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Communication and Gender: Interviews with Blue-collar Women

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS of Jeri Lynn Sofka for the Master
of Science in Speech Communication presented March 3, 1993.

Title: Gender and Communication: Interviews With Blue-
collar Women.

APPROVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:


Larry Steward, Chair


Stephen Kosokoff


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This thesis explores the interactions between women and men who work in highly-skilled blue-collar trades. The aim of this research is to describe women's perceptions and responses to their on-the-job communicative interactions with male co-workers, supervisors and union officials.

Small focus groups were conducted to produce rich narrative data that was audio recorded for later use by the researcher. The researcher met with the four subjects for

three sessions. The interviews lasted three hours each. The researcher also conducted follow-up interviews by phone to clarify subjects' responses. The subjects were provided with an interview schedule of questions prior to the interview.

This thesis seeks to identify women's perceptions of male and female differences in communication, perceived problematic communicative interactions and women's responses to perceived differences. This thesis also explores the possible correlation between women's sense of self-esteem and interactions with males on the job. Finally, subjects were interviewed to determine what strategies, if any, are used by women to work more effectively in a predominately male work environment.

It was found that this sample of women reported several perceived differences between male and female communication styles and that some differences are problematic. The subjects reported that difficult interactions may result in feelings of anger, frustration, anxiety, hostility or sadness. Finally, the subjects offered several strategies for coping in nontraditional jobs.

COMMUNICATION AND GENDER:
INTERVIEWS WITH BLUE-COLLAR WOMEN

by
JERI LYNN SOFKA

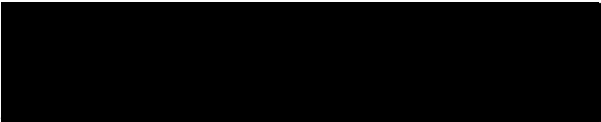
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in
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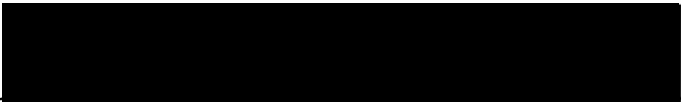
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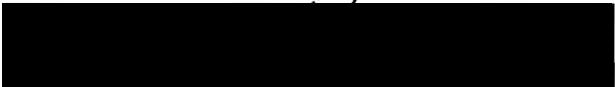
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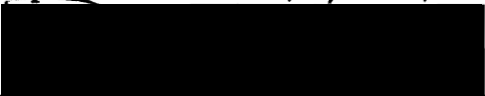

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The integration of females into traditionally-male blue-collar trades has resulted in numerous problems which adversely affect work conditions and relations between female incumbents and male co-workers and supervisors. Communication between men and women is marked by widespread instances of interpersonal conflict and hostility (Martin, 1988; Wallace, 1982; Walshok, 1981). There is a common belief that as the numbers of women in the trades grow the concomitant problems will decrease (Zimmer, 1988). Studies have indicated that this premise may be false and that problematic attitudes and behavior patterns will not disappear on their own (Gruber and Bjorn, 1982; Zimmer, 1988). An examination of the experiences and reflections of women who work in the trades regarding their interactions with men on the job constitutes the research focus of this thesis.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of blue-collar women regarding their communicative interactions with male co-workers and supervisors. This

research seeks to identify how women respond to their verbal interactions with men on the job and what strategies women use to cope with perceived differences in order to become accepted into a predominately male environment. Research on women in the trades is sparse. The few published studies assert that women have not been readily assimilated into the craft trades and that their experiences deserve scholarly attention (Padavic, 1991; Schroedel, 1990; Zimmer, 1988).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Given the ultimate purpose of this research, which is to explore the attitudes, perceptions, feelings and coping strategies of women in blue-collar trades, the scope of this study does not permit an in-depth analysis of the problems arising from women's entry into the trades. However, a brief overview of the problems that tradeswomen encounter is warranted in order to contextualize this study.

At the turn of this century, only 18 percent of Americans working outside the home were women. Currently, women make up approximately 50 percent of the labor force with earnings that average between 50 and 70 percent of their male counterparts (Koziara, Moskow and Tanner, 1987). Martin (1988) states that in the last decade the number of families headed by women has risen dramatically. This trend, combined with occupational segregation and low wages,

has resulted in a increasing number of women and children in poverty.

Single, married, widowed and women with children work out of sheer economic necessity. They are heavily concentrated in administrative support (clerical) and service occupations. Moreover, within these occupations men dominate the executive, administrative and managerial positions (Blau and Ferber, 1987).

In an effort to support themselves and their families, increasing numbers of women are entering male-dominated professions which offer better pay and fringe benefits as well as increased job security and greater opportunities for training and promotion (Wallace, 1982). According to Martin (1988), women in non-traditional jobs can make up to three times the pay of women who work in traditionally female-dominated jobs (p. 8).

Although women's wages and opportunities in the job market are steadily improving, women are still economically disadvantaged. Researcher Richard Levinson notes several factors which have contributed to the collective failure of women to achieve the occupational success of men. They are: 1) acts of discrimination; 2) job segregation by which women are employed in low-status, low-income occupations; 3) sex-role socialization; 4) conflicting demands of family and work roles; 5) cultural norms asserting that women are best suited for socioemotional or subordinate roles; 6) the sex-

typing of occupations and 7) women's psychological states of self-prejudice or lowered self-esteem (1982, pp. 54-55).

Women have made some headway into the trades (skilled and semi-skilled), but gaining entry into the skilled sector has been a slow climb. In 1960, women comprised three percent of the precision production, craft, and repair workers and have only reached 8.5 percent as of 1990. In the construction trades, which includes carpenters, brickmasons, tile setters, plumbers, painters and other highly skilled labor, only 1.9 percent of the jobs are held by women (1991, U.S. Dept. of Labor).

Several researchers (Levinson, 1982; Reskin and Padavic, 1988; Wallace, 1982) cite discrimination and job segregation as significant contributing factors for women not gaining access to skilled blue-collar positions.

Employers, co-workers and the unions have resisted the entry of women into the blue-collar world. Colwill states that "women have been edging their way into offices, into educational systems and into hospitals for decades... but no one has ever pretended that women are welcome in the trades" (1987, p. 97).

The numerous hiring barriers which prevent women from acquiring the necessary skills to work effectively in the trades include sex bias among job counselors, administrators and family members; veterans preferences in apprenticeship programs; age limits for apprenticeships (many women become

interested in careers later in life); culturally-mandated roles which discourage women from doing "men's jobs;" lack of support from trade unions and psychological factors such as women's lack of confidence in asserting themselves into occupationally-atypical careers (Wallace, 1982).

Affirmative action programs have helped open the doors to traditionally male-dominated careers, but employers assert that hostile male employees discourage women from entering and staying in non-traditional jobs, thus preventing management from meeting affirmative action goals. Based on their research of craftworkers and clerks, O'Farrell and Harlan (1982) argue that co-worker hostility is untenable as a sole explanation for job segregation. They found that one-fifth of the male respondents strongly approve of women on the job (p. 262). In another study, Levinson found that when potential job applicants phoned employers to request information about jobs in which the candidates were inappropriate according to sex-role stereotypes, 35 percent of the employers responded with clear-cut discrimination, lending support to the argument that it is not just male co-workers who discourage women from entering non-traditional fields (1982, p. 56).

Wallace (1982) states:

Recent studies find that women are interested in non-traditional blue collar-work; the problem continues to be the reluctance of employers to hire women and the persistence of organizational barriers that discourage women moving into jobs

that are technically open to them within a firm (p. 143).

O'Farrell and Harlan (1982) suggest that federal agencies should look for "good-faith efforts by corporate employers in three areas: recruitment, retention and education" (p. 263). In addition, managers can influence workers' and supervisors' behavior and the development of formal on-the-job training programs should be an integral part of affirmative action programs.

The role of trade unions in the exclusion of women may be significant. Women were not even invited to join most unions until the 1930's (Huber, 1982). As of 1988, only three to four percent of the apprenticeships nationwide were allocated to women. Martin (1988) claims that "instead of helping women to gain skills, unions (with a few notable exceptions) historically acted to exclude women as well as ethnic minorities from particular crafts" (p. 6).

Segregation of women into lower-paying, lower-status jobs is prevalent in the trades; and within specific job classifications, work assignments are often sex-segregated (Reskin and Padavic, 1988). Also, women are frequently given tasks that are the least desirable and limit their opportunities for training (Martin, 1988; McIlwee, 1982; Padavic and Reskin, 1990; Wallace, 1982). In other words, once women gain entry into the trades, many of them are classified as lower-status wage earners and assigned the most menial jobs.

Many women experience slower rates of promotion and lower or less frequent pay raises (Palmer and Lee, 1990). Furthermore, women's job stability is insecure as women are the last to be hired and first to go during a layoff (Koziara, Moskow and Tanner, 1987).

The fact that women experience resistance and hostility from male co-workers and supervisors is well-documented. Women report incidences of sexual harassment, threats of violence, practical jokes, poor training, yelling, obscene threats, intimidating behavior, sabotaged work, extra workloads, name-calling and exclusion from social interaction and patronization (Martin, 1981; McIlwee, 1982; O'Farrell and Harlan, 1982; Wallace, 1982; Walshok, 1981).

Certainly, not all women are the objects of male hostility, but the behaviors previously listed are common and widespread. Twenty-seven percent of the female subjects in one study stated that men gave them a "hard time" (O'Farrell and Harlan, 1982). In Walshok's study, one-half of the female participants reported problems with male co-workers and supervisors; one-third of the women experienced intimidation and sexual harassment (1981). Another study found that blue-collar female workers were more likely to experience harassment from peers and supervisors than were white-collar workers (Meyer and Lee, 1982).

In a study of sexual harassment of female auto workers, 36 percent of the women in Gruber and Bjorn's (1982) sample

were sexually harassed. The types of harassment included abusive language, physical attacks, sexual propositioning, sexual bribery, derogatory remarks (such as spreading of rumors), whistling and staring. Young, minority and unmarried women were harassed more frequently and with greater severity. The findings of this study indicate that as the numbers of women increased, the frequency and severity of the harassment increased. This finding is significant as it has been commonly believed that as more females move into male-dominated professions, males will become more accepting of the female presence.

Zimmer suggests that, "it may be the case that increasing the numbers of women, without addressing the sexist attitudes imbedded in male-dominated organizations may exacerbate women's occupational problems" (1988, p. 65). Zimmer supports this contention by citing examples of research on minority relations confirming the fact that as minorities (subordinate) members in proportion to the majority (dominant) members increases, tensions and hostilities are likely to increase rather than decrease.

Another male attitude commonly reported by females is male paternalism. In fact, Padavic and Reskin found that paternalistic attitudes were more common than either hostility or harassment (1990). The American Heritage Dictionary defines paternalism as "a policy or practice of treating or governing people in a fatherly manner,

especially by providing for their needs without giving them responsibility" (1969, p. 960). Padavic and Reskin (1990) suggest that paternalism can be positive, negative or benign. In the work place, paternalistic attitudes can have detrimental effects on women's success in a blue-collar job.

Well-meaning supervisors who assign women easier tasks and male co-workers who assume that women are incapable of performing particular tasks, may prevent women from being exposed to challenging jobs that test their skills and/or qualify them for advancement. Moreover, male co-workers may feel resentful about the fact that the work is not equally distributed to each sex (Padavic and Reskin, 1990, p. 615).

