
Gender Differences in Verbal Presumptuousness and Attentiveness

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Men's and women's verbal presumptuousness and attentiveness were measured by verbal response mode coding of laboratory conversations in five studies. The data were used to assess implications of two common assumptions about gender roles in American society: that women's status is viewed as lower than men's and that women tend to be oriented toward maintaining relationships, whereas men tend to be oriented toward hierarchy, mastery, and control. Comparisons failed to show the expected greater presumptuousness by men, despite evidence that presumptuousness was closely regulated within dyads. In these conversations, women were more attentive than men under some conditions, particularly within committed relationships (married or dating couples).

Common conceptions of gender roles in American society seem to be based on the assumptions that (a) women's status is considered lower than men's and (b) women tend to be oriented toward maintaining relationships, whereas men tend to be oriented toward hierarchy, mastery, and control (e.g., Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Chodorow, 1978; Fishman, 1978, 1980; Gilligan, 1982; Ickes, 1993; Lakoff, 1975; Miller, 1976; Spender, 1985; Tannen, 1990, 1994). Some authors have linked these two aspects by suggesting that people with lesser power and status are likely to pay

relatively closer attention to people with more power and status, to learn how best to maintain positive relationships with them (Fiske, 1993; Snodgrass, 1985). Thus, women's lower status may promote their relationship skills and incline them toward attending to and maintaining relationships.

This article reports five laboratory studies of men and women in dyadic conversations in which dyad members

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were not intentionally assigned differential status or roles. We were interested in whether gender alone would predict systematic differences in two previously validated verbal indexes that reflect relative status and relational orientation within conversations. By studying conversations in the laboratory and giving conversational partners the same task, we sought to reduce the uncontrolled role differences that may be confounded with gender in naturalistic settings. Some of the studies were originally designed for other purposes (which are not considered here), and they incorporated additional measures, but all the studies permitted direct comparisons of men's and women's verbal behavior.

*Expected Gender Differences
in Approach to Interactions*

The assumptions that, other things equal, women have lower status and a more relational orientation than men have implications for how men and women should use language in face-to-face interactions. Lakoff (1975) described a collection of features of "women's language" that express and help to maintain women's relatively lower status. Tannen (1990, 1994; cf. Maltz &orker, 1982) joined notions of women's language with self-in-relation theory to suggest that men and women have very different expectations regarding their relationships—differences that account for their different conversational purposes, different use of language, and failures to understand each other when they talk. Tannen (1990) argued that men tend to engage the world

as an individual in a hierarchical social order in which he was either one-up or one-down. In this world, conversations are negotiations in which people try to achieve and maintain the upper hand if they can and protect themselves from others' attempts to put them down and push them around. Life, then, is a contest, a struggle to preserve independence and avoid failure. (pp. 24-25)

In contrast, Tannen suggested, women tend to approach the world

as an individual in a network of connections. In this world, conversations are negotiations for closeness in which people try to seek and give confirmation and support, and to reach consensus. They try to protect themselves from others' attempts to push them away. Life, then, is a community, a struggle to preserve intimacy and avoid isolation. There are hierarchies, though they are more of friendship than of power and accomplishment. (p. 25)

For example, Tannen (1990) suggested that women want to make decisions by consensus and negotiation. They might begin by asking a vague question, expecting that this will lead to a negotiation in which they will get to say what they mean. Men, however, are presumably

more direct about taking a position; in their hierarchical world, challenging another can be a sign of respect. The resulting interactions between men and women can give rise to power differences between the genders and can help maintain and perpetuate the status hierarchies (Tannen, 1994).

Consistent with this view, in Fishman's (1978) informal observations of married couples' interactions, women asked nearly three times as many questions as men. Theoretically, questions are a way for women to connect and become closer. "It became clear that I asked questions not merely out of habit nor from my insecurity but because it was likely that my interaction would fail if I did not" (Fishman, 1978, p. 401). In addition to asking more questions, women often prefaced statements with phrases such as *This is interesting*, perhaps to ensure that they were heard. Furthermore, the women seemed to use more back-channel responses, such as *yeah*, *mm-hm*, and *oh*, presumably to let the speaker know that they were following the conversation.

The descriptive accounts of Tannen (1990, 1994), Fishman (1978, 1980), and Lakoff (1975) seem consistent with self-in-relation theories (e.g., Belenky et al., 1986; Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976), which suggest that gender differences in interaction reflect persistent behavioral patterns ingrained in participants during their upbringing or during years of experience in a society that assigns separate and unequal social roles to men and women. An alternative account is provided by evolutionary psychology (Buss, 1995a, 1995b; Kenrick & Trost, 1993; Kenrick, Sadalla, Groth, & Trost, 1990; Sadalla, Kenrick, & Vershure, 1987), which suggests that gender differences in status display and dominance could reflect biological adaptations. For example, according to a parental investment account of attractiveness, women must make a relatively large investment in reproduction (pregnancy, lactation) and hence are attracted to high-status, dominant men, who are more able to provide needed resources. Men need make a relatively small investment in reproduction and consequently need not be so discriminating. In response to this differential selection pressure, men may have evolved to display greater status and dominance to attract mates. Sadalla et al. (1987), for example, found that dominance behavior in interactions increased the attractiveness of males but had no effect on the attractiveness of females (although, of course, there are many alternative explanations for such a finding).

In a contrasting perspective, expectations states theory (Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980; Berger, Wagner, & Zelditch, 1985; Dovidio, Brown, Heltman, Ellyson, & Keating, 1988; Ridgeway & Berger, 1986; Ridgeway, Berger, & Smith, 1985) suggests that status perceptions and status-related verbal and nonverbal be-

havior may be much more malleable, reflecting a sort of weighted average of expectations derived from many sources. Status characteristics derived from the broader society (in which, currently, men tend to outrank women) may determine expectations and actions when situationally specific status cues are absent. Furthermore, in long-term relationships or groups, initial status differences associated with gender may become legitimized by a cycle of actions and self-fulfilling expectations. However, these can be overridden by situationally specific status characteristics, such as expertise in the task at hand. For example, Dovidio et al. (1988) found that men displayed verbal and nonverbal signs of social power (e.g., speech initiations, looking while talking) more than women when the conversational topic concerned an area of masculine expertise (automotive oil change) but that women displayed the same signs of social power more than men when the topic concerned an area of feminine expertise (pattern sewing). Thus, task and context must be considered in interpreting gender differences in behavior.

