of the feminine “like” results in the speaker sounding more informal, less knowledgeable, and weaker in general. The speaker sounds less authoritative because he seems to be fumbling with his words:

Small group: "...we were the, the first college ever to **like**, have greek life, we **like** kinda, **like** made it up, pretty much."

Large group (different): "Yes. We have greek organizations here. We have uh... thirteen fraternities and 3 sororities."

Similarly, the use of false starts and fillers such as "um", or "uh" cause the speaker to sound more informal and weaker, and thus, more "feminine". For example the small group guide began his tour with "um... we're, we're like really, uh. A) we're really old, we're all, we have a lot of like, brand new buildings and stuff like that, so we have a good, a good mix of /?/ and random things like that." In the case of the large group guide, only 39 of these fillers/false starts were used in total, while the small group guide used 71 "um's" and "uh's" and had 11 additional false starts (recall, this is in half as many words!).

I also found a significant difference in how each guide structured their tour according to size. Going back to the classroom analogy, there was much more interaction between the guides and groups in both small tours, than in either of the larger tours; much more of a conversation. In the ten minutes of transcription from the small tour, there were over 7 guide/group interactions, as well as 2 instances where the guide greeted passing friends. He allowed questions throughout the tour, asked the group questions, and at one point even said "I don't know what to talk about", prompting the group to ask about specific things they were interested in. This was typical of all small tour guides, both male and female. This was not the case, however, for the large tours. In the large transcribed tour, the only interaction was between myself and the guide at two points throughout ("...which was a really great experience I would say right? Me: yeah"). The structure of the larger tours was the same for both male and female guides; they would speak for a period of time about Union, and then have a question time, where they would ask "Any questions?" almost immediately followed by "No? ok..." and then a continuation of the tour. In the large

male-led transcribed tour, this took place twice, but no group members came forward with questions. I believe that this is because in such a large group setting, the guide recounts facts in a fluent and rapid manner, creating an impression of authority. Therefore the group is more likely to believe that the guide is defining all of the relevant and important information, and members may feel less comfortable about asking questions or interjecting and causing the guide to stray off topic. Similarly, in a large female led group, there were five questions asked during a 10 minute period and all but one were asked during these pre-set question times. I found that groups were more likely to interrupt female guides with questions than males in any context.

Lastly, I found that the large group guide used larger, more powerful words throughout his tour, making him sound more authoritative and formal. He stated “The Minerva system was founded in 2004 as a way of building kind of a new **interdisciplinary** kind of (?) space that would be available to students for their four years here. So, it was meant to **encompass** the academic and social and residential life (?) kind of a college experience.” One can then compare this to the small group tour - where the guide seemed unsure of himself, and more concerned with making sure that the group understood him, using more childish words such as “fun” and “big”. He stated “Yeah! The hockey games are a **ton of fun** to go to. Cause they have the **big whole** student section with their own cheers and **all that fun stuff** so... um, hockey games are definitely **big**.”

The difference in language between the two tours creates a difference in formality. If an outsider were to walk past both tours, they would know that the first was an official, formal, guided tour, while the second may sound more like a student explaining the school to a friend; much less formal, and much more laidback. In general, small group guides used primarily women’s language, which leads to a more intimate and less hierarchical group, while large group

guides used predominately power and authority-laden male language. I found this to be the main difference between different sized tour groups led by both males and females. If the issue had been powerlessness as Lakoff suggests, than guides would have been more likely to feel powerless and nervous in front of small groups. Instead, their use of these speech devices in small groups shows that they use them, as Tannen suggests, to soften speech and create a friendly informal conversation between equals. Both males and females make use of this style in small groups.

One thing I found interesting when looking back on different sized tour groups was the variation between male and female guides and their comfort with group sizes. I found that males, in general, were more comfortable in front of a large group, where they could give a pre-planned and more formal tour, while females were more in their comfort zone while leading smaller, more intimate groups. Male tour guides had the most confidence, and gave the smoothest tours in front of the largest groups, while females seemed to become more nervous with group size. This was evident to me in both body language (girl began to sway, fidget, and giggle more as groups got larger) and in spoken language (girls used more um's, uh's, and like's in bigger groups, while boys used more in smaller groups). For example, in 10 minutes of transcribed speech (much of which was unclear because of the wind) a female large group guide used 52 false starts and fillers in about 900 total spoken words in comparison to the male's 39 in about 2,350 spoken words. In addition, the small group male used 83 false starts in ten minutes compared to the large group male guide's 39. Males in front of large groups predominately stood firmly on both feet, often with hands in their pockets or holding something, while females tended to sway from side to side, moving around in a small radius in front of the group, often using their hands to talk. In short, there were some gender differences. Females were less comfortable in the authoritative

role as Tannen suggests and males were less comfortable as friendly equals, also confirming Tannen's suggestions. But both males and females shifted their styles with group size showing that the "female" speech styles were used by both males and females to create a friendly informal atmosphere in small groups.

Group Composition:

The second factor of the tour group which I will analyze is group composition. For example, was the group entirely prospective students, or were there parents present? Where there more parents than students? More males than females? More mothers than fathers? And how did all these differences affect the dynamics of the tour?

The most important aspect of group composition in my opinion was the ratio of adults to prospective students in the group. I found that the more prospective students, and the less adults present, the more guides tended to use elements of women's language, and the less authoritative they were. Thus, I believe that talking down a generation results in the use of informal language, while talking to elders requires more formal language. When talking to peers, both males and females strive for friendly equality while formal language is a mark of respect to adults. These devices then, do not seem to have the gender functions noted by Lakoff and Tannen. Formal language, described by Lakoff as powerful language, may in fact be powerless language in some contexts, signaling respect for a social superior. Informal language is a mark of equality and friendliness used by both genders. As an example, I will compare two large female led tours, one of which had about twenty prospective AOP (Academic Opportunity Program) students and two adults, and the other consisted of five prospective students and around nine adults. The group of prospective students began as follows:

So our mascot is the Dutchmen. He's this like short little guy with /?/ in his hair... he's pretty disgusting... but, um, he kinda just resurfaced like, last year, so... he, um, at all the hockey games – we're division 1 hockey – and the Dutchman kinda goes around and like makes everyone all excited and cheers, and he also kinda like walks around on random important days at Union. So... its kinda fun to look out for him and like... look at how gross he is.

Old group: Um, our colors are garnet and white. And our, we are the Union College Dutchmen. Um, so you'll see a lot of school spirit, especially around hockey season because we are big in hockey.

In these small examples alone, one can see that the guide of the younger group used more incomplete sentences, hedges, empty adjectives, and “likes”, while the guide of the older group did not insert her own personal opinion, and used complete sentences. In ten minutes of transcribed tour, the young group guide used 34 hedges and empty adjectives in about 1,600 words of speech, while the older group guide used 24 in about 1,750 total words. However, four of these 24 instances were repeats. For example, “it's a **really, really** nice building”. Thus I would argue that this guide only truly used 20 hedges and empty adjectives. As a result, the young group guide used about one and a half times as many of these elements in about the same amount of speech as the older group guide. As mentioned previously, these words weaken speech, and result in a “women's language” categorization by linguists. These examples show that so-called “women's language” is not always an indication of insecurity and powerlessness, and can stem from other sources. In this context, it has the function of creating a friendly and informal environment among peers.

Another significant difference between the two tours was the use of feminine “likes”. The younger group guide used the word “like” 43 times in ten minutes, while the older group guide said “like” only 12 times; less than a third as much. To further support this, a second female led older tour was transcribed, and this guide only used 7 “likes” in about 900 words of speech. As shown by the previous example, the use of these “likes” is unnecessary, and causes speech to be

less fluent, and more informal. It tends to sound as if the speaker is fumbling for words rather than presenting a well-thought out and pre-planned presentation. While this could stem from insecurity, I believe that as Tannen suggests, it successfully places the speaker on the same footing with the audience and creates more opportunities for interjections, questions, and interaction. In fact, the tour guides (both male and female) who had the greatest number of false starts/fillers and used “like” the most also had the greatest amount of interjections and questions by group members.