Whereas some men display paternalistic attitudes, others display hostile reactions. Some men refuse to help women with difficult tasks and/or, more critically, refuse to teach women basic safety precautions (Martin, 1988). Roby (1981) reports that foremen may discriminate against women by denying them their rights to take normal breaks and assigning women jobs ordinarily performed by two men.

Studies consistently report that work relationships are aggravated by the exclusion of women from social interactions. O'Farrell and Harlan (1982) explain that social isolation is used a tactic to discourage women from keeping their jobs. On the surface, this behavior may appear inconsequential, but considering the nature of blue-collar work where much of the training occurs on an informal

level, exclusion from social networks of support limits the opportunities for on-the-job-training. This may prevent women from adequately performing their jobs, thereby, reinforcing negative stereotypes about women's capabilities.

Astrachan (1984) interviewed 400 male blue-collar workers to find how they felt about women on the job. He concluded that men have mixed feelings. They may feel anger, fear, anxiety, envy, resentment, shame or guilt. Further, many men perceive women's entry into the workplace as a threat to their job security. Also, men may feel a loss of power or centrality.

Conversely, some men are supportive. Astrachan (1984) discovered that men have positive feelings such as pride, admiration and identification, but he notes that for many men negative emotions outweigh the positive emotions.

Surprisingly, research indicates that although women report numerous problems in traditionally male blue-collar jobs, many women enjoy a relatively high level of job satisfaction (O'Farrell and Harlan, 1982; Schroedel, 1985). Walshok (1981) discovered that women in blue-collar jobs cared less about their relations with co-workers than the quality of the their jobs. O'Farrell and Harlan (1982) contend that "the real impact of male hostility on women's satisfaction in non-traditional jobs is commonly exaggerated" (p. 262).

In summary, women have made some inroads into the blue-collar domain, but integration has not been easy. The problems arising from women's entry into the blue-collar workplace are complex, significant social problems that deserve attention. Hopefully, these problems will lessen over time as individuals and organizations learn how to adapt to the current changes in sex-roles.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Current economic indicators show an increased need for skilled trades workers over the next two decades (Martin, 1988). As more women move into these positions, problems are likely to occur. Solutions will require a conscious effort on the part of employers, employees and policy makers. Seifer (1973) maintains that universities and foundations can play key roles in developing public policies that will enhance the lives of working-class women.

Researchers conclude that, to date, scant attention has been paid to women in the blue-collar trades (O'Farrell and Harlan, 1982; Palmer and Lee, 1990; Roby, 1981; Seifer, 1973). Deaux and Ullman (1982) comment that there has been little research on which to develop working hypotheses. Roby (1981) contends that we need studies on the experiences of women who are moving into the blue-collar trades in order to identify male attitudes and facilitate the transition of women into the trade professions. Social science research

serves to draw attention to the women in the trades and can be used to help women recognize their own needs as well as to aid policy makers gain a better understanding of how to meet these needs. Social scientists who have been funded to do research on both blue and white-collar men have frequently acted on behalf of these groups. Blue-collar women have not had this assistance from the research community (Roby, 1981).

Finally, to the best of this writer's knowledge, there has not been any research devoted to communication between men and women in the blue-collar trades. In fact, most of the previous communication and gender studies focused on communicator style, male/female linguistic differences or perceived effectiveness (generally confined to a public setting). These studies have been empirical in nature, conducted in a laboratory setting, and rely upon self-report and/or researcher and peer observation techniques for gathering data. This qualitative research study reflects a commitment to lived experience which links communication to the context in which it occurs. To explore this subject in more detail, five research questions were posed.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent, if any, do blue-collar women think that men and women are different in the ways that each communicates on the job?

2. To what extent, if any, are communicative interactions between male and female blue-collar workers perceived by women workers as problematic?
3. Given the assumption that blue-collar women perceive men on the job as differing in communication styles, how do women respond to perceived differences?
4. What, if any, correlation exists between female/male on-the-job communicative interactions and blue-collar women's sense of self-esteem?
5. What communicative strategies, if any, do blue-collar women employ to function more effectively in a predominately male work environment?

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study is naturalistic in that it explores the natural worlds of everyday social interaction. As described in Denzin's theory of interpretive interactionism, data will be drawn from the participants' life-stories, life-histories and self-stories (1989, p. 22). This research is grounded in the theory of phenomenology, conceptualized by E. Husserl, which assumes that the general patterns of consciousness and experiences of individuals can provide fruitful information for researchers. The study of phenomena as perceived by individuals is emphasized, implying a non-positivistic stance (Goodall, 1987).

The interpretive perspective is deliberately nonpositivistic and opposes the positivistic model which presumes that social reality is objective and that the observer can be separated from what she or he observes. The interpretive point of view is descriptive and asks the question "how" instead of "why," rejecting the premise that inquiry is value-free. Denzin states that "description is concerned with conveying what it is/was like and has no analogue in natural science" (1989, p. 10).

Interpretive research as conceptualized by Denzin can 1) produce meaningful descriptions and interpretations of social processes; 2) can offer explanations of how certain conditions came into existence and persist; 3) can furnish the basis for realistic proposals concerning the removal of certain events or problems and 4) may also expose and reveal the assumptions that support competing definitions of a problem (1989, p. 23). Denzin states:

Every human situation is novel, emergent, and filled with multiple, often conflicting, meanings and interpretations. The interpretist attempts to capture the core of these meanings and contradictions.... Meaning is defined in terms of the intentions and actions of a person.... It is assumed that all meaning is symbolic.... It is assumed that the languages of ordinary people can be used to explicate their experiences (1989, p. 25, 31, 32).

The process of analyzing social settings as expressed by Lofland and Lofland (1984) includes consideration of meanings, practices, encounters, episodes and roles.

Analysis of meaning, as described by Lofland and Lofland centers on how people define for themselves a given problematic situation. Meanings are linguistic categories that make up the participants view of reality which includes culture, norms, understanding of social reality, typifications, ideology, beliefs, world view, perspectives and stereotypes (1984, p. 75).

Practices are the smallest behavioral unit of a social setting. They are a recurrent category of talk or action which is considered significant. Encounters are the

smallest initial social system that is formed when two or more persons are in immediate physical presence and strive to maintain a single (ordinarily spoken) focus of involvement. Episodes are remarkable and dramatic encounters.

Roles are consciously articulated and abstracted categories of social types of persons. Roles are both a label which people use to organize their own activity and one that they apply to others as a way of making sense of their activity (Lofland and Lofland, 1984, p. 76).

This research assumes an activist conception of human social life in that people are viewed as, to quote Lofland and Lofland, "creatures who are coping, dealing, designating, dodging, maneuvering, scheming, striving, and so forth--that is, who are actively influencing their social settings" (1984, p. 115).

People in a given social setting are in an on-going process of constructing their actions in various situations. "Deciphering and depicting exactly what sort of situation the participants are facing," according to Lofland and Lofland, is the central concern of an activist analyst (1984, p. 116).

Social research as defined by Lofland and Lofland is basically divided into two basic components: "one of which analyzes the situation and the other of which reports strategies" (1984, p. 116). Asking what people's strategies

are is a way to "deobjectify" social arrangements and achieve a better causal understanding of social events. Furthermore, by pursuing people's strategies, the researcher seeks to demonstrate human intention and authorship in the social world (Lofland and Lofland, 1984, pp. 116, 117).

If for example, blue-collar women report resistance on the part of males to accepting women in the trades, articulating various strategies may help to demystify the notion that working in a skilled trade is a privilege and a role reserved for men. Exploring what communicative strategies have been successful or not successful may provide solutions to some of the problems between men and women on the job.

In addition, strategy analysis may help women to discover their own particular behavior patterns and attitudes which contribute to changing prescribed roles for women as well as help them identify actions which support current gender-specific norms and roles.

In summary, this study is designed to produce qualitatively rich data elicited from the accounts of blue-collar women concerning their communicative interactions with others on the job and, particularly, problematic communication with male co-workers and supervisors union officials.

Data is presented from an interpretive, naturalistic, phenomenological perspective and a categorical framework is

constructed utilizing Lofland and Lofland's (1984) method of social analysis in which they pose two central procedural questions: 1) what is the situation being dealt with and 2) what strategies are being employed in dealing with the situation?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is guided by a feminist approach to communication scholarship and therefore will attempt to articulate and advance a general philosophy of feminism. Feminists historically and currently vary in their methods of analysis, political philosophies, assumptions, and priorities. Nevertheless, feminist scholars share numerous assumptions and they are united in their critique of ideologies that support the present constructs of masculinity and femininity.

Foss and Foss (1988) say that feminists draw upon many assumptions and methods from the new-paradigm scholars who are influenced by Thomas Kuhn's work on paradigm shifts that occur in the scientific community. They state:

For example, both feminist and new-paradigm scholars emphasize wholes rather than parts, process rather than structure, knowledge as a process interconnected rather than hierarchy, approximate descriptions rather than absolute truth and cooperation rather than competition (Foss and Foss, 1988, p. 9).

The objective of communication scholarship informed by feminist thought differentiates what is and what is not

feminist. The task of feminism is to critique and eliminate oppression by race, class and gender. Some feminists offer analyses of subordination by age and sexual preference, as well as the exploitation of nature and the environment (Steiner, 1989). Feminist research seeks social change rather than prediction and control as its goal.

The movement for equality, liberation, equity and self-determination echo the goals of the 1960's Civil Rights campaign in America and the nationalist movements in the third world. McCormack (1989) suggests that, "Indeed, feminism could be conceived as a part of the larger worldwide movement for justice and autonomy" (p. 18). Feminist theory, Steiner (1989) suggests, overlaps with critical, black and liberation theories in terms of goals, grounds and methods as these theories advocate social action as the route to social transformation. Steiner (1989) also argues that feminism as a social-political theory is necessarily moral, stating that "judgments about the 'rightness' of feminists' position rests on moral choices, not on questions of fact" (p. 160).

In its essence, feminist communication research is that which includes women, their environments and female-valued phenomena (Wood, 1988). Feminist scholarship is concerned with validation of women's experiences (Driscoll and McFarland, 1989); creation of social change (Fine, 1988); development of a feminist ethic (Steiner, 1989); elimination

of gender inequities and bias (Steeves, 1988); the production and legitimation of information and knowledge (Gallagher, 1989) and empowerment of women (Spitzack and Carter, 1988).

According to researcher Fine (1988), feminist scholarship is and must be driven by a passionate desire to change women's condition. In her words, "it is the feminist researcher's passion for other women (and, by extension, for herself) that is the essence of that which is feminist" (Fine, 1988, p. 19).

The relationship between the researcher and researched is a vital component of feminist research. Commitment to the research subjects includes designing research methods that do not exploit the subjects and do not impose the researcher's reality on the subjects. The researched are allowed to speak for themselves in their own voices. Instead of viewing research subjects from a detached perspective, feminist inquiry is marked, Steiner (1989) suggests, "by its holistic, anti-hierarchical approach; its valuing of personal information and its acceptance of diverse methods of acquisition" (p. 159).

Furthermore, feminist communication theory argues against the notion that empirical studies produce facts uncolored by personal bias and belief (Kramer, 1983).

Spitzack and Carter (1988) declare that feminist scholarship is "self-conscious and self-reflexive." A

feminist perspective demands that feminist scholarship direct a critical lens inward toward its own discursive practices as well as the scholarly practices that preserve women's invisibility.