Role Dimensions: Constructs and Validity

The status and relational aspects of language may be measured by indexes of two *role dimensions*—called *presumptuousness* and *attentiveness*, respectively—which are derived from a taxonomy of verbal response modes (VRMs; Stiles, 1978, 1992). As shown in the appendix, each of the taxonomy's eight basic modes is considered as either presumptuous or unassuming, as either attentive or informative, and as either directive or acquiescent. (This third role dimension was not considered in the present study.) For example, a question is considered as unassuming, attentive, and directive. To characterize an interaction, indexes of the role dimensions are calculated as the proportions of each speaker's utterances in the designated categories. These role dimension indexes can be calculated for, and compared across, conversations of any length by anyone on any topic in any context. They do not require particular experimental paradigms, and they do not put any restrictions on people's use of natural language.

Presumptuousness—the proportion of utterances coded as advisement, interpretation, confirmation, or reflection (see the appendix)—measures the degree to which the speaker verbally presumes to know what the other's experience is, was, will be, or ought to be (Stiles, 1992). Thus, presumptuousness has to do with being one up, with knowing the other, with assuming that one is important to the other. In naturalistic studies of encounters between people whose roles differ in status, the person higher in status role has consistently tended to be more presumptuous. For example, relatively greater presumptuousness was shown by parents with children (Stiles &

White, 1981), by psychotherapists with clients (Stiles, Shapiro, & Firth-Cozens, 1988), by physicians with patients in the United States (Stiles, Putnam, James, & Wolf, 1979) and the Netherlands (Meeuwesen, Schaap, & van der Staak, 1991), by attorneys with witnesses (McGaughey & Stiles, 1983), by management representatives with labor representatives (Hinkle, Stiles, & Taylor, 1988), by professors with students (Stiles, Waszak, & Barton, 1979), and by college seniors with first-year students (Cansler & Stiles, 1981). Although some of the mean differences were numerically small, all were statistically significant. Consistently very low presumptuousness by the occupants of lower status roles (usually fewer than 10% of utterances presumptuous) suggested that these people may have intentionally avoided being presumptuous, as if it were improper to use any presumptuous modes to a superior.

Attentiveness—the proportion of utterances coded as question, acknowledgment, interpretation, or reflection (see the appendix)—measures the degree to which a speaker's utterances concern the other person's experience (Stiles, 1992). Thus, attentiveness has to do with manifest interest in the other and attempts to ensure that the other's thoughts are expressed and considered in the conversation. In naturalistic studies of interviews, one would expect interviewers to be attentive, whereas interviewees should be informative (i.e., relatively low in attentiveness). Across studies, the observed differences have been large and consistent, despite great variation in the purposes and content of the interactions. For example, relatively greater attentiveness was shown by psychotherapists with clients (Stiles et al., 1988), by physicians with patients during medical history taking in the United States (Stiles, Putnam, James, & Wolf, 1979) and the Netherlands (Meeuwesen et al., 1991), by attorneys with witnesses (McGaughey & Stiles, 1983), and by radio call-in program hosts with callers (Henricks & Stiles, 1989).

Importantly, although they have abstract names, the role dimensions are based on precisely defined categories of utterances. Coders decide whether each utterance is disclosure, question, or one of the other categories; they do not rate global qualities such as attentiveness directly. The links to the abstract dimensions are theoretical (see the appendix; Stiles, 1978, 1992).

Hypotheses: Gender Differences in Role Dimensions

In focusing on VRM presumptuousness and attentiveness, we do not mean to imply that other linguistic, paralinguistic, and nonverbal components of communication are unimportant. We do suggest, however, that these VRM role dimensions represent important aspects of verbal interaction in which men and women are hypothesized to differ:

1. Insofar as verbal presumptuousness involves taking a one-up position, if men have higher status and greater concern with hierarchy, then men should tend to be more presumptuous than women are, other things equal.
2. Insofar as verbal attentiveness involves manifesting interest in the other's experience, women's relational orientation should lead them to be more attentive than men are, other things equal.

Alternatively, if men and women are equal in status and mutually concerned with seeming equal, then they might be expected to reciprocate verbal signs of status in conversations. Reliable attention to a norm of reciprocity could allow people to maintain their dignity and equal standing, without fear of being discredited, humiliated, or taken advantage of, when they talk with each other. If verbal presumptuousness serves as a marker of status for equal-status interactants, then their presumptuousness should tend to be equal within dyads and correlated across dyads, as each interactant strives to match the other's presumptuousness.

STUDY 1: DYADIC INTERACTION PARADIGM, MIXED-SEX DYADS

Perhaps the simplest way to test hypotheses about how men and women talk differently is to put a man and a woman who are similar in respects other than gender in a room together and record what they say. Study 1 used Ickes's dyadic interaction paradigm (Ickes, Bissonnette, Garcia, & Stinson, 1990) to do this. Previous reports have described several other aspects of these conversations (Garcia, Stinson, Ickes, Bissonnette, & Briggs, 1991; Ickes, Stinson, Bissonnette, & Garcia, 1990; Stiles, Walz, Schroeder, Williams, & Ickes, 1996), but none has dealt with the participants' presumptuousness or attentiveness.

Method

University undergraduate students were paired randomly into 38 previously unacquainted mixed-sex dyads (men and women had volunteered using separate sign-up sheets). The experimenter brought participants from different waiting areas, asked them to sit together on a couch, and then left on a pretext of retrieving more consent forms. The participants were then videotaped by a hidden camera. After 6 min, the experimenter returned and continued with other procedures (see Ickes, Stinson, et al., 1990, for further details).

We set an inclusion criterion for calculating VRM role dimension proportions as a minimum of five utterances per person. During the 6-min wait, 4 of the dyads sat in complete or near silence, so our analyses were based on the remaining 34 dyads.