Fillers and false starts, however, do sometimes signal feelings of insecurity in certain contexts. One of the most interesting things that I noticed, and as I previously pointed out, was that females seemed much more uncomfortable in front of larger groups. I also found this to be true of females in front of older groups, or groups with more adults. I believe that besides body language, one of the best indicators of nervousness is false starts and fillers, which indicate powerlessness in speech in some contexts. In the younger tour, the guide had 54 instances of false starts/fillers, while the older group’s guide had 73, a significantly higher number. Additionally, before the tour, she told me that she was nervous, and had been worrying all morning. This could indicate that females have more trouble than males speaking up a generation and maintaining authority. This directly relates to males socialization to avoid the one-down position, which gives them an advantage over females in such situations.

Lastly, the use of personal stories as well as the number of interactions between group and guide were similar in both groups, with the younger group having five, and four, respectively, and the older group with eight and three. I did notice, however, that the younger group was more comfortable interrupting the guide’s speech to ask a question, while the older group only spoke when given the opportunity by the guide. Again, I believe that this is because

the younger group guide spoke and acted in a less authoritarian way, allowing these interruptions.

A second aspect of the group which I found to be important was the gender of both the prospective students as well as the parents within the group. I found that parents were much more likely to ask questions than the prospective students, and females asked more questions than males. For prospective students, when males did ask questions, they were more likely to ask about sports at Union, or specific majors, while females often asked about clubs, food, and life on campus.

The biggest difference however, was between prospective mothers and prospective fathers. I found that adult women on the tour asked over twice as many questions as adult males. Their questions usually regarded life on campus (“What about clubs?”), personal information or opinions from the tour guides (“Did you do a term abroad?”), or clarification of something the guide had said (“Can you say it again?”). Males, on the other hand, often asked about logistical issues, such as how many credits students get per class, or how long classes are, one male even asked about the structure of the building we were in. To me this confirms Tannen’s claims (1994) that men are more focused on information, while women are more focused on social relations and perceptions. Furthermore, by avoiding asking as many questions as women, men avoid the one-down position in conversation. Because of this, tour groups with a greater number of females tended to have more guide/group interaction. These generalizations apply to the prospective parents more than today’s prospective college students.

Chapter 4 **Words of Generation Y: Like, Really, and Actually**

An undeniable and uncontested fact about spoken (and written) language is that it changes over time. New words come into popular use, and old ones die out. In the 70's, words like "groovy", "foxy", "funky", and "slammin'" were popular among young adults. But today, most high school or college aged students wouldn't be caught dead using such words. In the analysis of gender, power, and language, linguists such as Lakoff have identified specific words or phrases that they categorize as "women's" or "powerless" language. While many of these isolated words and phrases are still used in contemporary speech, others (such as "piffle") are outdated, and still others have come into the spotlight. It is necessary, then, to analyze the functions of new and changing words as they come into popular use. I believe that some of these generational words can be added to the lists of "women's" and "powerless" language, and thus can be used in the analysis of language and speech.

Three words in particular which I found to be used often were "like", "really", and "actually". Although none of these words are new to the English vocabulary per se, I argue that they have developed new uses in language among "Generation Y". Generation Y includes individuals who were born in the 80's and 90's, and sometimes even includes some individuals born after the year 2000. This is important to my study because Generation Y includes all of the current Gatekeepers at Union College, as well as two of the admissions office employees whose job it is to oversee the Gatekeeper program.

One thing that is important when analyzing the use of specific words is to recognize that a word in itself can have different grammatical functions. The words "like" "really" and

“actually” have several different functions in language which I will discuss in detail in each section. They can be used grammatically as hedges and fillers (among other things) as well as latently to indicate powerlessness, femininity, and an emotional closeness. What I mean is that certain uses of these words carry a latent meaning, or one which conveys information about the speaker, which coincides with their grammatical function. For example, one might use the word “groovy” to grammatically describe something as interesting, good, or hip while latently signaling their status as a hippy, or someone who uses such phrases. Linguists use the word “index” to describe the way we use language to convey information about ourselves and about the relationship between people in a conversation, aside from the informational or “referential” content of the message. For instance, the use of the words “like” “really” and “actually” can be used to index a casual relationship, or powerlessness in the dynamics of a conversation. In this chapter, I will break down the uses of each word by Generation Y, and describe how each can be considered “powerless” or “feminine” in certain conditions but can be seen as simply creating a relaxed atmosphere among equals in other conditions. I will then analyze these differences in usage in relation to gender and authority. Ultimately, I argue that these words are used strategically by Generation Y to manipulate authority and solidarity among a group of individuals regardless of gender. They are a tool in modern language that can be used to set the tone of a conversation, and control the hierarchy of a group.

“Like” – The go-to word of Gen. Y:

Undoubtedly one of the most characteristic words of teens and young adults today is “like”. The use of this word has ballooned in the past three decades, and is used in so many different contexts, that if one were to “Google” its part of speech, results would range from verb,

to preposition, to adverb, to noun, and beyond. Furthermore, a Google search of just the word “like” yields a handful of stories from the New York Times, Vanity Fair, and others about parents and teachers being fed up with the overuse of “like” by teens and young adults. There is even a WikiHow article called “How to Stop Saying the Word “Like”: 9 Steps”!

The word “like” has been commonly dubbed “Valley Girl” language by older generations, and is often seen as annoying or improper. The Valley Girl stereotype labels people (mostly girls) who speak this way as ditzy, young, and materialistic. It has a preset typecast of being “feminine”. When words such as “like” are used by younger generations, they define the speaker as a certain kind of person (“valley girl”). But they can also be used to establish an informal relationship between equals. When “like” is used as a hedge or filler, it makes one sound powerless. Thus I think that it is necessary to analyze the different uses of the word, breaking down the contexts in which the word is “feminine” or “powerless” and those in which it is used to establish an informal atmosphere. I will argue that tour guides who use the word “like” often do so in smaller groups, showing that they are not feeling powerless but are instead, as recommended by the Gatekeeper manual, trying to sound friendly and approachable. I argue that analyzing gendered use of a language requires a nuanced interpretation of speech devices in context since the same word can convey very different ideas. Both males and females make use of many so-called feminine speech styles to create informal atmospheres.

The Many Functions of “Like”

I would like to begin my analysis with the classic uses of the word “like”, the most obvious being the verb form. For example, “I **like** to eat ice cream”. When used in this context, the word “like” is neutral, showing neither “feminine” nor “masculine” traits, as well as no

marks of authority. Thus in my study, I ignored “likes” which were used in this context. The same is true when “like” is used for comparison; “It tastes just **like** my Mom’s!”, or in the place of “as if”; “It looks **like** it’s going to rain”.

The use of “like” which I found most common among tour guides was as a filler. Fillers are meaningless words such as “um”, “uh”, or “ah” which are used to “beef up” a sentence. They function to fill in gaps, decrease pauses, or denote thought. They give the speaker extra time to formulate his or her thoughts. The problem with fillers, however, is that they weaken speech. An overuse of fillers makes the speaker seem unsure, nervous, and as if they are fumbling for words. Thus Lakoff lists hedges and fillers as “women’s language” making the speaker seem weak and un-authoritative. For example, one tour guide said:

Um, yeah, like I said, we are division one hockey - we’re division 3 every other sport. But **um**, our hockey team’s actually really good, **uhhm**... they made it to the top 16? NCAA’s last year. **Um**, and like they were the top of **ECA**... the ECAC’s which is our conference^. **Uhh**... but we just switched coaches, so hopefully we’ll still be good!
Uh... alright.

However, as you can see, had this guide said something more along the lines of the following, without any fillers or false starts, they would have sounded more formal, and authoritative:

Like I said, we are division one hockey – we’re division three every other sport. But our hockey team’s actually really good; they made it to the top 16 NCAA’s a last year. They were the top of the ECAC’s, which is our conference. But we just switched coaches, so hopefully we’ll still be good! Alright...

In speech such as this, fillers break up the flow of thought, and result in a rougher, more fumbling dialogue. This leaves room for interjections from others. In the case of a campus tour, this could be questions or comments from the tour group. Thus one effect of fillers is to create a comfortable atmosphere where people feel free to break in with questions. This can be seen in a

small male-led tour where the guide used “like” 37 times in ten minutes of speech, most often as a filler. This created an informal, comfortable atmosphere within the small group:

Guide: Um, **like** the president of the college speaks there, then some, **like** acapella groups perform there. Um, so the first floor is for, just **like** meetings, **like** umm... and then second floor... it’s a traveling art exhibit. So they bring in artists from the outside community. They put up the art exhibit. Uh, and then third floor is study spaces...um, so it’s actually really good to study. It’s, **like**, dead quiet....