Although there has been increasing developments in feminist scholarship, many feminist scholars have commented on the scarcity of published research that is either grounded in feminine theory or takes gender as the central concept under study (Fine, 1988). Women are under-represented in the universities and men, to a greater extent, determine what is published and what is considered suitable research. These factors contribute to a lack of studies that are woman-centered (Kramarae, 1980). The fact that feminist scholarship openly challenges the status-quo in research has been problematic in terms of gaining acceptance by various sectors of the research community.

In a discussion on women's progress toward engendering a feminist academic practice, one researcher states that "we know that alternative academic orientation--and gender-related or feminist politics--still risk being branded as polemics rather than scholarship" (Self, 1988, p. 3). It is critical, therefore, that feminists work to further understand how discourses of knowledge and power are formed and changed.

Gallagher (1989) suggests that "in the field of communication, power is primarily defined by economic and

political determinants and finds its most cogent expression in the realm of ideas and ideology" (p. 85). A central question therefore, within the feminist paradigm for communication research, is learning how knowledge comes to be legitimized.

Treichler and Wartella (1986) propose that researchers seek to discover, "what is women's relationship to language, linguistic production, and symbolic representation, and what disruptions of the relationship are possible within patriarchal arrangements" (p. 12). They contend feminist theory offers communication studies "a social theory which attempts to account for the social and cultural construction of sexual difference and a more sophisticated and pointed analysis of power relations" (Treichler and Wartella, 1986, p. 1). Unlike past gender studies which merely sought to describe gender differences in communication, behaviors or attitudes, feminist social scientific studies have the potential to describe and explain gender inequities in communication systematically and to suggest directions for change (Steeves, 1988, p. 12).

Feminist communication scholarship examines the role of the symbolic processes in creating and sustaining hegemony; uniting or dividing humans; challenges socially constructed gender roles; defines all research as subjective; questions the validity of a modern patriarchal social structure; and seeks to understand the interplay between women's place in

culture and in language (Treichler and Wartella, 1986; Wood, 1988). Communication researcher Self (1988) suggests:

Feminist scholarship in communication, whatever its specific method of investigation, is concerned with the uses of symbolic processes...to include or exclude, to liberate or to limit human potential...it foregrounds inclusiveness; appreciation of and respect for cultural differences; intellectual honesty; and a commitment to fairness as basis of assessment of ideas, principles and individual cases of communication (p, 3).

It is important to note that feminist research is relatively new and feminist scholars are still in the process of ironing out methodological weaknesses. As McCormack states, feminists are "engaged in building a new knowledge with its own internal coherence and its own Gestalt" (1989, p. 20). In short, feminist scholarship has not arrived; it is in the process of becoming.

This study is grounded in feminist theory which gives primacy to 1) the assertion that gender is socially constructed; 2) the need for a balance of power between the sexes; 3) the validity of women's experiences and women's ways of knowing and 4) the importance of communication in defining and reshaping reality to include women in all aspects of the production of social life.

ASSUMPTIONS OF THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

The method of in-depth group interviews was selected for this research study because of its suitability for the collection of highly descriptive, narrative data. Lofland

and Lofland (1984) state that in-depth interviews or intensive interviews are "guided conversations whose goal is to elicit from the interviewee rich, detailed materials that can be used for qualitative analysis" (p. 12).

There are numerous advantages to the group process of interviewing. Walker (1985) notes that ideas may be generated which would not have occurred to any one individual and weaknesses in arguments may surface. Also, the group experience may prove to be of heuristic value for the participants (p. 5). Groups provide a social context which according to Hedges, "obliges participants to take account of other people's views in framing their own response" (1985, p.72). Furthermore, talking with other people can be stimulating and energizing.

There are potential disadvantages to the group method. It is difficult to focus on individual attitudes and dominant members may influence what is said. Also, some people may feel uneasy voicing opinions which are contrary to the rest of the group. As Hedges suggests, sometimes people feel constrained in what they say in front of their peers and may 'tidy up' what they say to the point of actual distortion of the truth (1985, p. 74).

This study is modeled after the focus group interview (FGI) which is widely used in market research (Shields, 1981). Communication researcher Lederman utilized the FGI technique in a 1983 study of communicator apprehension.

Lederman states that, "the FGI is a technique to use when the researcher wants to know more about what people of a given group feel, think, and/or do about something rather than when the researcher is interested in testing a hypothesis" (1983, p. 234). He defines the FGI as "an in-depth interview process in which participants are selected because they are purposive, although not necessarily a representative sampling of a specific population" (Lederman, 1983, p. 237).

Shields (1981) contends that knowledge of small group dynamics is the "first variable affecting the outcome of the focused group interview" (p. 314). Other variables include adequate preparation on the part of the interviewer; clear understanding of the interview's purpose and familiarity with the subject being researched.

In order to produce rich data, in-depth responses are required. Lederman (1983) suggests that the interviewer use reflective questioning techniques and internal summaries, probe for consensus and areas of disagreement and attend to nonverbal cues. Shields (1981) recommends that the researcher encourage narratives and allow group members to spontaneously react to agenda points.

In order to gather the desired information from respondents, the dynamics of the interview process and the skill of the interviewer are crucial. Hedges suggests that the interviewer 1) build up a picture of each individual

throughout the interview; 2) look at remarks in context, including the input of the other group members and the moderator; 3) note consistencies and inconsistencies; 4) listen to the tone of voice; 5) assess the effects of dominant personalities or group pressures (1985, p. 89).

The relationship between the researcher and the informants is vital to the success of the interview process. The subject of appropriate researcher/researched relations is of concern to feminist researchers who argue against the traditional paradigm of the "proper interview" which emphasizes the positivist values of objectivity and detachment. Oakley, for instance, (1981) rejects the notion of the interview situation as a one-way process in which the interviewer elicits, but does not give information. She asserts that the viewing of the participants as subordinate instruments of data collection creates problems for feminist interviewers whose primary goal is the validation of women's subjective experiences.

In Oakley's opinion, the goal of finding out about people is best achieved when the relationship between interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical (1981).

Denzin (1989) concurs with Oakley that interviewing should be conceptualized and experienced as a creative process in which people share experiences in a mutual search for greater understanding. Interviewing, he states:

should not be a relationship where one party does all the talking and the other only asks questions.

When interviews turn into this form, they become asymmetric, authoritarian social relations in which the power of social sciences determines the information given (Denzin, 1989, p. 43).

After interviewing hundreds of women over a period of ten years, Oakley (1981) concludes that an "interactive, collaborative, responsive approach which does not seek to minimize the personal involvement of the interviewer builds rapport...(p. 49). Oakley found that refusing to answer questions or giving personal feedback was not helpful in building rapport with the subjects.

Researcher McCracken cautions against full collaboration or 'overrapport'. He warns interviewers that "it is possible to go to far, become too intimate" (1988, p. 26). In McCracken's opinion, formality and distance helps to reassure the interviewees that the investigator can be trusted to maintain confidentiality.

Hedges (1985) maintains that the moderator needs to "cultivate a stance of passionate neutrality... his approval and interest is needed to keep people talking.... Certainly he must never disclose his own feelings by word, gesture, or expression..."(p. 82).

It is the contention of feminist interviewers, such as Oakley (1981), that statements like the one above, descriptive of the male paradigm of interviewing, reflect the lack of fit between theory and practice in the area of research that is not only about women, but is also for women.

Moreover, a detached attitude toward the interview subjects may be detrimental to the success of other kinds of research projects. In a study of reticent communicators, Steward (1968) recommended a therapeutic approach. Reticent communicators, Steward contends, must feel that the interview is therapeutic as a prerequisite to the revealing of information that may be harmful to their personal self-esteem. In Steward's words:

...the implicit word of warning in this is that if at any time the interviewer becomes preoccupied with his fact-finding at the expense of sensitivity to the needs of the subject, he will at once preclude the conditions necessary for the gathering of facts (1968, p. 24).

Considering the arguments, pro and con, for a detached stance in interviewing, the goal of this research is to make the interview process as comfortable and enlightening as possible for the participants. A balance between treating the interviewees as research subjects and as sensitive, creative people is ideal. It is ethically necessary to relate to participants as people first and as subjects of research second. As Oakley so aptly states, "personal involvement is more than dangerous bias--it is the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives" (1981, p. 58).

STATEMENT OF THE PROCEDURE

The researcher facilitated a small focus group of four women that met for three (3) hour sessions on three (3)

separate occasions, resulting in nine (9) hours of recorded data. Also, in order to clarify subjects' responses, participants were telephoned for follow-up questions which lasted approximately one hour each. An interview schedule of questions and topics for discussion was mailed to the participants prior to the interviews. The group was comprised of three white women and one African-American woman between the ages of 35 and 45.

The questionnaire for this study was designed to explore particular matters in elaborate and comprehensive detail. Following Jorgensens's (1987) recommendation, questions were open-ended with an emphasis on what, when, where, and how with the intent of facilitating the production of descriptive data. The discussions were taped using audio equipment and used only by the researcher.

All the participants expressed concern that their identities be protected therefore, names used in the description of the data are fictitious. The interview subjects made it clear that they did not want their names or professions identified for fear of retaliation that might affect their livelihood. If the interviewee's occupations were revealed, theoretically it would be possible to deduce their names.

The only personal information that the researcher can provide about the female subjects is that they have been working in the trades for more than five years and each

works in a different highly-skilled craft. They are outspoken critics of the male power structure within the unionized trades, vocal supporters of women's issues and are active in creating changes within their unions and on the job.

CHAPTER III

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review is divided into two broad categories. The first half includes research on the social construction of gender, stereotypes, power inequities and the role of women in organizations. The last half explores relevant research on male/female communicative differences (linguistic and stylistic). Research on women in the trades has already been incorporated in the section titled, "Significance of the Problem." This section begins with a definition of terms that are mentioned in the literature review.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Throughout feminist discourse one encounters a wide variety of theories, concepts and newly-coined words pertaining to gender. This researcher has not located any academic discussions in the literature on gender where gender is assumed to be a mere noun indicating either masculine or feminine traits. Thus, a brief discussion of some relatively new ideas emerging in gender studies is warranted.

Several scholars conceptualize gender as both a noun that describes behavior and roles assigned to the different sexes as well as a verb that describes the process of behavior and role assignment (Acker, 1991; Chafetz, 1990; West and Zimmerman, 1987). Gender is socially constructed in everyday life; it is a process carried on by both individuals and groups. West and Zimmerman (1987) describe this process as "doing gender." Parents who teach their children the proper behavior for boys and girls are actively creating gender or in the process of gendering (Acker, 1990).

Sociologist, Irene Padavic, states that "gender is enacted in institutions, one of the most important of which is work" (1991, p. 279). Acker suggests that organizational structures are gendered. In her words:

To say that an organization, or any other analytic unit, is gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine (Acker, 1991, p. 167).

Gender norms refer to behavior that is expected of people on the basis of the status to which they are assigned, given their sexual biology. The construction of expected roles and norms for men and women is referred to as gender differentiation. Chafetz (1990) suggests that the level of consensus within a society on gender norms and the

number of behaviors that are defined as gender specific varies. Further, she states:

To the extent that consensus is widespread concerning proper behavior for people on the basis of biological sex, the violation of gender norms will be perceived by others (of both genders) as deviant behavior and negatively sanctioned. The likelihood and severity of negative sanctions, in turn, reflect the strength of gender norms (Chafetz, 1990, pp. 35-36).

Gender stratification refers to the unequal distribution of resources between males and females within a society. Historian, Gerda Lerner (1986) notes that virtually all modern societies are patriarchal and are gender stratified. Patriarchy, according to Lerner, is:

In its wider definition it is the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general. It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and that women are deprived of access to such power. It does not imply that women are either totally powerless or totally deprived of rights, influence, and resources (1986, p. 239).