VRM coding. Transcripts of the videotaped interactions were coded three times independently by trained,

experienced coders (undergraduate women) according to the VRM taxonomy (Stiles, 1992). In this taxonomy, each utterance (simple sentence, independent clause, nonrestrictive dependent clause, multiple predicate, or term of acknowledgment, address, or evaluation) is coded twice, once for its literal meaning, or form, and once for its pragmatic meaning, or intent, using the same eight categories for each (see the appendix). For example, "What's your name?" is a pure question, whereas "Would you shut the door?" is a *mixed mode*, with question form and advisement intent.

Mixed modes may be intermediate on some role dimensions. For example, "Would you shut the door?" is directive in both form and intent, but it uses an unassuming, attentive question form to express a presumptuous, informative advisement intent. The effect of the form is to soften the intent, to make the utterance less presumptuous and more attentive than a pure advisement, such as the sentence "Shut the door" would be.

Role dimension indexes. For each coding of each of the 68 included participants (34 dyads), indexes of presumptuousness and attentiveness were calculated as the proportions of coded utterances in the VRM categories designated in the appendix, averaged across forms and intents. Incomprehensible or partially inaudible utterances were designated "uncodable" and not considered in calculating the indexes. The means of the three coders' indexes were used for the comparisons between genders.

The presumptuousness and attentiveness indexes collect a variety of specific features previously described as "women's language" or "powerless language" or "politeness phenomena" (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Fishman, 1978; Lakoff, 1975). Many of these language features involve the use of question or acknowledgment forms or intents, any of which contribute to making a passage less presumptuous and more attentive (see the appendix). These include (a) the frequent use of questions, (b) the putting of assertions or demands into question forms, (c) the addition of tag questions, (d) the use of back-channel encouragers (e.g., *mm-hm*, *yeah*, coded as VRM acknowledgments), and (e) the addition of names or endearments (also coded as VRM acknowledgments). Speakers might also reduce their presumptuousness by giving reasons (edifications) for making an imposition or expressing impositions indirectly in first- or third-person forms. The following are examples (utterances coded as form/intent):

"Take out the trash." Advisement/advisement; presumptuousness = 1.0, attentiveness = 0.0.

"Isn't it time to take out the trash, honey?" Question/advisement followed by acknowledgment/acknowledgment; presumptuousness = 0.25 (average of 0.5 and 0.0), attentiveness = 0.75 (average of 0.5 and 1.0).

"The trash needs to be taken out; the collection is tomorrow." Edification/advisement followed by edification/edification; presumptuousness = 0.25 (average of 0.5 and 0.0), attentiveness = 0.0.

The indexes' construction recognizes that speakers may use a variety of features in a variety of combinations to achieve equivalent relational results. That is, there are many combinations of VRM forms and intents that would yield particular levels of presumptuousness or attentiveness.

Features of women's language that concern nonverbal or paralinguistic behaviors (e.g., not interrupting; West & Zimmerman, 1983) or word choice (e.g., the use of weak expletives, such as *Oh*, *fudge* or *Dear me*, rather than strong ones, such as *Fuck* or *Damn*, or the use of *lovely*, *adorable*, and *sweet* as terms of approbation; Lakoff, 1975) generally do not affect VRM coding and thus are not incorporated into the role dimension indexes.

Intercoder reliabilities of the three-coder role dimension means, measured as the intraclass correlation coefficient designated ICC(1,3) by Shrout and Fleiss (1979), were .87 for presumptuousness and .96 for attentiveness. ICC(1,k), where k is the number of coders, is a conservative index of reliability, in which coder is considered as a random effect, so that constant coder biases are treated as error.

Results and Discussion

Presumptuousness was low ($M = .081$, $SD = .038$) and attentiveness was moderate ($M = .343$, $SD = .102$) in these conversations. Men and women were not significantly different on either index (see Table 1). For presumptuousness, there was a marginally significant reciprocity correlation (i.e., within dyads, members tended, marginally, to display similar levels of presumptuousness).

The failure to find a gender difference on either role dimension index was unexpected theoretically. Finding no significant difference in attentiveness converged, however, with the finding of Ickes, Stinson, et al. (1990) of no significant gender difference on their measure of empathic accuracy in these dyads. None of the previous reports of analyses of these dyads has noted gender differences in measures that might be related to status or social power. Nevertheless, the theoretical conceptions described earlier, like all theories, were protected by a host of unstated auxiliary conditions that must hold before such an apparently negative instance is understood to refute the theory (Meehl, 1990). Some relevant auxiliary conditions are considered at the end of the discussion of Study 2.

The conversations in these brief naturalistic initial encounters were mostly bland, with little interpersonal engagement. The low level of presumptuousness reflected both politeness and blandness; both interactants

TABLE 1: Mean Presumptuousness and Attentiveness In 6-Min Interactions of Previously Unacquainted Mixed-Sex Dyads, Study 1

Role Dimension	Women	Men	t(33)	Reciprocity
Presumptuousness	.084	.079	0.65	.34**
Attentiveness	.350	.335	0.66	.19

NOTE: $N = 34$ mixed-sex dyads. Within-dyad differences tested by t tests for correlated samples. Reciprocity was the correlation between indexes of dyad members.

** $p < .06$.

were in the range of the low-status members of previously studied status-discrepant dyads.

Finding even a marginally significant reciprocity correlation for presumptuousness suggested that participants were responsive to this verbal index of status, given its very restricted range. By matching presumptuousness, the interactants might maintain a normative sense of equal status within even these brief, rather superficial encounters.

STUDY 2: DYADIC INTERACTION PARADIGM, RANDOM PAIRINGS

One possible explanation for the failure to find gender differences in Study 1 was Type II error. Thus, Study 2 was an attempted replication. We again examined conversations between unacquainted students in the dyadic interaction paradigm, although this study included same-sex as well as mixed-sex dyads. Aspects of this study have also been reported (Ickes, Robertson, Tooke, & Teng, 1986), but the participants' VRM presumptuousness and attentiveness have not been considered previously.