Mother: So hows the greek life?

As you can see from this example, the guides use of “like”, along with other fillers, caused a break up in his flow of speech. This makes it seem as though he is also experiencing a break up in thought flow, and prompts the mother in the group to ask a totally unrelated question – as if she had to give the guide a topic, essentially guiding the direction of the tour on her own. When interruptions are allowed among such a group, the guide loses a sense of authority. As I will discuss in a later chapter, the most authoritative guides had structured segments of the tour where questions were allowed, and allowed little to no interruption during their tours. However, in small groups, a looser, more rambling presentation may establish the kind of comfortable atmosphere where prospectives feel free to ask questions.

As stated earlier, fillers also make the speaker sound nervous, or unsure of him or herself. This results in a weakening of the dialogue, as well as a weakening in the authority of the speaker. This is a trait which linguists such as Lakoff and Tannen have associated with females, and female language in general. Therefore, the use of the word “like” in the context of a filler can also be considered “feminine” or “powerless”. The following are some examples from tours with the Union Gatekeepers:

...they asked students what they would want from their library and they said a lot of open, **like**, natural light^ . You can see **like**, those windows, the whole back is kind of **like** that, so it's very **like**, lit, it's not **like**, yellow light, **like**, artificial light.

So it's not, we're not trying to **like**, set freshmen apart when they eat, but **like**, we're trying to get freshmen to **like**, get to know your class, **like** get to know everyone, in an environment where **like** you're not walking into **like** a ton of unfamiliar faces...

Another common misuse of the word "like", and the one which is most associated with the "Valley Girl" stereotype is the use of "like" as a quotative. In this case "like" signals that the subsequent phrase is quoted speech. For example "My mom was like, clean your room!" or "She was like, no way". "Was like" in these instances replaces the more formal word "said" indicating that what follows is a quote; "My mom said 'clean your room!'". The use of the word "like" as a quotative opens up the quote for interpretation, and leaves the speaker sounding less factual. It is used to show a more loose explanation of what someone else said, rather than quoting their exact words. For example, "He said 'that shirt is ugly!" and "He was like, that shirt is ugly!". In the first instance, we know exactly what the boy said. In the second, however, he could have said anything along the lines of "that shirt is not pretty", "that shirt is hideous", or even "I don't like that shirt". Thus by using "like" instead of "said", the speaker effectively weakens the factuality and authority of their statement, and takes on a more casual tone.

Furthermore, by using the word "like" instead of "said", the speaker indicates that they are speaking with equals or peers rather than to superiors. This creates a sense of equality and solidarity among those involved in the conversation. It is unlikely that one would use "like" in this manner when speaking to a parent, professor, or manager. Thus by using this, the speaker indicates equality within the group. If a guide were to use this "like" during a tour, they would effectively be weakening their language, however they would also be placing the rest of the group in an equivalent hierarchical position.

Another use of the quotative “like” is to express the opinions/actions of a group as one, and to simplify an explanation of those opinions/actions. In this use, the speaker may be making up a quote just to get a point across. For example, when talking about why Union was chartered, a guide might say “People at the time were like ‘Oh, the country is being formed, and we are going to need some kind of education...’”. While it is highly unlikely that any one person actually said that in 1795, it gets the point across that there was a need for a school, and thus Union was chartered by a group of concerned individuals. This use of a generalized quotative in this case, adds a more personal aspect to the narrative. I argue that this adds more of an emotional connection than if the guide had just said “Union was founded in 1795” and causes the group to feel more personally entwined. Tannen argues that this kind of language is typical of females who seek to engage their audience and involve people in a conversation; according to Tannen, speaking this way does not always signal powerlessness, just the belief that people should be engaged. In the case of tour guides, one could argue that their mandate overall is to engage their audience rather than to keep them under control or impress them, and so this kind of “female” language could be appropriate for both males and females. The guide is essentially saying that Union wasn’t just magically chartered, but that it was chartered by real people, just like you and me. Thus, using “like” in this manner causes speech to be more emotion-laden, less factual, and therefore less authoritative, while creating a connection in the group. Furthermore, by putting a modern, casual tone on the language (using “oh”), the speaker is once again employing the latently feminine use of the word “like”, indicating that they are just a young, laid-back, cool person telling a historical story.

Another modern use of the word “like” is as an exaggeration. “Like” can be used to amplify or highlight an adjective or adverb. This “like” is used when the speaker wants to really

emphasize a point. For example, when talking about possessions, one could say “I have like a million pairs of shoes”. This is obviously an exaggeration made to emphasize the fact that the speaker possesses many pairs of shoes. This use of the word “like” is equivalent to the use of empty adjectives and amplifiers in Lakoff’s analysis of language. In her analysis, Lakoff claims that women use these empty words such as “really”, “so”, and “very” to bolster speech when they are not actually needed. The statement “she is so nice” would have the same meaning without the “so”. I argue that these exaggerations using “like” are also unneeded. Someone could simply say “I have a lot of shoes” and get the same indexical meaning across. By using the word “like” however, the speaker signals to their audience that they have strong emotions on the matter, and their exaggeration serves as an example of just how strongly they feel. This emotion-laden language is characteristic of females, who seek to engage the audience. However, this might also undermine credibility by making it look like they value emotions over facts.

There were several instances of this with the tour guides. For example when talking about the library, one guide said “[During finals week] **like** everyone’s in the library trying to study for finals”. What this guide literally meant was that a lot of people study for finals in the library, but in saying it this way, she conveyed that this was more of an opinion and exaggeration than a fact. She also effectively showed her casual tone towards the tour and presenting actual details. A more official way of saying it would have been “approximately 85% of our students use the library to study for finals”.

An additional use of the word “like” which also carries the “valley girl” undertone is the use of “like” to show an approximation. “Like” can be used to replace more formal words such as “nearly”, “around”, “about”, and “approximately”. I found this to be the second most common use of “like” among the guides that I shadowed after fillers:

“I have class for **like** an hour and that’s it.”

“Um, and then upper, upper level class it gets **like** 12-13 kids.”

“My preceptorial met in my Minerva house and we were **like** 12 students”

Once again, by using the word “like” rather than a more formal approximation word (about, around, etc.) the guides signaled that they were more relaxed, and not trying to speak in an authoritative way. One can simply observe how the use of grammatically correct words rather than “like” make the same saying seem more scripted and official:

I have class for about an hour and that’s it

...upper level class it gets approximately 12-13 kids.

My preceptorial met in my Minerva house and we were around 12 students.

So then how does the use of “like” play in to contemporary gender and power roles in language? As I have shown, the modern uses of “like” as a filler, quotative, exaggeration, and approximation marker effectively weaken the authority of a speaker, while making conversation within the group more equal and casual. With the “valley girl” undertone, most would expect that “like” would be used more frequently by females, however I found that the use of “like” correlated more with authority than gender, and was used by both males and females to create a friendly informal atmosphere in smaller groups.

In my analysis of all the tours on campus, there were two guides in particular who stood out for their excessive use of the word “like”. Coincidentally, one was male and the other was female, however both were leading “casual” tours. The male in this case was leading a group of one prospective student and parent. His approach to the tour was laid back and informal, and involved a lot of interaction and downtime (awkward silences). In ten minutes of recorded speech (~1.120 words), he used the word “like” 37 times:

It’s on, **like**, everything. This is the Nott building. Um, it’s, **like**, to us, it just looks like an awesome building, but, uh, it’s actually a historic landmark.

The female was leading a medium sized group of prospective AOP students with one teacher. Her approach to the tour was also casual; using a lot of fillers and false starts as well as empty adjectives. She used the word “like” 43 times in ten minutes (~1,600 words). This resulted in a less official sounding tour, where the prospective students did not pay attention the entire time (they were often conversing amongst themselves or looking off in different directions).

In comparison to these two tour guides, other guides averaged 6.4 uses of the word “like” in ten minutes of transcribed speech. Females averaged 6.3 while males averaged 6.5. I found these tours to be more formal, and the guides to be more authoritative. Thus I argue that despite the feminine stereotype, and latent “valley girl” undertone, the use of the word “like” correlates more with authority than gender. Both male and female guides of larger, more official tours used “like” much less frequently than either the male or female guide of casual small groups.