Gender ideologies are belief systems disseminated throughout a culture that explain and justify gender differentiation and gender stratification. In the case of a gender-stratified society with males operating as the elite, social definitions will naturally be created in order to sustain and legitimate male privilege (Chafetz, 1990).

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER

The terms sex and gender are often used interchangeably and the literature offers differing definitions of each term. Generally speaking, sex refers to physiological, functional or psychological descriptions of persons who are biologically female or male. Gender, according to Pearson (1985), is "broad enough to include psychological as well as biological differences between persons" (p. 11).

In Chafetz's opinion:

gender has come to mean the socioculturally constructed components attached to each sex... and it is sociocultural definitions of, and reactions to, biological sex that produce and reinforce inequality between males and females (1990, p. 28).

At the most basic psychological and biological levels real differences exist, but the existence of gender systems which includes systems of gender differentiation and gender stratification are socially created.

For the purposes of this paper, gender is perceived as a socially constructed phenomena in which males and females are differentiated according to the norms and beliefs of a given society. The differentiation between the sexes may and often does lead to stratification and the predominant placement of women in a disadvantaged position.

Chafetz (1990) argues that the legitimacy of male power is rooted in gender ideology, gender norms and gender stereotypes. Gender ideologies are usually based on

religious principles or conceptions of biologically inherent sex differences. Ideologies of gender are belief systems that explain how and why males and females are different in addition to articulating the rights and responsibilities of each sex type.

In the viewpoint of Bem and Bem (1970), beliefs that define gender roles are part of a nonconscious ideology which is "the most subtle and profound form of social influence. It is the most difficult kind of social influence to challenge because it remains invisible" (p. 89). According to Bem and Bem (1970), gender norms are spread and accepted throughout a culture when people are not exposed to conflicting attitudes and beliefs. Chafetz maintains that gender norms for men helps men maintain authority over women and norms for women serve to sustain a deferential relationship to men (1990, p. 35).

Gender norms give rise to gender stereotypes and perceptions about gender differences that are shared by a large number of people within a given population. As is the case with other stereotypes, they may or may not be true. Many people are questioning and rejecting the dominant social definitions pertaining to the prescribed roles for men and women. Women are developing, to use Chafetz's term, "counterdefinitions" that include different norms and ideologies. Chafetz calls this phenomenon "gender consciousness" (1990, p. 37).

Feminist thought argues against the dominant perceptions about women's nature that have conditioned past and present stereotypes which impede women's progress for equality in the work place and other social spheres. A major task at hand is the eradication of counter-productive stereotypes about gender roles which value the masculine and devalue the feminine.

Stereotypes which undermine the position of women are psychologically stifling and do not serve the needs of contemporary society. Sargent (1977) likens stereotypes to polluted air which is invisible, unconscious and difficult to combat.

It is commonplace for women to enact behavioral roles that are based on stereotypes. They are taught that their talents and academic achievements are not supposed to rival their male counterparts. Girls are trained to limit their aspirations in the social arena and many women come to accept, even embrace, male dominion and superiority as a natural state of existence. Women are expected to be committed to their families and men to their careers. For many women career and family life are often presented as mutually exclusive alternatives. From the employer's perspective, family obligations are considered subordinate to work obligations, making it difficult for women to fulfill both work and family roles at the same time (Coser and Rokoff, 1982).

If women conform to a prescribed role of exclusive domesticity, they deny themselves the opportunity for career development and may suffer economic hardships. Furthermore, by staying in the home, women lend credence to the stereotype that they are not capable of earning a living on their own. When they break away from traditional role expectations, women face numerous hardships including lower wages, less opportunities for education and advancement and male resistance to their assertion for power and responsibility (Coser and Rokoff, 1982).

Gender stereotypes are based on assumptions about female/male roles, functions and capabilities. Sociologists Berger and Luckmann (1966) present a cogent argument for the social construction of reality which asserts that human phenomena such as gender roles are human constructions which become institutionalized and thereafter are perceived apart from human construction as if these roles were ordained by an outside force or exist in a natural, irreversible state.

Berger and Luckmann use the term reification to describe the process whereby people objectify socially created institutions. In their words, "the world of institutions appears to merge with the world of nature" (1966, p. 90). Roles are reified in the same manner as institutions. As role behaviors are passed down from one generation to the next, it is necessary to explain and "legitimate" the institutional order. Legitimation, Berger

and Luckmann state "not only tells the individual why he should perform one action and not another; it also tells him why things are what they are" (1966, p. 94).

Berger and Luckmann identify differing levels of legitimation. The fundamental legitimating explanations of reality are built into the vocabulary. Maxims, proverbs, legends and tales containing theoretical propositions constitute the second level of legitimation. The third level encompasses explicit theories advanced by specialized personnel. The wise old men of preindustrialized clan societies were the legitimators of the clan's norms and values.

The fourth and most complex level of legitimation is the creation of "symbolic universes" which Berger and Luckmann define as:

bodies of theoretical tradition that integrate different provinces of meaning and encompass the institutional order in a symbolic totality.... The symbolic universe assigns ranks to various phenomena in a hierarchy of beings, defining the range of the social within this hierarchy.... The symbolic universe links men with their predecessors and their successors in a meaningful totality (pp. 95, 102, 103).

Human phenomena such as gender role assignments, stereotypes and class distinctions are deeply imbedded in all societies and when challenged, threaten the legitimacy of dominant institutions and its representative groups that would retain a privileged status. Berger and Luckmann's theory of the social construction of reality is especially

relevant to the feminist perspective because it suggests that institutional change is possible, even though institutions, once established, tend to persist and be self-perpetuating. While change is not an easy task, if gender roles are socially created, they may likewise be altered.

Acker (1991) theorizes that gendered social structures are created by five interacting processes. The first process is the construction and maintenance of divisions according to gender including divisions of labor, power and physical space. The second process is the construction of symbols and images that explain, express, reinforce or oppose those divisions which are disseminated through the language, ideology and the media.

The third process occurs on a behavioral level when interactions between men and women enact dominance and submission. The fourth process involves presentation of self according to gender stereotypes. Finally, gender is created and conceptualized in family and organizational structures (Acker, 1990, p. 166).

Kanter (1982) posits a structural theory of sex differences that are exhibited in the workplace. In her view, structural position accounts for noted sex differences in organizational behavior such as worker aspirations, concern with co-worker friendship and leadership styles. Kanter maintains that, those who are disadvantageously

placed, whether they are men or women, behave in a similar fashion. Kanter states:

It is time to move beyond 'sex differences' and 'sex roles' in our understanding of observed behavior of women in organizations, and to return to classic and emerging social psychological and structural theories that explain behavior as a function of position in a network of hierarchical relations (1982, p. 247).

Kanter maintains that although it is true that women are more likely to face discrimination than men and that more women may be found at the bottom of opportunity and power hierarchies, "the behavior of women at the bottom (or alone) should be seen as a function of being at the bottom, and not primarily a function of being a woman" (1982, p. 247). Furthermore, Kanter remarks "it is the nature, form and degree of hierarchy that should bear the burden of change" (1982, p. 247).

A structural, class-based approach to the analysis of gender relations does not answer the question of how hierarchies can be transformed, but clearly this perspective suggests the necessity for creation of a new social reality constructed by women and men as a more pragmatic and equitable model for exploring solutions to current socio-economic problems.

In order to change the nature of hierarchical structures, it is necessary to understand the nature of power. Foucault (1986) states that it is important to know the "how of power" and to ask "what rules of right are

implemented by the relations of power in the production of the discourses of truth?"(p. 229). Historical investigation of the mechanisms of power and domination must be undertaken.

Weber (1986) notes that relationships of domination may exist reciprocally and "domination in the most general sense is one of the most important elements of social action--without exception every sphere of social action is profoundly influenced by structures of dominancy" (p. 28).

Historically, women have been economically dependent on men and in many cases the rewards for doing so justified this relationship. The scarcity of rewards and penalties for violating gender roles in the past has kept women bound to a subordinate position (Lerner, 1986). Feminist theory argues that women need not continue to accept a reality based on assumptions of gender that are no longer relevant. The psychological cost of reciprocal dominant/subordinate relations between the sexes demeans both men and women (Lerner, 1986).

Kessler-Harris (1985) advocates a gynocentric or woman-centered view on women's differences. She suggests that acceptance of women as different might enhance the speed with which women can move toward equality. Instead of adapting to male structures, women should return to the idea that their differences require accommodation. A woman-centered position, according to Kessler-Harris, asserts

women's differences proudly and she cautions against the practice of ignoring differences as this may perpetuate existing inequalities (1985, p. 144).

It seems clear that raising the gender-consciousness for all members of a stratified society is a prerequisite to social change and equity between men and women. Chafetz (1990) maintains that the first step toward gender equity must be a change in the division of labor according to biological sex. "Gender equality," Chafetz states:

requires that men and women share equally household and familial labor; fill extradomestic roles that are equal in the material and nonmaterial resources they generate; and are equally represented among incumbents of elite roles (1990, p. 110).

As the division of labor between the sexes lessens, differentiation of males and females will diminish and social definitions of gender roles and norms will change. Further, access to greater resources for women will reduce the male power advantage over females leading to eventual equality between the sexes (Chafetz, 1990).

In summary, gender is put forth as a socially constructed phenomena. The ideology of biological determinism is refuted and replaced with the assertion that gender is created and perpetuated within family and organizational structures. Gender differentiation has led to stratification of the two sexes with the placement of females in a less advantaged position than males. Prescribed norms and roles for each sex helps sustain sex-

role stereotypes. Ideologies that explain and legitimate sex roles are disseminated throughout the culture and become institutionalized. Sex-roles then are perceived as objective reality, separate from human construction. From a feminist perspective, gender equity is a necessity and may be furthered by elimination of the division of labor according to sex.

MALE/FEMALE COMMUNICATIVE DIFFERENCES

In 1975, linguist Robin Lakoff proposed that women's speech is non-assertive as it is marked by the frequent use of tag questions, intensifiers and hedges. Lakoff suggested (1975) that women tend to be more polite, to swear less and basically express themselves less forcefully and directly as men. According to popular belief, the speech of women is weaker and less effective than the speech of men.

Stereotypes about women's speech fall into the category of what Kramer calls folk-linguistics: a body of beliefs about women's speech capabilities that are not based on empirical evidence (1974). Perceived differences in speech patterns and styles do not necessarily correspond to real ones, but they are indicators of cultural attitudes about women and continue to persist today.

Since Lakoff's declaration that women are perceived as less powerful speakers than men, much research on male/female communicative differences has been conducted.

Some studies have supported Lakoff's hypothesis, other research has refuted her theory. In general, findings have been inconclusive and inconsistent.

Studies indicate that women are more polite (Hartman, 1983; Swacker, 1983), are less likely to interrupt (Eakins and Eakins, 1983; Leet-Pellegrini, 1980; Swacker, 1983) and are more tentative in their speech style (Carli, 1990; Hartman, 1983). Carli (1990) discovered that women were more tentative in their interactions with men than with women. Also, men perceived a tentative woman to be more trustworthy and likeable. She suggests that tentative language may be used by women as subtle influence strategy when speaking to a male audience. Results from Carli's study indicate that use of tentative speech enhances a woman's ability to influence a man, but reduces her ability to influence a woman (1990, p. 948).