Method

A total of 31 female and 29 male university undergraduates were composed randomly into 30 previously unacquainted dyads. Following the dyadic interaction paradigm (Ickes, Bissonnette, et al., 1990), the experimenter led the two participants from their different waiting areas to the room furnished with a long couch and a coffee table, left for 5 min to retrieve questionnaires, during which time the participants' interaction was recorded by the hidden video camera, and then returned and continued with other procedures (see Ickes et al., 1986, for details). In only 24 of the dyads did both members have five or more utterances during the interactions (6 male-male, 7 female-female, 11 mixed sex); consequently, only these 24 dyads were considered in our analyses.

Transcripts of the videotaped interactions were coded five times independently by trained undergraduates ac-

ording to the VRM taxonomy (see the appendix; Stiles, 1992). For each coding of each of the 48 included participants, indexes of presumptuousness and attentiveness were calculated as the proportions of coded utterances in the VRM categories designated in the appendix, averaged across forms and intents. Our analyses used the means of the five coders' indexes. Intercoder reliabilities, measured using ICC(1,5), which gives the reliability of the five-coder means (Shrout & Fleiss, 1979), were .90 for presumptuousness and .99 for attentiveness.

Results and Discussion

As in Study 1, the participants' presumptuousness was low ($M = .063$, $SD = .041$), and their attentiveness was moderate ($M = .369$, $SD = .171$). To fit all the participants' data into a comprehensive analysis, we used a three-factor ANOVA in which left or right end of the couch (Seat 1 or Seat 2) was a within-dyads factor and the genders of the people occupying the left and the right seats were between-dyads factors. In this design, the hypotheses that men tend to be more presumptuous than women and that women tend to be more attentive than men are tested by the three-way interactions (Seat Number \times Gender in Seat 1 \times Gender in Seat 2). Neither of these interaction effects was significant; for presumptuousness, $F(1, 20) = 0.19$, and for attentiveness, $F(1, 20) = 1.00$. Furthermore, none of the other main or interaction effects in these analyses was significant either.

Ickes et al. (1986) reported that the women in these dyads tended to be verbally and nonverbally more active than the men, with slightly more verbalizations, verbal reinforcers, directed gazes, positive affect, and open body posture and less interpersonal distance. Such effects are found regularly in comparisons of same-sex dyads of men versus women (Ickes, 1982; Ickes, Schermer, & Steeno, 1979). The VRM role dimension indexes are proportions of utterances and hence control for verbal activity.

An alternative version of the hypotheses might suggest that the expected gender differences on these VRM indexes should appear only in mixed-sex conversations—in effect, that relative status makes men more presumptuous and that relative relational orientation makes women more attentive. Even within the mixed-sex dyads considered separately, however, men and women were not significantly different on either index (see Table 2). Women's mean attentiveness was numerically higher than men's, but the difference was not significant ($p = .18$). Separate comparisons of men's versus women's indexes in the same-sex dyads were also nonsignificant (see Table 2).

For presumptuousness, there was a strong reciprocity correlation between men and women in the mixed-sex

TABLE 2: Mean Presumptuousness and Attentiveness in 5-Min Interactions of Previously Unacquainted Dyads, Study 2

Role Dimension	Women	Men	t Value	Reciprocity
Presumptuousness				
Mixed-sex dyads	.065	.067	-0.18	.82 ^{††}
Same-sex dyads	.059	.063	-0.30	.39
Attentiveness				
Mixed-sex dyads	.421	.321	1.43	-.19
Same-sex dyads	.352	.383	-0.41	-.07

NOTE: Within-dyad differences in mixed-sex dyads ($n = 11$) tested by t tests for correlated samples comparing indexes of participants within dyads. Differences between male dyads ($n = 6$) and female dyads ($n = 7$) tested by t tests for independent samples comparing dyad mean indexes. Reciprocity was the correlation between men and women for the 11 mixed-sex dyads and between the left and right seat on the couch for the 13 same-sex dyads.

^{††} $p < .002$.

dyads (see Table 2) and a nonsignificant but positive one between Seat 1 and Seat 2 in the same-sex dyads. Across all 24 dyads (Seat 1 vs. Seat 2), presumptuousness reciprocity was .70, $p < .001$, suggesting that participants monitored each other's presumptuousness and responded in kind.

In a post hoc attempt to ameliorate the low statistical power of Studies 1 and 2, we combined the 45 mixed-sex dyads from Study 1 ($N = 34$) and Study 2 ($n = 11$) in a single analysis. The procedures for these studies were very similar, except that the interactions in Study 2 were 1 min shorter. We used a 2×2 mixed ANOVA design in which study (1 or 2) was a between-dyads factor and gender was a within-dyads factor. In this analysis, women were slightly but significantly more attentive than men; means were .367 and .331, respectively, $F(1, 43) = 4.21$, $p < .05$. Neither the main effect of study nor its interaction with gender significantly affected attentiveness, and none of the effects approached significance in the parallel analysis of presumptuousness.

How can these weak results be reconciled with the strong, intuitively convincing arguments and examples offered by Tannen (1990), Fishman (1978), Lakoff (1975), and others? These conversations were very short (6 min in Study 1; 5 min in Study 2); perhaps the potential gender differences were overwhelmed by the ritualistic requirements of initial small talk but would emerge in longer conversations. The participants were strangers with no expectation of further contact; perhaps the conversational effects of gender differences in status and relational orientation would emerge in more enduring or personally significant relationships. The conversational task required little engagement and elicited little intensity (judging, e.g., from the low levels of presumptuousness); perhaps the expected differences would emerge in conversations that had more substance or purpose. At the least, the results suggest that the

assumed gender differences are not inevitable but require qualification.

STUDY 3: SPOUSES AND STRANGERS

Study 3 examined mixed-sex conversations that were substantially longer (30 min each) and that involved people in more enduring relationships (spouses) as well as strangers. Aspects of this study have been reported elsewhere (Premo & Stiles, 1983), but the comparisons of men's and women's presumptuousness and attentiveness were not reported.