Although “like” was originally used by “valley girls”, it has become a crutch in modern speech for younger generations. It is used among peers, both male and female, in casual conversation and interaction. This shift is reflected in the latent meaning of the word, which was originally feminine, but now serves to show informality or equality.

One of the most interesting things that I discovered while reading about the word “like” was its relation to the phrase “you know” in modern speech. Christopher Hitchens of Vanity Fair explains that using “you know” in speech signifies that the speaker is middle class and middle aged, just the way that “like” signifies membership to a younger, more “déclassé” generation (2010). Furthermore, the use of “you know” by older generations correlates to the use of “like” by current young adults. Most frequently it is used as a filler, it can also be used to spark an emotional connection. For example, by saying “If you are, you know, the kind of person who likes to study in your room...” the speaker is making the audience evaluate their own

personalities and try to relate them to a group of people (in this case, a group of people on campus). In other words, “you know” is the “like” of older generations.

I found this interesting because there were two particular instances where I noticed that guides who I considered very formal and authoritative used “you know” frequently. Originally I believed that “you know” was functioning as a tag question, one of Lakoff’s key elements of women’s language. Therefore, it did not fit that these authoritative guides were using women’s/powerless language so frequently. When I looked into the uses of “you know” more deeply, however, I found that they were being used by these guides in the manner that older generations use “you know”. Here are a few examples from the two tours:

Um, **you know**, one of the things that a lot of people talk about when they talk about Schenectady is that, **you know**, we are a city of 60,000 students. So just like, at least for me, I wouldn’t walk around Chicago at 3 o’clock in the morning, **you know**, by myself or, **you know**, you wouldn’t walk necessarily in the city of, **you know**, New York at 4, 3 or 4 in the morning by yourself. **You know** we do live in, in a, in an urban setting, so you have do have to be conscious of your own safety.

Um, it is a bit of a, a tough program, **you know**, it’s gonna make you work hard but obviously every, every program here is like that. But **you know**, all my friends that are engineers just completely loved it and, its an incredible experience, and you get to do... great things like that.

If one were to replace all of the uses of “you know” with “like”, these statements would still have the same meaning, but would sound more informal as if they were spoken by a younger person:

Um, **like**, one of the things that a lot of people talk about when they talk about Schenectady is that, **like**, we are a city of 60,000 students. So just like, at least for me, I wouldn’t walk around Chicago at 3 o’clock in the morning, **like**, by myself or, **like**, you wouldn’t walk necessarily in the city of, **like**, New York at 4, 3 or 4 in the morning by yourself. **Like** we do live in, in a, in an urban setting, so you have do have to be conscious of your own safety.

My point here is that although “you know” and “like” are interchangeable, the latent function of each is different. “Like” is a mark of a younger more “hip” person, while “you know” signifies that the speaker is of an older generation. Thus when “you know” is used by the younger generation, it is a signal of authority; the guide is attempting to remove himself/herself from a position of “younger” (to parents) to a position of equal or even older (to prospective students). In other words, the guide is avoiding the one-down position – a characteristic of men’s language according to Tannen (1994). By using “you know” these guides are able to establish that connection, without sacrificing their power over the group.

The tour guides who used “you know” the most were both males leading medium to larger sized groups. I found both to be authoritative in presentation and demeanor. The first guide was leading a large group of prospective LIM students and used “you know” 21 times in approximately 2,350 spoken words. The second guide was leading a medium sized group of prospective parents and students of various interests. He used “you know” 20 times in about 1,700 spoken words. It is important to note that both males did use “like” during their tours. But the first only used it 8 times, and the second only 5. I found that they used “like” when trying to describe something better or telling personal stories. In other words, they used “like” at times when their speech wasn’t entirely scripted, and they had to think of things on the spot, or when they were trying to make show a connection between themselves and something on campus. Thus, with a lapse in knowledge or information, they slipped back into an unsure or powerless form of speech for a short period:

For me at least, I don’t really have a lot of time to **like** sit down and eat a meal, so I will have **like** or 10 meal swipes a week so it’s easier for me to just be able to grab and go /?/ in class.

I found it curious that only male tour guides used “you know” a significant number of times. All of my previous research has shown that the use of “women’s” or “powerless” language correlates with formality rather than gender. It is my guess however, that Tannen’s argument that males actively try to avoid the one-down position in conversation still holds true. While authoritative females avoid the use of “like” all together, authoritative males often replace it by using “you know”. This effectively shows that they have access to and can use the language of an older generation, keeping them out of the one-down. The use of “you know” effectively places them above prospective students (who assumingly would use “like”) and *at least* on an equal level with adults on the tour. Female’s lack of “like”s and “you know”s makes it difficult to place them in hierarchy with either prospective students or adults through this framework. In other words, instead of actively trying to avoid the one-down, females just avoid the improper use of the word “like”.

In general, I believe that the use of “you know” by younger generations, who are more apt to use “like”, is a signal of authority. At the same time, however, it is a symbol of powerlessness in the older generation. Years from now, young adults may use “like” as a mark of authority when speaking to an older generation Y, however it will still be considered “powerless” among members of generation Y.

Really – not always an amplifier.

Just like “like”, many words have different functions when used in different contexts in modern language. In her research on gendered language, Lakoff isolated 10 different elements of women’s language, which she believed were responsible for weakening women’s speech. One of these elements in particular was the use of amplifiers, or emphasizing words. Among the list of

amplifiers which are often used by women, Lakoff mentions the word “really”. “Really” was a commonly used word among the tour guides, with the group averaging about 10 uses per ten minutes (the range being 2-25 uses). In the context of an amplifier, “really” is used to boost the meaning or feeling given by the subsequent word. Thus in the phrase “I was **really** excited”, the word “really” emphasizes that the speaker was beyond just being excited, but adds no real meaning to the sentence.

What it is important to realize, however, is that “really” can function as more than just an amplifier in modern language. It can also be used to state or validate a fact, or confirm that what is said is *in reality*. In other words, when a speaker uses “really” as a validation, they imply that they are telling the truth, with no exaggeration, or speculation. For example “These are **really** my shoes” implies that the shoes belong to the speaker, and denies all speculation that the shoes may be stolen or borrowed.

It is important to distinguish between the two uses of the word “really” because one is latently feminine (as Lakoff originally stated), while I would argue that the other is latently authoritative. By using “really” as a validating word in a phrase, the speaker is able to quash all speculation about that statement being untrue before it can even start. In using such a validator the speaker is covertly saying “I am correct, this is the truth, and I know what I am talking about”. Thus using “really” to validate a statement is certainly authoritative, and nowhere near being a feminine amplifier.

The problem with distinguishing between these two uses is that they may be interchangeable in certain instances. For example, one guide said “...our faculty **really** stress the importance of being able to study things in different fields and be able to apply new fields in different ways.” This phrase could mean one of two things. Either the faculty *greatly stresses* the

importance of interdisciplinary study, or the faculty *really does stress* the importance of interdisciplinary study; in other words, it's not just an empty promise that the College makes. In the first case, "really" is used as an amplifier, while in the second, it is used to verify the subsequent statement. How then, can one tell these uses apart?

I found that in order to determine how "really" is being used in a statement, it is often necessary to look at the context, as well as the surrounding speech pattern of the speaker. If a speaker is using authoritative language, and large, sophisticated words, it is highly unlikely that "really" is being used as an amplifier. Furthermore, I have found that when "really" is used as an amplifier, it can be replaced with other amplifiers at will (i.e. very, extremely, incredibly), while this is not the case when used as a verifier. When "really" is verifying a statement, it can only be replaced with other verifiers, such as "truly" or "actually". For example, in the following case, "really" is used to verify, because it cannot be replaced with another amplifier, but can be replaced with a verifier:

...we've **really** striven to provide a holistic and... and an interdisciplinary education for our students. What that implies is teaching our students how to be ethical and **really** engage with their peers in an increasingly globalized society....

...we've **truly/very** striven to provide a holistic and... and an interdisciplinary education for our students. What that implies is teaching our students how to be ethical and **truly/very** engage with their peers in an increasingly globalized society...

However, in the following case, "really" can be replaced with "very", indicating that it functions as an amplifier:

I always like to mention that at the library we have some **really** cool systems... So, that's **really** helpful.

I always like to mention that at the library we have some **very** cool systems... So, that's **very** helpful.