Research indicates that women use more tag questions, using statements like, "it's a beautiful day, isn't it?" (Fishman, 1982; Holmes, 1984) and women tend to qualify their statements with disclaimers such as, "I may be wrong, but," or, "I don't know, but," (Pearson, 1985). Fishman (1980) found that women ask more questions and insert more "you knows" because these devices are useful for conversational maintenance. Women, Fishman (1982) suggests, ask more questions, use more tag questions, and insert "mms," "yeahs," and "ohs" throughout conversations as a

means of insuring and encouraging conversations.

Conversely, men in Fishman's study tended to exhibit minimal response cues and displayed a lack of interest (1982).

Males tended to dominate conversations and control topics, according to researchers Thorne and Henley (1975).

Holmes (1984) concurs with Fishman that tag questions function as a device for eliciting a response from the addressee. Whereas it is true that tag questions may mean the speaker is uncertain, it depends upon the circumstance. The affective meaning of tag questions implies solidarity, politeness and concern for the feelings of the other and is used to soften directives. Baumann (1983) studied tags and qualifying prefatory statements finding that both men and women used them, but men used these two speech features three times as often when speaking with other men. Baumann (1983) speculates that men may be more certain of themselves in conversations with women than with other men.

The use of qualifying phrases had an adverse affect on women's credibility in only one investigation. Bradley states:

it cannot be argued on the basis of these findings, however, that tag questions and qualifiers are inherently 'weaker' or credibility deflating since males were able to use them with virtual impunity.... In this context it may be that qualifying phrases were perceived as indicators of uncertainty and non-assertiveness when used by women but as tools of politeness and other-directedness when employed by men (1981, p. 90).

Bradley's findings suggest that linguistic devices used by women in this society are devalued, not because they are inherently weak but because of the lower status of the female (1981, p. 73).

Warhsay (1972) concluded that males tend to use an instrumental language style and women use a more affective language style. The findings of Warshay's study indicate that the male is more active, ego-involved and less concerned about others. Also, males tended to be less fluent, refer to events in a verb phrase, involve themselves more in their own references and refer less to others. Females, in contrast, were more fluent, referred to events in a noun phrase, tended to locate themselves within their interacting communities and referred more to others. The female adult exhibited a concern with "being," whereas the male exhibited a concern for "doing" (Warshay, 1972, pp. 8, 9).

Leet-Pellegrini (1980) studied conversational dominance as a function of gender and expertise. The findings of this study indicate that male experts talked more, were perceived by subjects as being relatively more dominant and were perceived by judges as relatively more controlling of the conversation. Leet-Pellegrini suggests that, "results supported the view that male experts pursue a style of interacting based on power, while female experts pursue a style based on solidarity and support" (1980, p. 97).

In a study which examined self-confidence and control, Pederson (1989) found that male subjects were more efficient explainers and female subjects were better as followers. Male same-sex pairs were markedly faster at problem solving in a conflict communication situation than the female same-sex pairs. Women more often posed their doubts in a form of a question and men more often just stated the fact. Pederson concluded that women did not show less confidence and men did not exhibit more controlling behaviors. "It becomes quite clear," Pederson states, "that nothing definite can be said about communication efficiency of men versus women without explicit reference to communication situation..." (1989, p. 113).

In a 1988 study which tested 10 separate female and male speech indicators (Mulac, Wiemann, Widenmann and Gibson), men and women's language was found to be generally consistent with earlier studies; however, language differences were smaller in mixed-sex dyads than in same-sex dyads, contradicting the notion that people act more sex-role stereotypical when interacting with members of the opposite sex. Mulac, et al. also point out that research on speech accommodation has demonstrated that when interacting with others outside their dialectical community, speakers often modify their speech in order to diminish differences. People tend to adjust, verbally and nonverbally, as a means of mirroring the behavior of others they like, whom they

wish to have like them more or whom they see as rewarding them in some way (1980, pp. 317, 318).

Staley and Cohen (1988) found that males and females, for the most part, perceived themselves as similar in speech style; however, judges reported that males and females exhibited distinctly different communication styles.

Research studies have found that women disclose more personal information to others than men and are socialized to display their emotions. Henley and Thorne believe that "the display of emotional variability, like that of variability of intonation, contributes to the stereotype of instability in women" (1977, p. 210). Self-disclosure, they assert is not in itself a weakness or negative trait; like other gestures of intimacy, it has positive aspects. Henley and Thorne (1977) argue that the reason women disclose more than men may be due to their lower status just as subordinates in work situations are likely to disclose more than their superiors.

Finally, women and men differ in their nonverbal behavior in areas such as touching, territoriality, facial expression, gestures, body positioning, eye contact, posture, vocal cues (pitch, inflection, volume, quality, rate and enunciation) and artifactual communication such as clothing, jewelry, objects and other adornments (Pearson, 1985).

It is apparent from the literature that there are generalities that can be stated concerning the differences in the ways that women and men communicate in mixed-sex and same-sex dyads and groups. Mulac et al. (1988) note that linguistic indicators should be thought of as gender preferential rather than gender distinctive (1988).

Lexical domains are reflections of roles which are acquired through the process of socialization. Key (1975) argues that "there is concrete evidence that adults talk differently to male and female children.... By the time children enter school, the sex patterns are very well entrenched" (p. 63).

Henley and Thorne argue that both sexes can benefit by adopting the positive traits exhibited by members of the opposite sex. Males can benefit by adopting certain "female" patterns such as supportive listening and women can improve their credibility by eliminating those forms which are self-deprecating and self-limiting. They state that "we should work toward the time when all speakers will be attended to and valued" (Henley and Thorne, 1977, p. 211).

In conclusion, numerous research studies have attempted to identify various male/female communicative differences. Findings are inconsistent, but certain linguistic devices may be defined as gender preferential. Conclusions on perceived speaker effectiveness are also inconsistent and it has been suggested that communication efficiency cannot be

accurately evaluated without consideration of the context of the communicative interaction. Research findings do suggest that if a female uses linguistic devices, such as tag questions or qualifiers, her perceived effectiveness is diminished. Yet, when a male uses the same devices there is no adverse effect on his credibility. Women, therefore, may be devalued as speakers because of lower status, not because of the linguistic devices they use. Finally, it has been suggested that both sexes can improve their communication by utilizing the positive traits exhibited by members of the opposite sex.

CHAPTER IV

DESCRIPTION OF THE DATA FROM THE INTERVIEWS

INTRODUCTION

This study was designed to explore two key questions: what are women's on-the-job experiences in the trades and how do they respond to these experiences. Communication between men and women was the main focus of discussion. Categories of data emerged from the central themes that were explored during the interviews. Titles of the first four sub-chapters, "Different Styles, "Watching Your P's and Q's," "Gender Bias/Gender Hostility," and "Just One of the Hazards of the Trade" are taken directly from the recorded data.

Lofland and Lofland (1984) state that because qualitative research is exploratory, certain themes might emerge that the researcher may not have anticipated. The interview schedule provided the basic structure for organizing the data that was collected. The description of the interviewee's perceptions was organized according to themes that recurred throughout the group sessions.

DIFFERENT STYLES

The women in this focus group reported numerous differences in the ways that men and women communicate on the job. Some differences are perceived as acceptable and nonproblematic, while other differences pose continual problems in everyday work efficiency, as well as contributing to aggravated interpersonal relations. There was a consensus among the subjects that when their male co-workers were engaged in a conversation, a majority of them:

- 1) generally discussed "men's topics" such as sports and women;
- 2) tended to spend more personal conversation time talking to other male co-workers than with female co-workers;
- 3) used profanity more often than women;
- 4) frequently dominated male/female conversations;
- 5) were reluctant to ask for help or let others know that they did not know how to perform a task;
- 6) provided fewer details than women when assigning tasks and giving instructions;
- 7) were often unwilling to listen to or speak to women and
- 8) directed task-related conversations to the male in situations where males and females were both present.

None of the women seemed to mind the fact that men focused on topics of little interest to women, unless they talked negatively or sexually about women. As one participant stated, "I know men are going to talk about other kinds of things. After all, they have different interests than women." Likewise, no one seemed concerned

that men spent more time talking with other men unless the situation was extreme. For example, one woman expressed the loneliness she felt in the early part of her apprenticeship program because she was the only woman in her class and none of her classmates would speak to her for the first month of school. Eventually, she became friends with some of her classmates, but it was difficult for her to be accepted in a world that was so entirely male that even the Coke and coffee machines were located in the men's bathrooms.

The women said that the male tendency to use profanity was not problematic unless it was directed at them personally or at women in general. One of the participants did comment:

There are guys that cannot speak without swearing. I knew a guy that could not say a sentence without saying the F word. Finally, I said to him, 'can you say one sentence without using that word?' From that point on he started watching it. It went down to once a paragraph.

Another woman said that when women swear, men often make disapproving comments, as if swearing were a male privilege. A woman added: "men swear a lot, but when a woman swears there's usually a comment. I never expect a comment from another woman." She went on to say:

I feel that when they point it out to me, they do it for a reason--it's a payback. If they have to take their pictures down, even though I'm not the one that made them do it, I better not swear.

The women said that they are used to the fact that a man will often take more floor-time when engaged in a

personal conversation with a woman. In the group's opinion, men do not generally listen as attentively as they could and some men grow impatient when listening to a woman. Women, the group said, usually listen more patiently than men and are more equitable in conversational turn-taking.

Men, in the group's experience, were reluctant to ask for help, especially from a woman. One woman commented that she watched a man on her crew trying to fix a machine for almost 8 hours before he finally asked her for advice. Another woman said that in her observation, men will, if possible, avoid letting others know they do not know how to perform a particular task. Or if they have been given instructions that they do not understand, instead of asking for clarification, some men will behave as if they do understand. One woman stated that she thinks men are not as open in their communication. She said:

If I don't understand something, I ask questions until I know exactly what to do. I've had men crew partners that acted like they understood, but they really don't. I would be very embarrassed if I said that I knew how to do something, but I really didn't.

The group whole-heartedly agreed that when male supervisors give work instructions, the instructions are often vague and missing important details that the women feel are necessary to carry out the task. Men, on the other hand usually seem to understand what the foreman wants. One woman commented:

Men are poor in verbal instructions, yet they seem to understand each other. If a supervisor tells a male to go over there and insert a particular pipe, the males usually just walk over and carry out the instructions. I need pictures, details and I like to go over it completely and tell the supervisor what I think he said, so I know I've got it right because I hate to make mistakes and have to do work twice.

One of the women disagreed at this point and interjected:

Men don't always understand, they just act like they do; they will go away and dink around for a few hours and then the supervisor will come back and the man will ask a question and the foreman will go over it once again.

The researcher asked if women supervisors provided more details when assigning tasks and they said that it was difficult to draw any comparisons because there are so few women supervisors. One woman stated that in the past she had a woman supervisor and the woman did provide more detailed instructions and was much easier to understand than most male supervisors. But, she added, "this was just one woman, so I really couldn't say anything about women in general."

When the researcher asked if foremen seemed to mind that women asked more questions, one woman said, "No, they are usually pretty good about going over things." Another woman, however, received a written reprimand for asking too many questions. The women were puzzled by fact that men seem to understand each other better and wondered if women had a difficult time understanding instructions because they didn't have enough experience on the job. "Men just have a

different style of communicating," one woman commented. She went on, "I am a verbal person, you know, let's talk it over, let's see what needs to be done. They use as few words as possible and just expect us to understand by osmosis or something."