Method

Participants were 12 couples who had been married for at least 1 year ($M = 4.3$ years). At least one member of each couple was a graduate or professional student in some field other than psychology. The participants' ages ranged from 22 to 33 years ($M = 26.3$ years). Each of the 24 people participated in two 30-min conversations on different days, once with his or her spouse and once with the opposite-sex member of one of the other couples. The order of spouse and stranger conditions was counterbalanced. The conversations took place in a laboratory, with the experimenter out of the room, and were tape-recorded with the participants' permission. The participants were asked to have an informal conversation, in which they could talk about whatever they liked.

The transcript of each conversation was coded three times independently according to the VRM taxonomy (see the appendix; Stiles, 1992) by trained volunteers. Each of seven individuals coded from 5 to 24 of the transcripts. The three independent sets of codes were combined into a composite set on a two-out-of-three basis; forms or intents on which all three disagreed were classified as "disagreement." Of the 19,488 utterances coded, two out of the three coders agreed on 99% of the utterance forms and 96% of the utterance intents (Premo & Stiles, 1983). Participants' presumptuousness and attentiveness were calculated as the proportions of coded utterances in the VRM categories designated in the appendix, averaged across forms and intents, based on the composite set of codes.

Results

Presumptuousness was slightly higher in Study 3 than in Studies 1 and 2 ($M = .131$, $SD = .056$, averaged across both genders and both conditions). Attentiveness was at a similar, moderate level ($M = .354$, $SD = .095$).

Because of its partial round-robin design, data from Study 3 could not be fit into a comprehensive analysis without violating independence assumptions. The analyses summarized in Table 3 considered the spouse conversations and stranger conversations separately.

TABLE 3: Mean Presumptuousness and Attentiveness in 30-Min Conversations of Spouses and Strangers, Study 3

Index	Women	Men	$t(11)$	Reciprocity
Presumptuousness				
Spouses	.160	.156	0.27	.53*
Strangers	.107	.101	0.41	.50*
$t(11)$	3.93†	3.04***		
Consistency	.64***	.02		
Attentiveness				
Spouses	.386	.295	2.00*	-.41
Strangers	.387	.346	1.14	-.13
$t(11)$	-0.02	-2.89***		
Consistency	.39	.64***		

NOTE: $N = 12$ mixed-sex dyads in each condition. Significance of mean differences tested by t tests for correlated samples. Reciprocity was the correlation between participants within each conversation. Consistency was the correlation of participants' behavior in the two conversations.

* $p < .10$. *** $p < .05$. † $p < .01$.

In neither conversation were the men significantly more presumptuous than the women. Both men and women were significantly more presumptuous with their spouses than with strangers, however. Within each condition, the presumptuousness means were very close (see Table 3), and the reciprocity correlations were marginally significant. Considered across all 24 conversations—ignoring the nonindependence due to participants contributing to two conversations—the male-female presumptuousness reciprocity correlation was .63, $p < .001$. The women's presumptuousness, but not the men's, tended to be consistent in the two conversations—that is, women whose presumptuousness was high or low relative to other women in one conversation were similarly high or low in the other (see Table 3).

In their conversations with their spouses, the women were marginally significantly more attentive than the men (see Table 3). The attentiveness difference was in the same direction but nonsignificant in the conversations between strangers. Considered across all 24 conversations—ignoring the nonindependence due to participants contributing to two conversations—the gender difference in attentiveness was significant— $M = .387$ for women, $M = .320$ for men, $t(23) = 2.29$, $p < .05$, by t test for correlated samples.

The men were significantly more attentive to strangers than to their spouses, whereas the women were equally attentive to both (see Table 3). Furthermore, the men were consistent across conversations in their attentiveness—that is, the relatively attentive husbands were even more attentive with the wives of strangers. As in Studies 1 and 2, the attentiveness reciprocity correlations were nonsignificant.

Discussion

Examining longer conversations between people in more committed relationships yielded more encouraging results. Study 3 offered modest support for the hypothesis that women tend to be more attentive than men, at least in conversations with their spouses (see Table 3). (Looked at another way, evolutionary psychology might suggest that men tend to be relatively more attentive with opposite-sex strangers; cf. Ickes, 1993.) Although the size of the attentiveness difference was similar to that observed in Study 2 (see Table 2) and the number of dyads was similar, the within-group variation was less (*SDs* for attentiveness in the spouse conversations were .117 and .070 for women and men, respectively), and the difference was marginally significant. Perhaps the variability was less because the conversations were longer, allowing participants to balance their attentive and informative behavior.

Like Studies 1 and 2, Study 3 found no evidence of greater presumptuousness by men. On the contrary, in conversations with both spouses and strangers, men's and women's presumptuousness were within about half a percentage point (see Table 3). This, together with the marginally significant reciprocity correlations, suggested that conversational partners may have responsively matched each other's levels of presumptuousness. Participants' tendency to be more presumptuous with their spouses than with strangers, even in these laboratory conversations, was consistent with the presumptuousness construct and with the finding of no significant difference between men's and women's verbal familiarity, a theoretically related VRM measure, in these dyads (Premo & Stiles, 1983).

Finding that only the women's presumptuousness was consistent across conversations (see Table 3), in conjunction with the reciprocity correlations, could suggest that the women's relative presumptuousness reflected personal style, whereas the men were doing the adapting that led to convergence.

STUDY 4: COUPLES MAKING DECISIONS

Although Study 3 involved committed relationships and enough time to develop conversational topics, the task was unspecific, and the conversations tended to be social and bland. Indeed, although the spouses tended to be somewhat more presumptuous with each other, the strangers' presumptuousness was only slightly above that of the undergraduates in Studies 1 and 2 (compare data in Table 3 with data in Tables 2 and 3). We considered that the expected gender differences in status might be more likely to emerge in a task that was more involving or called for the exercise of more interpersonal influence.

Like Study 3, Study 4 involved people who were intimates—dating couples—but used a decision-making task in an attempt to increase participants' sense of involvement and raise their level of presumptuousness. Study 4 was based on a master's thesis (Wurzelbacher, 1992) that has not been published previously.

Method

A total of 33 undergraduate couples who had been dating for at least 3 months ($M = 16$ months; range 4 months to 48 months) were audiotape-recorded in a decision-making task. Participants averaged 19.7 years (range = 17 to 23 years). They received either participation credit for their introductory psychology course or a gift certificate for a local restaurant.