It is important to note that amplifiers can be replaced with both other amplifiers and verifiers, however verifiers can only be replaced with other verifiers. Thus the true test to whether “really” is being utilized as an amplifier or verifier is whether or not it can be replaced with an amplifier.

In my study of the Union Gatekeepers, I found that there was no significant correlation between the use of the word “really” and gender or power. All of the guides used “really” as an amplifier more than a verifier, but there was no significant difference among uses. However there was a difference in the utilization of “really” when analyzing gender *and* power together. Two of the “authoritative” male guides used “really” as a verifier proportionately more than any of the other guides (44% vs. 21%). Perhaps utilizing both functions of the word, they were able to balance out being authoritative males with friendly guides.

I believe that many of the guides used emotion-laden words such as “really” frequently throughout their tours to display their passion for Union College and the services that it has to offer. Guides are selected and trained based on a love for Union, which they are instructed to display to the prospective students and parents. Perhaps the use of such words is forced by the authoritative guides who are also attempting to be friendly and create a connection within the group. Thus for the two male guides, they naturally used the authoritative function of the word more frequently, but also used the amplifying “really” to create connection.

I think that the utilization of the word “really” displays perfectly the balance which tour guides must have between acting authoritative or friendly. As a guide, they must utilize their authority over the group, keeping their attention and interest, while portraying a friendly and welcoming environment on campus. By using both forms of “really” guides are able to do both of these things subtly and without actually having to transition from official, formal language to

friendly, casual speech. For example, “The library is **really** great because it **really** does allow you to utilize as many resources as possible”.

Theories aside, it is still necessary to address that “really” is used in speech as more than just an amplifier. Therefore, for linguistic purposes one must evaluate the use of “really” before just tagging it as a feminine amplifier in speech. In fact, it seems as if there is no correlation at all to gender, and rather carries an “informal”/“authoritative” speech dynamic. Depending on the ratio of uses between the powerless and authoritative “really”, one can be more or less authoritative or powerless. As one starts to use the authoritative “really” more, their speech becomes more official, while if one were to use the feminine/powerless “really” more, their speech would become less powerful and friendlier.

Actually – how it relates to “really”

Another word which I found to be used often by The Gatekeepers is the word “actually”. “Actually” is an interesting word because it serves the same function as the verifying form of “really”, however it adds no real meaning to the phrase which it modifies. This could help to reveal more about the verifying form of “really” and what its real significance is in linguistics. The phrase “[Union] was **actually** the first college chartered by the regents board of New York” would have the same meaning with or without the word “actually”. Thus one could consider “actually” to be an empty adjective, or an unneeded description word. However just as the verification form of “really”, “actually” is used in this context to validate the speaker’s statement, thus giving them more authority.

So is “actually” powerless or authoritative? I argue that the use of the word “actually” functions to make authoritative speech weaker; it is a powerless element of powerful language.

Thus it is more likely to be utilized by someone in a position of power, who is attempting to weaken their speech in certain roles. In my analysis of the tour guides, I found that “actually” was used the most in a ten minute span by the three most authoritative guides. I believe that these guides were attempting to balance their position as a friendly, yet powerful guide by throwing in such words.

By using the word “actually”, the guides indicated exactly when they were telling true facts, rather than opinions or estimations, showing some weakness in their demeanor. The most powerful and authoritative person in the world would not have to use the word “actually”, they would simply state a fact, and trust in the groups confidence in their knowledge. For example, if the President of the college were leading a tour on campus, he could simply point to his house, and state “That is my house”, without anyone doubting his statement. However, one of the tour guides stated the same fact like this: “that white building you see over there is **actually** the president’s house.” The guide added in the empty adjective “actually” to show some powerlessness, as if to say “you should believe this”, rather than the all-powerful “believe this”. In other words, “actually” as well as the verification “really”, act as a sort of humbler to powerful speech. They shift the speaker from the all-powerful guide who is simply stating facts, to the powerful guide who states facts as well as opinions and estimations, in an attempt to show solidarity with their group. As you can see from the following examples, the guides who used “actually” the most also spoke in the most authoritative manor, using larger vocabulary as well as less false starts, fillers, etc, compared to those who were less authoritative:

After your first term, you can **actually** decrease the number of meal swipes you have and what that does is increases the second part on your meal plan which is called declining balance (used actually 19 times)

one of the best things is the fact that lots of people **actually** do get internships during that six week break that we have. So you have an opportunity to get basically 2 internships in a year. (10 times)

Less authoritative:

Um, it's, like, to us, it just looks like an awesome building, but, uh, it's **actually** a historic landmark. (2 times)

In general, then, I believe that “actually” is a powerless element in language, but it is more likely to be used by powerful speakers. It allows a speaker to weaken their speech with an empty adjective, while still maintaining authority. By saying that a something is “actually” a certain way, the speaker points out that they are telling the truth, however they do so using a latently powerless word. The same is true for “really” when it is used as a verifier/validator. Powerless speakers do not need to use words such as “actually” or “really” because they have no need to further weaken their speech. Powerful guides on the other hand, must do so in order to keep a healthy balance between power and solidarity within their group.

By studying the contemporary use of the words “like”, “really”, and “actually”, I found that many of Lakoff’s “Feminine” devices in language, such as amplifiers and fillers, are used by both males and females to create a friendly, informal atmosphere in conversation. Thus, I would argue that these devices should be deemed “informal” rather than “feminine”. Furthermore, I found that males in a position of authority use similar “informal” words such as “you know” to create this same friendly atmosphere while maintaining a sense of power and avoiding the one-down position in conversation. However this was the only gender difference I found regarding these “informal” devices.

Chapter 5 The Odds and Ends of Language

Body Language

One thing that I found important to look at in my study was body language. Body language is one of the most important aspects of self presentation. Mood, attitude, personality, and confidence can all be read through body language. It's not uncommon that we judge someone by their body language before we really even speak with them. Just a look can give someone the wrong idea. Just think of how often you hear comments like "She looked at me like I was a child" or "He looks like a jock". Body language is not just how someone carries themselves; it includes facial expressions, presentation, and even clothing. Thus, in order to give a good tour, and in order to represent Union properly, guides must look and act the part. They must dress and act like the friendly representatives of the student body they are as well as students who uphold the moral standards of the institution.

It is intrinsically difficult to quantify body language, as it can only be observed. The body language of an individual cannot be documented and analyzed on paper the way in which spoken language can, and I did not have the resources to video tape and analyze each guide. Even if those resources were available, it would be nearly impossible to catch document and then compare the body language of each guide, as well as the reactions of the prospective students and parents to that body language. Thus the following section is based solely off of my own observations, post-tour analyses, and ideas drawn from outside literature. I cannot say that what I found in these observations is definitive, as it is merely speculation on the topic. However I believe that if the resources were available to quantify this data, we would find similar results.

Dressing the Part:

The Gatekeepers of Union are specifically instructed in the official Gatekeeper manual to look presentable, and to come to tours looking neat, and put together. They are told never to wear clothing from another school, and to always try and represent their pride in being a Union student. By simply making an effort to look nice, guides show prospective students and parents that they care enough about Union to put an effort in before each tour to show their best side. Furthermore, by looking presentable, guides show that their role on campus is not just a casual one. They have an official job with the admissions office which they take seriously and take great pride in.

Tour guides are also told not to wear any clothing with Greek letters or marks of affiliation with fraternities or sororities. This is because Greek life in the United States gets the most media attention when things go wrong, and thus carries a negative stereotype. The Admissions Office on campus believes that affiliation with a Greek organization, though not a negative thing, could influence the reactions and opinions of prospective students and parents on campus tours. If a parent sees a guide wearing Greek life clothing, they may pass judgment before the tour even begins. Many prospective students and parents do not want to commit to a school whose social life is dominated by Greek organizations, and Union particularly stresses alternatives such as Minervas, clubs, sports, and student government.

In my time shadowing tours, every gatekeeper arrived promptly and looked presentable. There were no instances of guides wearing sweatpants, or looking like they had just rolled out of bed. Union t-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, and scarves were common, and Greek affiliations were hidden unless prospective students or parents specifically asked the guide if they were involved

in the system. I found this to be one of the best aspects about all of the guides at Union. Each guide looked official, and presentable, and thus gave off a great first impression to prospective students and parents.