The women all agreed that one of the most important male communicative habits that strained the work and personal relations between men and women on the job was their unwillingness to listen or talk to women on the job. For example, one woman who was in a supervisory position stated:

I've had engineers come to my male assistant instead of me and try to explain things to him. I had to make a big scene to get this one engineer to come and talk to me about the parts he wanted us to make. And he would overreact and he was going to have this big power play with me. I got a note from the superintendent saying that he (the engineer) didn't have to talk with me and that if he did talk with me, the superintendent had to be present. I wrote a note back to the superintendent, asking him if this was the way everyone in the shop was treated. Finally, it was ironed out and now the engineer and I get along together. It's a whole process that men would not have to go through.

Another woman commented that when her tool partner is a man and he is away from the site, the foreman will give her the instructions and then come back later to ask the man if he understood the instructions correctly. The foreman does not bother to come back and check with a woman if he has given the instructions to a man which were then passed on to the woman.

Another common occurrence is men's habit of directing their conversation exclusively to other men when both men and women when are present. One woman commented, "when I'm partnered with a man and the supervisor comes over he talks to the man, he never talks to me, has no eye contact with me and then he walks away."

In conclusion, the group suggested that reluctance on the part of male co-workers and supervisors to speak to and listen to women workers significantly affected interpersonal relations between men and women on the job. The group also said that one of the reasons many men are reluctant to communicate with women is because they do not want women on the job. Poor communication between men and women prevents some women from getting the information they need to learn and perform their jobs correctly.

GENDER BIAS AND VERBAL HOSTILITY

"Gender hostility" or "gender bias," in the viewpoint of this group of blue-collar women, is a commonplace phenomenon in the trades. The women in this study believe that gender hostility significantly affects the communicative interactions between the sexes. Gender bias is manifested in a number of ways. Men may be verbally hostile. They may exclude women from conversations or refuse to work with them. Men may try to sabotage women or ruin their reputations by spreading rumors. Some men

exhibit paternalistic attitudes toward women. Some may physically assault them. They agreed that men who are biased against women on the job can make women's work experiences very unpleasant.

When asked if verbal hostility is rare, occasional or frequent; three out of the four women reported that male hostility is frequently a problem. One woman who works in a mill said that, "it was pretty much a daily occurrence." One of the group who is a woman of color, compared the hostility toward women to racism. She said "it's always there, under the surface." Others of the group said that the climate can be "tense," "stressful," "unhealthy" or even "poisonous." The situation varies from worksite to worksite and some days are better than others, but as a rule, women will inevitably encounter angry men who are resistant to women's entry into the trades.

The social climate in the construction trades is unique one woman pointed out. She stated:

Construction, and men and women in construction, it's an extreme situation. It is very different than when people are working together selling something in a store or working together in an office. It's more of an extreme environment and it's very masculine.

One of the group members has worked in a small shop for many years and has not been the target of male hostility as much as the rest of the group except for a period of time when she was helping organize a strike. She was the only woman on a strike committee of six and she said that she had

to bear the brunt of the anger directed at the organizers of the strike. The anti-strike men put a sign on her desk that said "Carrie's Union Negotiating Team". Even though she was not the leader of the strike, the men acted as if she was to blame. One of the women in our focus group asked her if the anti-strike men were hostile to the men on the strike committee and she said, "No, they never said anything to the men on the committee."

Verbal hostility toward women is higher when men are in a group, the women noted and in many instances when a man is in a one-on-one situation with a woman, his behavior will be less abrasive. One woman accused men of cowardice. "It's safer to say something against a woman when you are in a group," she said. Two other women commented that they are acquainted with male co-workers who privately support women's position to work in the trades, but these men do not publicly say anything in women's defense.

Two women who work at numerous job sites outside their local area remarked that the men in their own craft are more resentful of them than co-workers from the other craft groups. In their experience, the group to which a woman belongs will be the least accepting of her presence. If a woman is an electrician, for example, the male electricians are often more hostile to her than males from the other trades. Also, the women said that when they travelled to job sites outside their local area, they usually received

fairer treatment; were more accepted and were assigned jobs that required more responsibility.

The researcher asked the participants if they had any thoughts about why men in their own local unions and trades were more overtly hostile. They responded by saying that they thought that men in their own locals were more threatened by them because--as one woman put it--"I am right in their face." Also, when they were on the road, the men on the site knew that the women were only going to be there for a limited period of time, so the men could afford to be nice to them. "Men are embarrassed to have women in their locals," one woman commented. "Yes, we are like the bastard child or an unwanted step-child," another woman commented.

The women mentioned that in their experience, male resistance and hostility toward women is not limited to co-workers. Male supervisors and union representatives say things to women on the job that are offensive. One woman said: "Union agents have been some of the most hostile people in the crafts." Another woman told us that when she went to her shop steward with a sexual harassment grievance he refused to report the incident. "So, I went directly to my local and they didn't believe me. The union said that I had a personality problem."

According to this group, management uses a "divide and conquer" technique to discourage women from staying in the

trades. Women are almost always physically separated and "they try to keep women separate by spreading rumors about them," one woman stated. This is what one woman had to say about management:

Women would have more strength on the job if they were able to work together and were at ease with each other. Women are virtually always paired with a man. If women were partnered together and they did good work, it would be more difficult to lay them off. Anyway, they generally credit the guy for putting up with a woman partner and give him the credit if the job is well done. If it's a bad job, then the woman gets the credit. They actually don't think that women can do the job on their own. They don't think a woman can handle the job without a male partner and if we did do the job without a male partner, than we would be twice as threatening.

The women agreed that management and union support has increased somewhat over the years. Laws are now more protective of women's rights and some men have changed their behavior toward women on the job. "Men are not as verbally or physically abusive these days because they are too afraid of getting slapped with a harassment suit," one woman noted.

Nevertheless, some men still denigrate women on the job. The more common epithets used against women include, "bitch," "cunt" or "slut." Men may make references to the sexual preferences of women, accuse them of being dykes, tell dirty jokes or ask inappropriate questions like "are you wearing a bra?" One of the women said that a man called her over and in front of a dozen other men asked her if she was wearing a bra. She said: "I told him, 'I don't even

talk to people who speak to me in such a way.' Then I just turned and walked away."

All the women reported working with men who try to verbally "put women down," tell disgusting jokes about women or call women offensive names. They also said that they have worked with men who try to provoke women into arguments and with men who made them afraid for their safety. Two out of the four women in this study said that they have worked with men who they felt would intentionally set them up to have an accident on the job, if the opportunity arose. In some instances verbal hostility may escalate into physical violence. One woman recounted this experience:

My boss told me that I was going to be working with this one guy and I was looking forward to working with him because I heard that he was a good teacher but, a few weeks went by and we still were not paired together so I asked my boss when I would get to work with him. My boss said that I would have to go and talk to him about it. Well, this guy had refused to work with me only my boss didn't tell me that. So when I went to talk to this guy, he went berserk. He told me that he hated women on the job and that his mother had emasculated his father and his mother tried to be a better welder. He said that women didn't belong on the job and he went on and on. Then later on that day, he walked by me and kicked me in the butt. I was stunned, I had a lot of clothes on so it didn't hurt that much but, it was shocking. I never said anything to him. I didn't know what to do. I just crawled into a shell. A couple of nights later, I was at the apprenticeship school and the head of the whole school comes along and starts reaming me out about smoking on the job and of course, all these men smoke on the job, and he says that he's heard that I can't work with two tools because I'm smoking with one hand all the time and I knew exactly where that came from and I just blew up because it wasn't true. I knew that the same guy had come down and tried to poison the

head of the school about me. I said, 'I know who it is'--I said his name and then I said, 'the next time he kicks me in the ass I am going to grab his foot, knock him down on the concrete and beat his head in with a pipe-wrench.'

This woman eventually testified with another woman before the executive committee of her local union on every incident the two of them could remember of men "giving them a hard time" on the job. She stated:

It was really hard on me emotionally. Not one of these things is pleasant and to recall them for an hour and a half in front of men that you are not sure are your allies and one in particular was not and he tried to deny everything we had to say. He was saying that things were not the way we perceived it. Like, he didn't mean it that way or he didn't mean to hurt you or maybe he didn't even kick you. You say that, but he's not here to defend himself. In other words, he was not willing to believe that we were telling the truth. When it was over we went out to the parking lot, it was raining, and we just stood there hugging each other and crying. Man, it was hard.

The woman who testified the above commented that the men who listened to their grievances were surprised at the kinds of incidents they reported. This is what she said:

They were all twittery and nervous about the fact that we were going to be offended by pictures or jokes or something like that. When we talked about being afraid for our lives, having men rape us, having them hit or kick us, most of these things were literally criminal offenses--criminal assaults that actually we could have went to the police over.

No action was taken against any of the men that were reported, but the union did create an in-house sexual harassment policy.

Some men directly confront women with the fact that they don't like women on the job. "A couple of times a year, some guy will come to me and let me know that he doesn't think that women are adequate for this kind of work," one woman stated. Or men may express their disapproval in a less direct fashion. For example, a man might say "it's okay if women want to be in the trades if they can carry eighty pounds of weight around all day." The following story exemplifies how a male can attempt to covertly express his hostility:

On my last job, I was sitting alone with a male co-worker in the lunchroom before the day's shift began. We were talking and I told him about a conference that I had just attended that was about women in the trades. This guy asked me if I knew any woman who wanted to be plumbers. I said that 'yes, I knew one young woman that wanted to be a pipefitter.' He said, 'that it would be okay with him if she could lift a 12-ton chain fall on her shoulder. Well, in thirteen years, I have never seen anyone, male or female, use anything larger than a 5-ton chain fall. The message was clear to me that he did not feel that women belonged in the trades.

Later on that day, for no apparent reason, this woman was physically attacked by the man to whom she had spoken with in the lunchroom. He hit her in the ribs with his elbow. "He acted as if he accidentally stumbled into me," she said, "but he hit me hard and it hurt for a good twenty minutes."

The women in the group offered a few reasons why they thought men were hostile toward women on the job. "Sometimes, it's because of their personal life," one woman said. "If they're going through a divorce, all of sudden

they seem to hate women or if there is a real stressor in their marriage, they'll start harassing women more."

One participant noted that men have difficulty accepting women outside the domestic sphere. She stated:

I think that men think of women as less than human. They can only think of us as sex objects. I had a man tell me once that women were only good for two things; you just put them on a pulley between the bedroom and the kitchen. Can you imagine that? I can't imagine thinking something like that much less say something like that to another person.

Another woman suggested that men are afraid of women pulling wages down or worried that women are going to make them look bad by doing a better job. Some men who are resistant to women's entry into the workplace just hate women, one woman suggested.

Women, it seems, are not the only targets of male hostility. As one woman stated, "men treat each other really bad; especially the apprentices." All the women agreed that apprentices have to take a certain amount of verbal abuse. One woman commented:

When you're an apprentice, you are the lowest of the low and I think that women coming into the trades need to understand the role of the apprentice so they understand that they're not being treated badly just because they are women.

The women expressed their disapproval of maltreatment of apprentices. One of the women said that she has tried not to relate to apprentices in such a manner. Another woman said, "I have seen men treated badly as apprentices and turn around and treat their apprentices in the same

exact way." Another woman interjected, "That's one of the big differences between men and women. Women don't abuse the people below them." Another woman disagreed: "Some women in positions of power learn very well from their male counterparts." In response, another woman said, "Yes, some women can be just as mean as men."