Each couple was asked to choose an undecided real issue, such as plans for an upcoming weekend, that they could discuss for 15 min. After the issue was chosen, they were instructed to try to make decisions about it. They were told they need not reach a final decision within the time limit, but if they did, they were to continue to discuss the decision in more depth or detail for the full 15 min. After these instructions were given, the tape recorder was started, and the investigator left the room, returning after 15 min.

Transcripts of the audiotaped conversations were coded three times independently according to the VRM taxonomy (see the appendix; Stiles, 1992) by coders assigned randomly from a pool of eight trained, experienced undergraduates. For each coding of each of the 66 participants, indexes of presumptuousness and attentiveness were calculated as the proportions of coded utterances in the VRM categories designated in the appendix, averaged across forms and intents. Analyses used the means of the three coders' indexes. Intercoder reliabilities, measured using the intraclass correlation coefficient designated ICC(1,3) by Shrout and Fleiss (1979), which gives the reliability of the three-coder means, were .93 for presumptuousness and .98 for attentiveness.

Results and Discussion

Participants' presumptuousness ($M = .205$, $SD = .061$) was higher in this decision-making task than in the previous studies. Their attentiveness ($M = .395$, $SD = .086$), however, was similar to that in Studies 1 to 3 (cf. Tables 1 to 3).

There were no hints of a gender difference in presumptuousness, despite the strong reciprocity correlation and the very similar means (see Table 4), which suggested that participants were closely responsive to each other's levels of presumptuousness.

In these relatively close relationships, women tended to be more attentive than men (see Table 4), consistent with Tannen's (1990, 1994) and Fishman's (1978) sug-

TABLE 4: Presumptuousness and Attentiveness by Dating Couples in a 15-Min Decision-Making Task, Study 4

<i>Role Dimension</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>t(32)</i>	<i>Reciprocity</i>
Presumptuousness	.207	.202	0.45	.60 ^{††}
Attentiveness	.422	.367	2.63 ^{***}	-.06

NOTE: $N = 33$ couples. Within-dyad differences tested by t tests for correlated samples. Reciprocity was the correlation between women's and men's indexes.

*** $p < .05$. ^{††} $p < .001$.

gestions and concepts of women's relatively greater orientation toward relationships. In this respect, the results of Study 4 confirm and lend confidence to the finding of Study 3 that the wives were marginally more attentive than their husbands.

STUDY 5: BLOCKS AND WORDS

Study 5 used a more complex design in an effort to gain better control over conditions that might moderate gender differences in talk. Like Studies 1 and 2, it involved unacquainted undergraduates rather than intimates, but it assigned them specific conversational tasks designed to elicit a wider range of VRMs and higher level of presumptuousness than typically occurs in social conversations. No report of this study has been published previously.

Method

Participants were 80 undergraduates who received participation credit in their introductory psychology course. They were randomly assigned to 40 previously unacquainted dyads: 10 male, 10 female, and 20 mixed-gender. Debriefing checks confirmed that no pairs had been previously acquainted.

Dyad members did not see each other at any time before or during the procedure. They were brought to adjacent rooms (designated Rooms 1 and 2) individually from separate waiting areas. The first participant was always brought past the open door of Room 2 (which was empty) to Room 1 and given orienting instructions; then the second participant was brought to Room 2 and given identical instructions. The doors were closed when the instructions were given, but the rooms were not sound-proofed, so the occupant of Room 1 could hear muffled voices as the instructions were repeated in Room 2. Room assignment was balanced as part of the random assignment procedure; in the mixed-sex dyads, half the participants of each gender were assigned to each room. After giving the orienting instructions, the investigator left and closed the door.

The participants were seated at tables in their separate rooms and provided with identical sets of colored plastic blocks and letter tiles in separate closed boxes labeled

blocks and *words*, respectively. Using an intercom system, the investigator introduced the participants by first names and gave instructions for the first of two 10-min tasks. Task order was counterbalanced. In the blocks task, participants were told to plan and build identical structures using the colored plastic blocks. In the words task, participants were told to construct identical crossword patterns using the letter tiles. In each task, participants could communicate verbally, via the intercom. All communication was audiotaped. We designed these tasks to stimulate a variety of verbal operations—asking, describing, instructing, agreeing, and so forth (see the appendix).

After 10 min, the investigator told the participants to stop working on their first task and gave them instructions for the second task. Then, after another 10 min, the investigator told them to stop working on their second task. Afterward, the participants rated their perceptions of each task on 7-point scales that included liking for the task, difficulty of the task, own contribution to the task (relative to partner's contribution), and degree of control during the task (relative to control by partner). Participants were then brought together and debriefed.

The participants' verbal interaction during the two tasks was coded directly from the audiotapes three times independently according to the VRM taxonomy (see the appendix; Stiles, 1992) by coders drawn from a pool of 15 trained undergraduates. For each coding of each of the 80 participants, indexes of presumptuousness and attentiveness were calculated as the proportions of coded utterances in the VRM categories designated in the appendix, averaged across forms and intents. Our analyses used the means of the three coders' indexes. Intercoder reliabilities, measured using the intraclass correlation coefficient designated ICC(1,3) by Shrout and Fleiss (1979), which gives the reliability of the three-coder means, were .76 for presumptuousness and .76 for attentiveness. These were acceptable but lower than reliabilities in the other studies, perhaps partly because coders worked directly from the tapes, without the benefit of transcripts.

Results

As we had hoped, the tasks stimulated much higher levels of presumptuousness ($M = .395$, $SD = .099$ across tasks and participants) than the tasks used in the other studies. Attentiveness was also higher ($M = .498$, $SD = .076$), suggesting that the blocks and words tasks required the participants to pay relatively close attention to each other's experience. We also considered participants' postprocedure ratings of their degree of control of each task, relative to control by their partners ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.73$, on the 1- to 7-point scale).

The data from Study 5 fit a balanced five-factor mixed ANOVA design, with three between-dyads factors (gender of person in Room 1, gender of person in Room 2, task order) and two within-dyads factors (room assignment and task). In this design, the hypotheses that men tend to be more presumptuous than women and that women tend to be more attentive than men are tested by the three-way interactions of Room Assignment \times Gender of Occupant of Room 1 \times Gender of Occupant of Room 2. This interaction effect did not approach significance on presumptuousness, attentiveness, or perceived control (all $F < 1$). However, some other effects in the five-factor ANOVAs were significant.