Acting the Part:

On top of dressing the part, tour guides must be able to act like the friendly group leaders they are trained to be. This goes farther than how they speak. Guides must be confident, speak clearly, and able to effectively lead a group of strangers around campus. This includes acting self-assured, hiding signs of nervousness, making eye contact, and even smiling.

One of the most noticeable things on any campus tour is how the tour guide walks in front of the group. Gatekeepers at Union are taught to walk backwards in front of the prospective students and parents, maintaining eye contact as much as possible. This prevents the guide from turning their back on anybody, which can be seen as rude, and can make anything the tour guide says difficult to hear. Furthermore, by facing the group, a sense of community or solidarity is formed. It opens up the tour dialogue for questions and interactions between the guides and prospectives. In one instance, one of the Gatekeepers was discussing internship opportunities and looking around her group when she noticed one of the parents looking confused. She stopped what she was saying and said “You have a question! You look confused.” The group laughed, but the parent was in fact confused, and had it not been for this guides awareness of the group, and maintenance of eye contact, this parent may not have had her question answered.

On the other hand, one guide experienced a great deal of difficulty walking backwards (he continually tripped and walked into things). This guide in particular was leading a group of just one prospective student and mother. In other tours which were this small, guides often

walked next to the two group members, which I believe is just as effective as walking backwards in front of them; it mimics friends walking side by side, and keeps the tour open for dialogue between any of the members and the guide. This guide however, often talked standing still, and then walked in front of the group with his back turned, occasionally turning halfway around rather awkwardly to say something. I found this very ineffective, and it caused the tour to seem much less friendly and open in a way. The parent and student could only ask questions when the guide turned or stopped to talk, and being in the group myself, it felt as if we were students just following a teacher around campus.

In my opinion, by walking in front of the group with his back turned, this guide effectively became much more authoritarian, and the tour became less interactive and friendly. This same guide stumbled on his words often, seemed as if he didn't know what to say, and often resorted to awkward silences. I believe that he was nervous about giving such a small and intimate tour, and thus overcompensated for this nervousness by being too casual with his spoken language (stating many more opinions than facts, not explaining much in detail, using a lot of weak language), but overly authoritative with his body language. To me, this gave off an air of "I'm a cool, laid back guy, with a lot of authority so I can just casually give tours without really being questioned". In my opinion, this guides nerves and lack of linguistic eloquence placed him in the one-down position in the group, and he compensated for that by displaying authoritative body language, and walking in front of the group.

This guide was an exception to the trend followed by the rest of the Gatekeepers. I found that each of the others did a great job of staying in front of the group, and maintaining eye contact. As stated earlier, some guides with very small groups walked along side, as friends would do, which effectively works the same as being in front. Both methods of leading keep the

group together, and ensure chances for questions and interactions. I did notice, however, that female tour guides were more susceptible to realizing when group members had a question or weren't entirely sure of something. Their question and answer sessions seemed to be longer and they looked around the whole group, asking if there were any questions multiple times before continuing on. This supports the claim that females are naturally more concerned with connections and interactions, while males are more focused on information. For the male tour guides, if nobody asked a question, they assumed that there were no questions or confusion, and continued on. One male guide in particular always asked "Any questions?" and then almost immediately said "No? Ok, let's continue". Males did not make as much eye contact, and tended to just focus on an obligatory point in or behind the group when talking.

In addition to this, I found that female guides tended to use their hands a lot more while talking or explaining things. They also seemed to sway back and forth while standing in front of their groups during a question and answer session or inside a building, while male guides were typically planted in one spot. For example, one female guide of a large group swayed back and forth, pointing at various features within a building while reciting the following information:

This is the Campus Center. Uh, we have a mailbox and your mailrooms, to our left here, the campus calander. Um, student activities will have a monthly calendar putting one thing that's happening each day^ um socially, or fun-wise. Uh, but we have a lot of things that are happening all the time. Uh, we do have the Minerva system that I will talk about shortly as well as a whole bunch of clubs, theme houses, as well as a lot of other stuff. There's a lot of stuff that you can do if you have the time to devote after you're done with your academic work. We're gonna try to navigate through... stay with me (laughs). So the second floor here is one of the two dining halls we have on campus^. And the bottom floor here is where you can use your declining.

While this swaying could be a sign of nervousness, I believe it functioned as a symbol of enthusiasm and animation in front of a crowd. By moving around a lot and gesticulating, these guides were showing their passion for the specific aspects of Union they were speaking about

through more than words. If they were to stand perfectly still, they may seem bored by the topic, like they're just going through the motions of giving a campus tour, and not feeling any of that passion for Union that they are supposed to display. As you can see from the example, this guide talked in nearly complete sentences, being very clear, specific, and authoritative. Yet her enthusiasm for what she was saying was displayed through her body language; she swayed, pointed, and even raised her voice.

For male guides on the other hand, a lack of movement during stationary segments of the tour did not detract from their enthusiasm. By standing completely still, these guides effectively displayed their comfort in speaking in front of a group as well as confidence in what they were saying. If a male were to sway back and forth too much, it could be taken as a sign of nervousness. This is because women in society are expected to be more emotional, while men are expected to be more collected, calm, and authoritative. Tannen's (1994) studies on gender and authority in the workplace display this perfectly. Women's peer culture teaches them to be more emotional and egalitarian. Thus emotion-laden performances, such as wild gesticulations and swaying are expected, and not interpreted as nervousness or powerlessness. Men's competitive culture teaches them to be calm, collected, and authoritative. Thus wild gesticulations and swaying back and forth would be perceived as a lack of self-confidence or nervousness. This was especially true in the small male-led group mentioned earlier, where the guide seemed somewhat nervous. He tended to sweat a lot, and was very unsteady on his feet, often tripping over things.

Male tour guides did use gesticulations and hand movements, just not as frequently as females. This allowed them to maintain that calm collected air, while showing their passion for Union, and acting more friendly/emotional towards the group. One male guide in particular, who

gave one of the most information-laden, authoritative tours, also used the most erratic hand gestures of all the males. I believe that he used this as a method to balance out his dominating approach to the tour. His tour was jam-packed with to history and fun facts about Union, which did not allow for much interaction within the group. However, he was able to carefully balance his authoritative language and tour style with welcoming and friendly body language such as hand gestures and smiling often. In the following example, this guide was standing still, with both feet planted, but pointing to different locations around campus. He even offered up a smile at the end:

So this one over here is Davidson hall^, it's a suite style building. Its, uh, sister hall is Fox Hall. This is for upperclassmen, that's for freshmen students. Um, its suite style so you have a common room with 2 doubles that come off that common room, so it tends to be more of a social environment. You have these great study lounges and a little courtyard and inside a bunch of study rooms so it's a really great space. On the other side of Davidson is Webster Hall^. It's where actually both of us lived freshman year.

Smiling was another element of the Gatekeepers' body language which I paid close attention to. Tannen found that women tend to smile more than men, and Eckert & McConnell stated that smiling is improper for someone in a position of authority, as it shows too much emotion. I found that female tour guides did tend to smile a lot more than males, and often laughed or giggled more during their tours, making the group laugh along. Again, I attribute this to women being stereotyped as well as trained by their own peer cultures to act more emotional and friendly in public. One guide repeatedly joked about her father coming to campus just to hang out, as it got laughs out of the group every time. Again, since males are not expected to be as smiley as females, I don't think that smiling less took away from their tours. They did smile on occasion, often if they said something incorrectly, or if a parent or student asked a goofy question.

One thing I found interesting was that two of the male guides I shadowed carried coffee with them throughout their tour, drinking it in between periods of talking. None of the other guides exhibited this behavior, not even with water or some other beverage. Coffee is a social phenomenon, and it has been a symbol of adulthood and business for years. I believe that consuming coffee, especially in public, is seen as a mark of age or sophistication. Perhaps these two tour guides used their coffee consumption to signify authority, or place themselves on the same social level as adults in the group. As males, I believe that this could be an attempt to avoid the one-down position in interaction. By acting like an adult in the business world, these guides effectively place themselves above the prospective students and at least on an equal level to the prospective parents in the group. Females are not taught to avoid the one-down, and thus have no need for such behaviors during their tours

In general then, I believe that male and female guides present themselves differently in front of tour groups in terms of body language regardless of authority or group size. Both genders in this study led a variety of different sized groups, and had the same balance of authority and solidarity in front of those groups. While both genders dressed similarly, in presentable, clean, put-together outfits, they acted very differently in front of tour groups. Like Tannen said, women are socialized to show that they care about connection and emotion, while men are socialized to be calm, cool, collected and authoritative, always avoiding the one-down position in conversation. While Tannen applied this principle to spoken language, I think that it is more relevant to body language in our modern society.