The group stated that some men exhibit paternalistic attitudes towards women on the job. Three of the four interviewee's said they have worked with supervisors who assigned women lighter work-loads and male co-workers who insisted on carrying heavy objects or performing the more sophisticated tasks. But, only one women felt that paternalism on the part of male co-workers and supervisors was problematic. Two of the women stated that in their work history encounters with paternalistic males were rare. One woman who works in a field where each person has a highly specific task said that men couldn't help her even if they wanted to.

One woman believes that her apprenticeship training was hampered by the actions of paternalistic males. She stated:

When I was an apprentice, the guys, most of them were older and kind of protective. They didn't think of it as paternalism, they were just being protective. But the result is just the same and that is I didn't get the knowledge and I didn't get the information I needed and I didn't get to do what the other young men were doing. I just want to say that I don't like working with somebody who doesn't want me to do the job and doesn't want me to be there. And there are those kind of people. And I don't like it when they are way too fatherly and they don't let me do the job

because they don't think I ought to be doing this kind of work.

She added that she has worked on many construction jobs where she was "shuffled off to do the paperwork." Now that she has reached journeyman status men treat her more as an equal, but she rarely gets to do the most challenging kinds of tasks. In the trades, the group reported, it is important to always increase your skill level and successfully accomplish the most sophisticated tasks because as a building project progresses, the most skilled workers are kept on the job until the project is completed.

Not all men are resistant to women in the blue-collar trades. Some men are genuinely supportive as the following stories illustrate:

This last foreman I had was really magnificent. Sally and I went on the job together and the first thing he did was pair us up. We had been teamed up together one time over 10 years ago and we were separated because the employers said that women could not be paired together because of discrimination and we could sue them if they put us together instead of integrating us into the workforce. It was great because we really like working together. Then he proceeded to tell us that he had just won a terrific battle for his daughter with sports in high school and he had taken it to the max.... It was quite wonderful to know right off the bat how supportive he was of women and their struggle.

There are some wonderful male mentors. I had a guy that gave me all the information, support and reassurance I needed and I got his job when he left. There are some men out there that really like women and they seek you out to talk to you.

I was really blessed because a lot of the journeyman I worked with when I was coming through my program let me take the lead. They would sit

back and say, 'this is what we are going to do today and I'm going to be the apprentice and you are going to be the journeyman.' If I started to screw up, they would say, 'Well, what about this?' They just guided me and I was able to do everything. Now I do the same thing. When I have someone with less experience, I tell them, 'You do it, I'm just going to stand back and watch.'

Even though the participants are subjected to varying degrees of male resistance, nonverbal hostility, verbal denigration and even physical assaults, they do work with individual men whom they respect, admire and share a sense of comradarie as the following excerpt illustrates:

There is a crowd of men in particular that I like very much. They work in the industrial jobs and I am always glad to see them. I like the industrial jobs, rather than the commercial or maintenance jobs because that type of fellow is there. They are more open and they are more liberal. They call themselves outlaws. Society doesn't like them. Some of them are bikers; some of them are alcoholics, but they are perfectionists in their work, they do a really good job. They can do it in New York. They can do it 200 feet below the ground and they can do it 200 feet in the air. They do good work and they accept me. I'll tell you, there's something that happens when you have been up 23 hours with the same people and the temperature is 110 degrees. There's just some sort of comradarie--for me, that I made it and you made it-- that somehow makes us amalgamated. It's a different experience.

In summary, gender bias and verbal hostility toward women by males in the blue-collar trades is a common phenomenon in the experiences of the women in this group. When men are in a group, they tend to be more verbally aggressive than when they are interacting with a woman alone. Women in the group have been the brunt of verbal abuse from male co-workers, supervisors and union officials.

Male journeymen may be verbally abusive to their male and female apprentices alike. Only one woman reported that paternalism on the job was problematic. Each woman reported positive experiences with supportive male co-workers and supervisors and expressed the wish that more men could be accepting and helpful to women in the trades.

WATCHING YOUR P'S & Q'S

Women may or may not be spoken to by men on the job, but they are definitely watched closely by male co-workers and supervisors. The group strongly agreed that women and their work were constantly scrutinized. One woman reported that she would find male co-workers counting her work production and her boss would count the times another woman went to the bathroom. All the women shared the perception that many men on the job are watching and waiting for women to make mistakes. Some men are supportive and some men are impressed by the work women do but, they are outnumbered by the men who don't want women on the job and are hoping that the women fail. As one woman commented, "the guys gave this woman welder a job they knew she couldn't handle, and she proved them right."

"When a woman doesn't do the job," one of the participants commented, "it's really noticeable and when a man is farting around, he's just a man farting around. If a woman works her full eight hours she's trying to make the

men look bad, if she only works seven and a half, she's not doing her job." According to another woman in the group, "It's a lose-lose situation."

Women, the group members noted, have to constantly be on guard and monitor their own behavior. If a woman shows anger, she is accused of behaving irrationally and "taking things too personally." Or as one woman said, "if a man gets mad, he's just mad. If a woman gets mad, she's irrational." "One of my biggest gripes," one woman said, "is that when I react in a certain way, they say, she takes things too personally or it must be her time of the month." The researcher asked: what does taking it personally mean?

Oh, it means, you're too thin-skinned, that's how I'm taking it--you have to toughen up. Men don't deal with the problem--they start making attacks. If you have a disagreement about something and instead of discussing a view, he turns around and attacks you and then tells you that you are taking things too personally.

It is important, one woman suggested, for women to "pick their fights," in order to avoid being labelled a complainer. If a woman does file a formal complaint against a male co-worker or supervisor, especially for harassment, the woman may be ostracized, given the worst jobs and/or have to work in a climate of hostility. One of the members of the group who had charged a co-worker with sexual harassment said that nothing on the job has been the same since word got out that she filed a suit against somebody. She stated:

On the day that everyone found out that I filed a suit, I had to walk through a bunch of guys and if looks could kill, I would have been dead many times over. When I left the mill I was really afraid for my safety. I've been labelled as a trouble-maker and guys that used to be okay won't talk to me now.

In some instances men will support a female co-worker. One woman reported that when she had been the target of harassment from her supervisor, ten male co-workers wrote letters of support to the union.

Workers in the trades are generally prohibited from conversing on the job unless they are discussing task-related topics. According to the group members, when women talk on the job, it is more noticed by supervisors. One woman related a story about her supervisor chastising her for talking on the job. "I was standing with my crew partner and some of the guys," she said, and "he comes up and starts giving me flak about talking on the job. I said to him, 'I'm standing here with my crew partner, ain't I.' He (the supervisor) doesn't say a thing to him or any of the guys about standing around talking. He just picks me out of the whole group." "I have experienced that also," another woman interjected and she went on to say:

We stand out so much on the job, everybody's always watching us. If two guys are standing talking to each other, it's not that big of a deal. But, if women are standing talking to each other, a half a dozen white hats are looking at you and a half a dozen of your own guys are staring at you.

Talking with another co-worker does not always invite the scrutiny of others. When women or men have reached a

certain status they have talking privileges not given to their subordinates. One women said to another woman in the group:

Excuse me, remember when we did that job at the beach and you were a foreman and I was a foreman. We were standing out there talking in front of God and everybody. And there were three other black foremen down there and a shop steward. We stood up on the module one day: John, Keith and myself. We stood there and all of a sudden we looked at each other and one of us said, 'Do you believe that we are standing here talking and we're not worried about who's looking at us?' There were two stripes and a steward and they could not touch us.

The two women continued to discuss the one job that they had worked on together. One of them recalled how they had used the bathroom as their communication center:

Oh yeah, we would have pee breaks and we scheduled them on the half-hour so if we went to the bathroom, we knew that another woman might be there. We would leave each other notes on the walls or we would leave announcements like 'woman's conference at 2:30.' So at 2:30 all the women would tell their foremen, I've got to go right now.

The women feminized their private space with the materials they hand on hand. They set up a cable spool in the bathroom, covered it with a tablecloth, picked fresh flowers and had their lunches in the bathroom. One of the women shared this anecdote:

Remember when we had the "asshole of the week award?" We would post it on the bathroom wall and then all the women would tell the guy, I heard you won the "asshole of the week award." We were trying to make a point but it only worked for a few weeks because the guys were hoping to get the award. They got so much attention. It was like a badge.

To summarize, the participants stated that women and the work they do are subject to closer scrutiny than their male counterparts. Men who would prefer that women not be on job tend to be critical of women's work performance and may look for ways to discredit them in an effort to prove that indeed, women do not belong in their domain. As one woman stated, "We just better watch our P's & Q's if we want to make it on the job with men."

JUST ONE OF THE HAZARDS OF THE TRADE

All of the women in this study group reported being sexually harassed by males on the job. As one women put it: "It's just one of the hazards of the trade." They said that they have encountered sexual harassment in the forms of "men coming on to them," "making lewd comments," "copping a feel," or "trying to look down their overalls." One incident of rape was reported. Sexual harassment is not limited to male co-workers. Male supervisors and union officials may engage in sexual harassment. One of the participants is currently involved in a class-action harassment suit against her employer and her union. One woman shared this story about a man who propositioned her:

When I was an apprentice, I was the first woman in my trade so my picture was in our locals' newsletter. For some reason, I didn't have a copy so after a meeting one night I asked the President of our local if he had any extra copies. He said yes, he did have a copy and he kept it in the dresser drawer in his bedroom. I thought--what a weird place to keep it. And then he told me that

If I wanted a copy to come over to his bedroom and get it. And this is the President of my whole union.

The women shared some of their thoughts on sexual harassment. One woman said that her union refused to have a sexual harassment training program because they said 'it was a personal issue' and not a work issue. "Sexual harassment isn't a personal issue," she added, "it's a people issue. It's a power issue and it's anti-union." "Yes, it really is" a second woman agreed, "and as a matter of fact we take an oath when we join the union to promote each other's welfare in every way, shape and form."

The whole group agreed that some men on the job think of women as less than human. The group discussed one aspect of male behavior that was denigrating to woman--bragging about sexual exploits to other men. One woman suggested that it is a form of male bonding and she made this comment:

I think that it is really sad that one of the ways that men bond is by talking about their sexual exploits with other men. Because it's another form of dehumanizing women. I think that a lot of those men that have hatred toward women on the job don't really see women as human beings. I don't think a rapist sees a woman as a human being and I don't think men on the job see women as human beings. I think they see women as sex objects. It really disgusts them to see women in any other way. I will be glad when that kind of bonding no longer exists.

The group shared their thoughts on the best action for a woman to take when she is being sexually harassed. It is imperative that the man be told that you do not appreciate or like his behavior, one woman stated. Another woman said

that women need to report the man to a supervisor and document the incident in a journal. One woman suggested that it is wise to follow up the chain of command if the woman does not receive a satisfactory response from the supervisor. One woman said that every situation is different. She said:

I think it's very important that I go with my instinct. If I think that I can tell the guy and he will respond, then I do that. If I don't think I'm safe and I want to take it to someone else, than I do that. If I know that the guy is going to be off the job tomorrow and he's going to be gone forever or for a long time than I just write it in my diary. It really depends on the situation.

It is important for women to know their legal rights, one woman stated. In their discussions, the women concurred that there is no one correct way for a woman to respond to sexual harassment as each situation is unique. Sometimes, a man will quit harassing a woman if she threatens to go to a supervisor and sometimes this may not be true. Some supervisors are more willing to take action than others. One woman said that she tells men, "don't touch my body if you want to keep your hand." A response that is effective in one situation may not work in another.