The room assignment and task order variables were included to balance the statistical design, and we expected them to have negligible effects. However, participants assigned to Room 1 (who were always seated first) were significantly more presumptuous than participants assigned to Room 2, $F(1, 32) = 6.43$, $p < .02$ (Table 5 gives means for the tasks separately). The mean difference was small (.023), but participants apparently adjusted their own presumptuousness in light of their partner's presumptuousness, as reflected by the high reciprocity correlations (see Table 5), so that the small differences were consistent across dyads.

A significant three-way interaction of room assignment (i.e., arrival order) with task (blocks or words) and task order, $F(1, 32) = 4.16$, $p < .05$, on presumptuousness can be considered in terms of modifying the main effect of room assignment: The difference in presumptuousness between occupants of Rooms 1 and 2 tended to be larger for the first task (mean difference of .035) than for the second (mean difference of .010).

There was also a significant four-way interaction of room assignment with the genders of both participants and task order on presumptuousness, $F(1, 32) = 7.88$, $p < .01$. In 2 of the 16 conditions defined by this interaction, the general tendency for the occupant of Room 1 to be more presumptuous was reversed: when the person in Room 1 was female and the person in Room 2 was male for the words-blocks task order, and when both participants were female for the blocks-words task order. We could find no satisfactory way of understanding this result.

Paralleling their presumptuousness, participants' perceptions of their degree of control during the task (relative to control by partner) was significantly higher if they were in Room 1 ($M = 4.14$) than in Room 2 ($M = 3.79$), $F(1, 32) = 8.30$, $p < .01$. The Room 1–Room 2 difference in the rating of control, like the difference in presumptuousness, was greater in the first task (.63) than in the second task (.08), shown by a significant three-way

TABLE 5: Mean Presumptuousness and Attentiveness in Blocks and Words Tasks, Study 5

Role Dimension	Speaker Occupying		Reciprocity
	Room 1	Room 2	
Presumptuousness			
Blocks task	.396	.374	.66 ^{†††}
Words task	.417	.394	.78 ^{†††}
Consistency	.38 ^{****}	.53 ^{†††}	
Attentiveness			
Blocks task	.531	.518	-.27
Words task	.466	.478	.07
Consistency	.43 [†]	.11	

NOTE: $N = 40$ dyads (40 participants for each mean and for consistency correlations; 40 dyads for reciprocity correlations). Each task took 10 min. Reciprocity was the correlation between interactants within each task; consistency was the correlation between tasks for individuals within each room.

**** $p < .02$. † $p < .01$. †† $p < .001$.

Room Assignment \times Task \times Task Order interaction, $F(1, 32) = 4.34$, $p < .05$.

Two other significant three-way interaction effects on the control ratings were harder to understand: (a) an interaction of Room Assignment \times Task \times Gender of Occupant of Room 2, $F(1, 32) = 6.06$, $p < .05$, in which the general tendency for the occupant of Room 1 to feel more in control was slightly reversed in the blocks task (but not the words task) when the occupant of Room 2 was male and (b) an interaction of Task \times Task Order \times Gender of Occupant of Room 2, $F(1, 32) = 5.85$, $p < .05$, in which the most extreme ratings were of the blocks task when it came first—highest ($M = 4.20$) when the occupant of Room 2 was male and lowest when the occupant of Room 2 was female ($M = 3.75$).

The blocks task elicited consistently greater attentiveness than the words task, $F(1, 32) = 44.52$, $p < .001$ (Table 5 gives means). Perhaps the relative difficulty of describing the oddly shaped blocks themselves (as compared with the letter tiles) made participants attend more closely to each other's experience—asking more questions, repeating the other's descriptions (reflections), and so forth.

Women who were assigned to Room 2 were more attentive than men who were assigned to Room 2 (see Table 6), partially supporting the attentiveness hypothesis. This was reflected in the combination of two significant effects on attentiveness involving the gender of the occupant of Room 2: the main effect of gender, $F(1, 32) = 4.70$, $p < .05$, and its interaction with room assignment, $F(1, 32) = 4.75$, $p < .05$. (In Table 6, the top row compares attentiveness to female and male occupants of Room 2, whereas the bottom row compares attentiveness by female and male occupants of Room 2. The columns compare interacting dyad members.)

TABLE 6: Attentiveness Toward and By Female and Male Occupants of Room 2 in Blocks and Words Tasks, Study 5

Speaker	Gender of Occupant of Room 2	
	Female	Male
Occupant of Room 1	.501	.496
Occupant of Room 2	.524	.472

NOTE: $N = 20$ individuals per cell. Each task took 10 min. Means represent the average attentiveness across the blocks and words tasks. In a five-factor ANOVA, the main effect of the gender of the occupant of Room 2 was significant, $F(1, 32) = 4.70, p < .05$, and its interaction with room assignment was also significant, $F(1, 32) = 4.75, p < .05$.

Discussion

It seems unlikely that the lack of significant gender differences in presumptuousness reflected insensitivity due to inadequate sampling or measurement. The participants' consistency in presumptuousness across the tasks and their high reciprocity correlations (see Table 5) suggest that presumptuousness was again not haphazard but closely regulated within dyads.

The tendency of the dyad member assigned to Room 1 to be the more presumptuous was unexpected, but it was supported by participants' ratings of their perceived control of the task, relative to their partners. In retrospect, we speculated that this could be a seniority or primacy or turf effect, which turned on the layout of the laboratory and the way we used it. The occupant of Room 1 always arrived first, passed the open door to Room 2, and then, after receiving orientation instructions, heard the other participant being instructed. Thus, by a few minutes, the person in Room 1 was always the senior person, within the context of the study, and both participants knew this. This may have given the occupant of Room 1 a slightly higher status or social power within the newly formed dyad. Finding that the differences in presumptuousness and perceived control occurred mainly in the task that was done first could indicate that the arrival order effect tended to decay as the study proceeded.