Males in front of all groups are generally calmer, more collected, more serious, and less smiley than women. However, this is what is expected of them by society, so it is actually a neutral position on the powerless/emotional-authoritative/serious scale. If a woman were to act

exactly this way however, she would be seen as dominating and overly authoritative. Thus females must act more emotional, passionate, and smiley to achieve the same level of neutral authority. If a male acted this way, he would be seen as powerless and overly emotional. Thus, what the important thing to see here is that in order to achieve the same level of neutrality in terms of emotion and authority, males and females must act differently.

Personal Stories

Continuing with the theme of emotional connection and solidarity within groups, I decided to look at how often tour guides recalled personal stories during the first ten minutes of their tours. By telling a personal story, or even sharing one of a friend's stories, guides effectively give prospective students and parents a glimpse into their own life, feelings, and opinions. Thus telling personal stories is a linguistic way to create a sense of commonality within tour groups. Following Tannen's claims that women are more concerned with such solidarity and sharing of emotions, one would expect that female tour guides would share more personal stories than males.

In my study, female guides actually shared less personal stories with their groups; with four females averaging 4.5 stories per ten minutes of tour and three males averaging 6.3 stories in the same amount of time. The guide who told the greatest number (13) of personal stories was indeed a male. Personal stories included anything from stories of past experiences to mentioning their own class schedules, experience in past classes, and even sharing their friend's stories. For example:

Prospective student: Is double majoring common?

Guide: Well.... Yes and no, because we have either do double major, or you can do interdisciplinary which is technically one major with two departments that combine to your own one major. So...**I am a strict double major.**

Guide: **I'm not, not a musician, or an engineer, but one of my friends is doing that and said it's the most incredible, uh, coursework he's done.** If you are interested in that, you can get it done here.

Guides used personal stories in order to better explain things throughout their tours, as well as to provide secondhand information on subjects which they didn't know much about. As one can see in the first excerpt, the guide is explaining that most students on campus are involved in multiple departments. She uses herself as an example of a double major, continuing on to talk about the high number of interdepartmental majors as well as single majors who have one or multiple minors. By giving such a specific example, prospective students and parents are able to place a face on, and make a personal connection to one of the opportunities on campus. Furthermore, in the second excerpt, the tour guide himself did not know much about the lab he was pointing out (the Phaser Music Lab), but relayed positive feedback he had heard from his friend. This helps to show that Union students themselves are enjoying the newest additions to the school, and they hype isn't simply within the administration.

Since males are naturally more authoritative in terms of body language and presentation, perhaps using feminine qualities of language helps them to balance control over the group with friendliness and welcoming into the group. Like I said previously, men in a neutral state are more calm, collected and authoritative than women. Instead of allowing this to set the tone for their tours, they may utilize more feminine elements of spoken language, such as these personal stories, to facilitate this balance. Women, on the other hand are already viewed by society as friendly and group oriented, thus they don't need to use as many stories to connect with groups. This is similar to the way that guides selectively use the words "like" "really" and "you know" to modify authority in language.

The HRT (Rising Intonation)

Previous literature has shown that the use of the high rising terminal, or rising intonation, in speech signifies femininity and powerlessness. By raising one's voice at the end of a statement, that statement effectively sounds more like a question. It makes the speaker sound unsure of themselves, as if they are questioning their own knowledge. At the same time however, Tannen points out that the use of rising intonation is becoming increasingly popular among younger generations, just as the improper use of the word "like" has spiked in popularity. She claims that this is beginning to be more accepted in language, and points out that women generally use this more, as they are socialized to sound less confident, and more powerless. Tannen also suggests that rising intonations can be used to level the playing field and to invite others in to the conversation, and thus contribute to fostering connections as she says is typical of females.

I looked into the use of the HRT in tour guides, marking every time when a guide used rising intonation at the end of a statement which was not a question. This was difficult to do however, because I discovered that many guides use rising intonation to combine two sentences into one sentence with somewhat of a short pause in the middle. For example, one guide stated the following ([^] marks HRT):

We're actually increasing our class size now... so we're bringing in more first year students this year^ And we'll have more next year as we, um, increase the community on campus.

In this instance, she connected two separate sentences using the high rising terminal and "and". She could have just as well said "...So we're bringing in more first year students this year. We'll have more next year as we, um, increase the community on campus." Thus in these circumstances, it was hard to determine if the HRT was being used as a symbol of uncertainty or powerlessness, or as something else, such as signaling a casual link between the clauses of the

sentence. I believe that just like the use of “like”, this use of the HRT to bridge sentences is just a generational use of the word, which is utilized often, but has a different effect than rising intonation that is clearly used at the end of a statement. I believe that this use of the HRT displays excitement and enthusiasm. Where monotony shows boredom and indifference, wavering intonation serves to show the opposite. A speaker whose voice undulates is more pleasing to listen to, and is better at holding the attention of an audience. Even though this use of the HRT does not necessarily show powerlessness or uncertainty, it is a symbol of engagement and solidarity with the tour group, thus it effectively diminishes authority just as the use of HRT at the end of a sentence; it is more innately feminine to speak with such emotion.

I was able to count the uses of HRT by each tour guide during the first ten minutes of their tour and actively compare them. Overall, I found that male guides used rising intonation significantly less than female guides. On average, female guides utilized the HRT 29 times per ten minutes of speech, while male Gatekeepers only used rising intonation about 12 times per ten minutes of speech. This actually supports Tannen’s theory that females utilize the HRT more than males.

I believe that females’ use of rising intonation directly correlates with their use of enthusiastic body language and hand gestures. Just imagine talking to someone who is animated and using passionate hand gestures, but speaking in monotone. Socially, these two do not fit together. Thus, since girls are socialized to act more emotional, they must mimic this with their vocal intonation as well. In fact, the male Gatekeeper who utilized the HRT the most during his tour (19 times in ten minutes) was actually the same male who was most enthusiastic in terms of body language. What this really means is that as body language becomes more animated in any speaker, the use of rising intonation and wavering vocal pitch increases proportionately.

Similar to body language, I believe that the standard use of HRT is higher for females than it is for males. Thus, women can use rising intonation more often than men without diminishing their authority. A female Gatekeeper can utilize rising intonation nearly 30 times in ten minutes, but if a male were to get close to this number, he would begin to sound powerless and “feminine”. In other words, males and females can display the same amount of authority while utilizing different proportions of body language and vocal pitch.

Thus, it is more natural for women to utilize the HRT, and more natural for men to speak more slowly, and less “singsong”. This does not make one gender any less authoritative than the other, but relates directly to gender roles and expectations in our society. Thus, an overuse of the HRT in language by males, makes them more feminine, and less authoritative. However, an underuse of the HRT in females would be considered masculine, and overly authoritative. The main point is that the scales of authority in relation to rising intonation are different for each gender because of gender socialization, and thus must be evaluated separately.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine gender, language, and authority in a contemporary context among college students. To properly do this, it was necessary to study both males and females in a social position of neutral authority. Thus, I selected to study the Gatekeepers of Union College. These campus tour guides are all members of Generation Y, ranging from sophomores to seniors in college. The tour guides came from a variety of geographic backgrounds, and different academic and social disciplines.

In order to study language among the Gatekeepers, I shadowed, recorded, and transcribed campus tours over the period of two academic trimesters at Union College. Using literature from scholars such as Tannen, Lakoff, O’Barr, and Atkins, I was able to analyze specific elements of spoken language and body language which were previously categorized in terms of gender and authority. This includes vocal intonation, the use of generational words, false starts and fillers, among other things.

Linguists such as Robin Lakoff and Deborah Tannen have stated that males and females utilize language differently in accordance with their gender. In this study, I found that male and female tour guides have equal access to language and vocabulary, and that they use this language in the same context in equal positions of authority. In other words, authority, not gender, determines how individuals speak.

It is my belief that men and women have equal access to both powerless and authoritative language (also referred to as “women’s” and “men’s” language). They are able to utilize this entire range of language in any context, but choose to manipulate this use in accordance with

their authority. This was evident when studying how guides used different elements of “women’s” language. I found that the use of false starts, fillers, amplifiers, and words such as “like”, “really”, and “actually” correlated with Gatekeepers’ perceived authority rather than gender. Furthermore, unauthoritative styles do not signal powerlessness but instead the desire to create a friendly informal atmosphere. Tannen suggests that females are socialized to communicate in friendly informal ways but I found both males and females did this in appropriate contexts.

How then is the perceived authority of a Gatekeeper determined? All gatekeepers must be able to actively balance their authority over a group with solidarity within that group and a welcoming friendliness. The way in which tour guides of both genders manage this depends on the composition of the group. Again, the analogy of presenting one’s math homework comes into play. Imagine the linguistic differences in presenting homework to a friend, and presenting that same homework in front of the whole class and the teacher. Although the same thing is being presented, the audience differs greatly. When presenting to a friend, the dialogue is more likely to be informal and conversational, when presenting to a class, the dialogue will be official, and authoritative.

The first element of tour group composition which drastically determines Gatekeeper language is group size. Just like in the math homework example, guides speak differently in front of different sized groups. With small, intimate tour groups, Gatekeepers used more casual language, and tours had a conversational tone. As group size increased, guides became more scripted, using more official language, and allowing less interjections and random questions. Larger tours became more structured and less intimate. This was consistent with tour guides regardless of gender.

The second element of group composition which affected Gatekeeper language was the age demographic of each group. In other words, did the group have more prospective students, or more prospective parents? We can apply the same math homework analogy to this situation. Imagine presenting that same math homework to a group of first graders and a group of middle aged adults. Its more than likely that these presentations would be drastically different in terms of language. One would present the work to younger kids using simpler, more casual language, while a presentation given to adults would consist of more authoritative, official, sophisticated language. The same is true for campus tours. I found that regardless of gender, guides leading younger tour groups used more informal, casual language such as “like” and “really”, but when leading groups consisting of primarily adults, tour guides were much more official, using less elements of this informal language such as false starts and fillers.

The one gender difference that I did find here was that male guides actively avoid the one-down position in conversation while females were in content holding an egalitarian position in speech. In other words, males actively tried to use language which placed them higher than or equal to every member of their group. For example, two male guides leading large groups with many adults used the phrase “you know” quite often. This phrase is a part of language which is most commonly associated with middle-class, middle-aged Americans. By using such language, these guides avoided the one-down of belonging to a younger generation by proving that they possess the language skills of an older, and more sophisticated generation. Females, on the other hand, simply avoided using any generational language such as “like” or “you know”, therefore removing themselves from the hierarchy, and obtaining no position in language.

Other than differences in avoiding the one-down position in conversation, men’s and women’s use of what Lakoff calls “women’s language” is actually the same. Thus, I argue that

this language is truly “informal” language, and is used to define an appropriate atmosphere. Formality and authority would be strange and ineffective in a small tour group just as excessive informality would not work in a large group. Both males and females have access to this informal language, and both genders use it to actively manipulate their authority when talking to a group depending on the composition of that group. Using this method, guides are able to efficiently balance authority with friendly group solidarity to give the ideal campus tour to each individual group. In simply reading any of the transcriptions which I produced during this study, it is impossible to tell if the guide is male or female, however it is possible to evaluate that guide’s authority over their group.

Just because males and females utilize the same spoken language does not mean that they utilize the same body language. In this study, I found that there is a difference in body language which stems entirely from gender, but reflects authority as well. This coincides with Tannen’s theory of gender socialization. Recall that Tannen discussed how males and females are brought up differently, and socialized to act differently in different situations. She claimed that women are “trained” to act fragile, weak, emotional, and egalitarian, while men are “trained” to be strong, calm, rational, and authoritarian. While both genders speak the same, they act differently.

Society stereotypes men and women in the same way which Tannen claims that we are socialized. That is to say we expect women to be more emotional, and more fragile than men. We expect men to be calm and collected, and to have authority over others around them. Because of this, we naturally expect men and women to have differing body language. If a man were to give a presentation standing flat on both feet, perfectly still, hands in pockets, looking straight ahead, this would seem natural. However, if a woman were to do the same, many would find this odd, and rather masculine of her. On the same level, if a man were to give a presentation while

gesticulating passionately, swaying back and forth, and gazing around to read the audience's reactions, he could be labeled as feminine. Yet this would be natural, or normal, for a woman to do.

Thus, I argue that in terms of body language, men and women must be judged individually. The scale of body language ranges from powerless and emotional to authoritative and rational, where powerless/emotional body language is expected from females and authoritative/rational body language is expected from males. Thus, each gender has a different position of neutrality on this scale. Women naturally begin on the powerless/emotional end, while males naturally begin on the authoritative/rational end. Thus, in order to achieve the same amount of authority over a group of prospective students and parents, males must utilize more authoritative/rational body language than females. What I mean here is that if one were to simply evaluate a male and female guide in equal positions of authority without taking gender into consideration before hand, they would find the female to be powerless and emotional in comparison to the male. Thus, males and females do differ in accordance to body language, but both are able to manipulate these gestures in terms of their own gender to achieve equal levels of authority.

One thing that I did notice during my study of body language was that females are much more perceptive than males to the body language of prospective students and parents in their groups. I attribute this to females' tendencies to observe the behaviors of others. By simply making eye contact with every member of the group throughout their tours, female guides could tell when prospective students or parents were confused or had questions that they were holding in. By simply being more emotional in terms of body language to begin with, females in these

scenarios were better at reading the body language of others, and allowed more time for questions and interactions within their tours.

Another facet of language which goes hand in hand with body language is vocal intonation. Originally included in Lakoff's list of "women's" language, rising intonation on declaratives is used primarily with feminine body language. Rising intonation, or the HRT (High Rising Terminal), was utilized in this study by both male and female tour guides. I argue that an undulating vocal range is significant in portraying emotion and passion in speech. It coincides with passionate and emotional body language, and thus sees a greater use by females than by males. If females were to speak in a calm, authoritative monotone while using the emotional and passionate body language that is expected of them, they would seem obscure – for these two elements of language simply do not go together. Thus, I argue that men naturally have less vocal undulation in speech while women are naturally more "singsong". Since this also goes along with gender stereotypes, I do not believe that it has an effect on authority. Women are not any less authoritative than me just because they use different intonation. Both genders however, can modify their vocal intonation to sound more or less powerful, just the same as they can modify their body language.

In conclusion, I found that both males and females have equal access to a range of language which is authoritative and powerless/informal. What scholars such as O'Barr and Atkins have called "powerless" language is really informal language used by both males and females in appropriate contexts to create a friendly, egalitarian atmosphere. Both genders use this access to modify their authority in terms of their surroundings. Words such as "like", "really", and "actually" as well as fillers, false starts, hedges, and tags are used by Gatekeepers of both genders to manipulate power associations depending on the composition of the group that they

are leading. In situations of equal authority, Gatekeepers of both genders will utilize the same language, and give similar tours. Therefore, this language, which was originally considered to be “women’s”, is not constrained to gender and is in fact related to authority, and thus can be deemed “informal”.

Where gender does come into play is in body language. Males and females utilize the same scale of body language, which ranges from emotional and powerless to rational and authoritative. Because of gender stereotypes and socialization, a neutral position for females is naturally closer to the emotional/powerless side, and a neutral position for a male is naturally more authoritative/rational. Therefore, Gatekeepers of equal authority, guiding similar groups in terms of composition, will differ in terms of body language simply due to gender. Thus, body language and its accompanying vocal intonation is determined by gender, and manipulated in terms of authority, whereas spoken language is possessed by all regardless of gender, but also manipulated in terms of authority. Furthermore, this same gender socialization causes women to be more perceptive to the body language of others, as well as causing males to actively avoid the one-down position in conversation.

In short, gender differences have not disappeared in communication styles, but overall the generalizations of Tannen and Lakoff appear to be oversimplified. Today’s college students, male and female alike, make use of a repertoire of styles in order to create an effective atmosphere in different contexts. Speech devices labeled as “powerless” or “feminine” are used by both males and females in small groups to create a friendly, informal atmosphere which is appropriate to the task at hand; making prospective students and their parents feel comfortable and welcome to ask questions. On the same level, “authoritative” or “masculine” speech is used

by both males and females in larger groups to establish the more formal atmosphere needed to effectively convey information to a larger group.

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