The seniority or arrival order interpretation suggested a possible (speculative) interpretation of the finding that women were more attentive than men only in Room 2—the junior, low-status room (see Table 6). Theorists have proposed that women may tend to be attentive as a long-term adaptation to having less power or status in relationships and having to understand and cater to others who have more power (Fishman, 1978; Fiske, 1993; Snodgrass, 1985; Tannen, 1990, 1994). Thus, perhaps the women in Study 5 were differentially ready to become attentive when placed in a lower status role (i.e., arriving later), as a product of their relatively greater experience or expectation of being in one-down

positions. Men may tend not to make this adjustment so easily or quickly.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The expectation that women would be more attentive than men, based on the theoretical assumption that women are relatively more oriented toward maintaining relationships, received its strongest support in Studies 3 and 4, in conversations within committed relationships (spouses and dating couples, respectively). The numerically greater attentiveness by women in the relatively small- N comparisons of Studies 1 and 2 (see Tables 2 and 3)—which reached significance when they were combined post hoc—and in the conversations with strangers in Study 3 (see Table 3), along with the significantly greater attentiveness by women in Room 2 than by men in Room 2 in Study 5 (see Table 6), suggests that there may also be small gender differences in attentiveness with strangers, however, at least under some conditions.

Acknowledging the expectation states tenet that gender is a diffuse status characteristic that assigns women a lower status, Carli (1989, pp. 565-566) pointed out that women face a self-presentational dilemma in mixed-sex interactions: (a) They can accept their presumed lower status and, either passively or actively, reinforce it through their own behavior; (b) they can compete for status directly and thereby risk being negatively evaluated for violating gender-role expectations (Carli, 1989, 1990); or (c) they can use a more tactful, indirect approach to achieve status and influence within the interaction. Carli (1990, Study 1) reported that in mixed-sex discussions designed to elicit disagreement, the women tended to pursue the third option and were relatively more "tentative"—a measure that appeared to combine attentiveness and unassumingness (e.g., tag questions, hedges, disclaimers). Understood as attentiveness, this result parallels that found in the decision task of Study 4, which was also designed to elicit disagreement (see Table 4). Being attentive may allow women to assert themselves diplomatically and advance their ideas without provoking a confrontational status competition.

It is not necessary, however, to assume that the attentiveness differences were secondary to status differences. Women's closer attending to others' experiences could derive from other aspects of socialization, such as self-perpetuating norms favoring close attention to relationships within same-gender groups of girls (Hall, 1987; Maltz & Borker, 1982). The suggestion from Studies 3 and 4 that women tended to be more differentially attentive with intimates than with strangers seems consistent with the emphasis on close relationships of the self-in-relation approach (Belenky et al., 1986; Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976).

Our five studies offered no evidence that men tend generally to be verbally more presumptuous than women. The repeated null results call into question the assumption that participants considered the women's status as lower than the men's status in laboratory conversations in which partners were given equivalent roles. Of course, status differences might have been present but expressed by other verbal behaviors or by nonverbal behaviors, which were not the topic of this study (cf. Dovidio et al., 1988). On the other hand, the strong evidence from previous studies that relative presumptuousness differs reliably in status-discrepant dyads (e.g., Cansler & Stiles, 1981), the evidence that presumptuousness was closely regulated in the present conversations (the reciprocity correlations), and the suggestion that relative presumptuousness varied with a transient status difference attributable to order of arrival at the laboratory (Study 5) make it less likely that there were substantial undetected status differences between genders. It seems more likely that when men and women were assigned equal-status roles in these conversations, they perceived each other as equals and behaved accordingly.

The consistently similar means and high reciprocity of presumptuousness may be considered as a manifestation of communicative accommodation (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991). We speculate that as the conversations evolved, the participants learned from each other how presumptuous they could appropriately be with each other and continually adjusted their speech to maintain a sense of equal status in these conversations. The close tolerances are consistent with a view that people work hard to maintain each other's "face" (Brown & Levinson, 1978), not allowing each other to become one-up or one-down within an encounter.

Despite our null findings, it may be that in naturalistic settings in which men and women assume systematically different roles, presumptuous varies with gender, as it does with status. Such a possibility would be consistent with expectation states theory and with Eagly and Steffen's (1984) suggestion that differential status perceptions reflect differential distributions of role assignments to each gender. Conversely, the widespread belief that women tend generally to use less presumptuous language may reflect a stereotype based on a differential distribution of women into low-status roles.

APPENDIX: Verbal Response Modes Cross-Classified by Role Dimensions

	<i>Attentive</i>	<i>Informative</i>
Presumptuous		
Directive	<p>Interpretation Form: Second person (<i>you</i>); verb implies an attribute or ability of the other; terms of evaluation. Intent: Explains or labels the other; judgments or evaluations of other's experience or behavior.</p>	<p>Advisement Form: Imperative, or second person with verb of permission, prohibition, or obligation. Intent: Attempts to guide behavior; suggestions, commands, permission, prohibition.</p>
Acquiescent	<p>Reflection Form: Second person; verb implies internal experience or volitional action. Intent: Puts other's experience into words; repetitions, restatements, clarifications.</p>	<p>Confirmation Form: First-person plural (<i>we</i>) in which referent includes other. Intent: Compares speaker's experience with other's; agreement, disagreement, shared experience or belief.</p>
Unassuming		
Directive	<p>Question Form: Interrogative, with inverted subject-verb order or interrogative words. Intent: Requests information or guidance.</p>	<p>Disclosure Form: Declarative; first-person singular (<i>I</i>) or first-person plural (<i>we</i>) in which other is not a referent. Intent: Reveals thoughts, feelings, wishes, perceptions, or intentions.</p>
Acquiescent	<p>Acknowledgment Form: Nonlexical or contentless utterances; terms of address or salutation. Intent: Conveys receipt of or receptiveness to other's communication; simple acceptance, salutations.</p>	<p>Edification Form: Declarative; third person (e.g., <i>he, she, it</i>). Intent: States objective information.</p>

NOTE: Both the form and intent of each utterance are coded. For example, "Would you close the window?" is question form with advisement intent.

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