WOMEN IN OVERALLS: SELF-PERCEPTIONS

This segment of the report is devoted to a discussion on the self-perceptions of the four subjects. In particular, the women discussed what work experiences were

satisfying. They shared their thoughts how working in the trades has affected their self-image and the relative importance of interactions with men on the job.

Carrie works in a supervisory capacity. She is satisfied with her job and her position in the company. She says that she is fortunate to get paid a decent wage for doing work that she truly enjoys. She has worked for over 13 years as a leadperson and even though her supervisor told her that she would never be promoted, she is quite satisfied. "I don't want to move up in the hierarchy," she said.

She was a shop steward for many years and is highly active in her union. As a result, many people rely on her for information on work-related issues. She commented that it is satisfying to help other people and "it is quite complimentary when people ask you for advice."

She shared some insights garnered from her involvement in union activities:

I learned that I could not perform miracles. I came to realize that you cannot fix things alone and have discovered the limits of how far I can go alone.... I am a fighter and I have won battles but, winning isn't everything. Winning doesn't help the hurt that you feel from the battle.

When asked about her relationship with men on the job, she said, "I've had tremendous support from a lot of the men for my union stuff.... Some men respect my contributions, and some are awfully critical. People are just people and women are not perfect," she added.... If you stand up for

what you believe in, I think you can get respect from men. Everybody knows that I'm big on the union, so they come to me for information." She also said that she has earned the respect of co-workers because when engaged in an argument, she argues for the issue and does not attack the person.

As a method of communicating her thoughts about work situations and policies, Carrie posts her ideas on the bulletin board. She is, in her words, "a namer of truths." She stated: "Speaking the truth is so important to me. It's one of my highest values, to speak the truth and not let all these lies continue to go on." She argued for the merits of verbal confrontation:

As soon as you react to something, you can let it go, the less damage you do to yourself and the other person. I think it makes for a very healthy person to say: quit picking on me, I don't want you to do that, you have to stop or whatever it is you want to say. These kind of simple statements really do work sometimes.

Overall, Carrie maintains a positive self-image and takes great pride in the quality of work she produces. She stated that she has earned the respect of many people in her shop because of her willingness to fight for the rights of her co-workers and her ability to solve problems fairly.

Elaine has worked the last six years for one company. She said that women at her job are harassed by many male co-workers, supervisors and union officials. As a result she started a women's support group and has joined with several

other women in a class-action legal suit against her company and the union.

Shortly after filing the suit, she took a leave of absence, she said, because she was concerned for her physical and emotional welfare. She did not receive support from any of the men at her job. Her shop steward said that he would like to support her, but he told her that "they would hang him out to dry." Her husband supported her decision to file a suit, but since he works for the same company, he also has received flak from fellow co-workers. Although Elaine's husband is supportive, he is conflicted and afraid of retaliation.

The interviewer asked her to describe her relations with men before she filed the law suit. Elaine said that she has always had to contend with hostile men and she was relieved to be transferred to a department where she works alone most of the time. She says that "some men will try and make you look bad." She revealed two tactics that men might use in order to sabotage a woman's performance:

If a woman is new in an area, the men will tell her things that they know will get her into trouble. They will tell you that if you're not busy, you can go take a break and read the paper, knowing full-well that reading is not allowed. Or if they know a supervisor is coming by at a certain time they will tell you to take a break, so the supervisor will catch you not working.

Elaine said that encounters with hostile men have affected her sense of self-worth. She said that she has to

work to maintain a positive self-image. She describes what she does to cope with her work environment:

I keep reaffirming myself. I tell myself positive things. When men work together, they don't compliment each other. If I see a guy's weld and it's not good, I don't say anything. If it is good, I say 'good looking weld' or something like that. Or if I am working with a partner and we do a good job, I'll say something like, 'boy do we do good work.' If men have anything to say about your work it's usually negative. They are always joking, but in a negative, hurtful manner. They don't do it to me as harshly as they do to each to each other but they do it. They never say anything good about my work, but if I screw up they all know about it. So, I just remind myself that I'm doing a good job.

Elaine thinks of herself as a good worker and she expressed her desire to have men on the job acknowledge her contributions. She said: "I'd like to be thought of as a co-worker and treated with respect and I would like to be accepted for the work I really do." Elaine says that she is not a competitive person although, "I do challenge myself." She is proud of the work she does and she is determined to fight for her right to work in the trade that she has mastered. She had this to say about her job:

I'll tell you, I'm stubborn I suppose and they might run me off anyway. My doctor tells me not to go back to work. My husband doesn't want me to go back, even my daughters don't want me to go back. But I tell them, 'why did I do all this-- just to throw it away?' What good is it going to do to let these men know that they have succeeded? I have done nothing wrong and I'm not letting them chase me off. I'm gonna go back there. And I know it's gonna be hard. I have a good work record and I'm not gonna let them chase me off.

Betty was the first woman in the state of Oregon to earn a journeyman's license in her craft. She has worked on many jobs as the lone woman with up to 300 male co-workers. In an effort to improve working conditions for women in the trades she co-founded a local chapter of a national tradeswomen's organization.

Throughout her long career in the trades, Betty has had numerous encounters with "sexist men." She has been sexually assaulted, bitten, kicked and verbally attacked. She states that she is currently looking for a counselor who specializes in on-the-job sexual harassment in order to better cope with her feelings of frustration and anger. She said that she is, "really tired of dealing with sexist men and sometimes I feel like I just cannot endure another job where I'm going to have to put up with their crap."

The interviewer asked her if she thought that she was assertive enough with men on the job. She replied:

I'm not always assertive enough. When I get shuffled off to do the paperwork jobs or when guys pull tools out of my hands, sometimes I just let them. But I do confront them a lot more now than I did when I was younger. I will not tolerate certain behavior anymore and I will not let men say things to me that I do not like. I will not.

Betty said that she is adversely affected by interpersonal relations with men. She stated that she would like to be less sensitive and more able to "just do the job and go home. But the negative part affects me, the prejudice, the bias--that part of it does affect me." She said:

I like to be accepted where I am. If I know that there's even one or two hostile men that shun me on the job, it makes it harder for me to go back to work the next day. But it does not keep me from going.

Even though she may become emotionally upset from her interactions with men, Betty says that her sense of self-worth is more directly related to the quality of work she produces. "I like stepping back and taking a look at a good job I've done or having someone tell me they think I've done a good job." She added:

I like to do things right. I want to get it right the first time. I don't like to tear apart my own work or spend extra time on a job. I want to do it, do it right and get on with it.

The interviewer probed for further incidents of positive job experiences. She responded:

I'll tell you when I really felt good and that is the first time I made it through the first layoff and I got to stay on the job. Boy did that feel great.... I feel a little embarrassed. I've had two situations where they gave awards and usually in a union job they don't give awards. Actually one was an award and the other one was a bonus and I really enjoyed getting them.

Throughout the interviews, Betty vocalized her belief in the value of belonging to a union. At one point she said:

I think that a lot of women are active in the union and one reason I think it is true is because most of us had jobs where there was not a union and even though there's guys out there that give me a hard time, and the weather's bad--it's too hot--it's too cold, or it's dirty, it's noisy, it stinks or whatever it is. I still get the same pay as the guy next to me. I don't have to negotiate my contract, somebody does it for me. The kind of equality I experience on the job is

unparalleled of any job that I've ever had and that's because of the union and I'm very grateful to be a part of that.

Betty believes that women have to watch out for each other. This is one way she helps other women survive on the job:

If I know who is the supervisor, I try to let the other women know. It's very important to know who the power people are because they can just walk into a situation and see you standing there and you could be out the door that day. If you at least know who's there you are in better shape.

Of all the women in this study, Betty has worked the longest in the trades. She has helped pave the way for other women in her craft. She said that if there was one thing that she could change on the job it would be male prejudice and bias.

Debra and her husband both work in the same craft. She said that men were more accepting of her and that "coming through" the apprenticeship program was smoother for her than for other women. "I am fortunate," she said, "that my husband and I work in the same trade because everybody knows we're married and so they are more accepting of me." She also added that she worked on the road with her husband for several years and she developed a reputation for withstanding very difficult working conditions. She said:

When I got back from working the subways in New York, I would go on job sites and meet people and they would say, 'oh, you are Debra, we heard about you.' People in the trades know how hard it is to work on the road, so if someone has worked for long periods of time on the road, that person commands a certain amount of respect.

Debra says that she takes pride in her work and she enjoys teaching those with less experience. She is satisfied with her level of assertiveness. In fact, she said that if a co-worker is giving her "a hard time," she tells him: "meet me out in the parking lot and I'll wear out your ass." "Some men leave me alone," she says, "because they are intimidated by my stature." Other men try to intimidate her. She told us this story about a time when a man half her size was hassling her:

There was this group of us carrying a cable and each foot of cable weighs about 70 pounds. This scrawny little guy was walking next to me saying something nasty. I was carrying the cable up over my head. I said to him, 'here you carry this and I let it drop.' He almost collapsed from the weight and he never said another word to me.

Because Debra is a woman of color she stands out "like a sore thumb," she says. "I know that there are guys out there that don't like me and they would not mind if I fell into a hot wire."

"Sometimes I feel like an imposter, sometimes I don't feel like I am as competent as I should be," she revealed. "Like when I get up in the morning and I'm just Debra and then I put on my hard hat and I'm supposed to turn into some kind of superwoman," she exclaimed. The researcher asked her if she always had doubts about her competency. She replied:

No, but I want to do something right the first time. I know that I carry the struggles of a lot of women and a lot of Black women on my shoulders.

Whenever I go on a project, if I do something haphazard, sloppy or messy, it reflects on the whole race of women and black folk.

The researcher asked her how women can help each other in the trades? She said that she tells women that are new in the trades to listen to her but sometimes they don't and the women come back to her and say, 'why didn't you tell us it was going to be like this?' Debra said:

They think it's not going to happen to them and they are going to get through without any problems. I tell them, 'it will happen to you, if not today, then tomorrow or maybe the next day. But, you will have your day.' Women must know they are going to have problems in the trades. If they are prepared, they might be able to handle it better. I also make a point of telling them all the things they are going to need on the job. I help them with survival skills.

The interviewer asked her to elaborate on what special kinds of things a woman might need on the job. She said:

For example, they don't have tampons in the restrooms. Most of the time there isn't any soap and sometimes there is no running water. So you need to bring a backpack or something and fill it with all the personal items you are going to need.

When questioned on what she would like to change most on the job, she replied: "I would like to be a valued person on the team and know that my input, my ideas, makes a difference. I don't want to be invisible. I'm tired of being invisible and being unheard."

STRATEGIES and ADVICE

After working many years in a predominately male environment, the women in this study have tried numerous

strategies for minimizing antagonistic relations with men in an effort to become more accepted on the job. The ways in which the participants responded to various problems they encountered is the focus of this section. The following suggestions were extracted from the recorded data and from one woman's written response. It is noteworthy to mention that the members of the group qualified their suggestions, stating that all women are unique and will therefore have different experiences on the job. Group members did not always agree on tactics and the researcher has attempted to incorporate all the suggestions and advice that was discussed during the interviews.

Nonverbal Communication

The participants agreed that it is important for women to present themselves as workers, thereby dressing appropriately for the job. It is to a woman's advantage to minimize her femininity and sexual attractiveness. This can be accomplished by eliminating the use of lipstick, nail polish, heavy face make-up, heavy perfume and seductive clothing. One woman stated that, "I did not wear lipstick until I became a journeyman and I still do not wear nail-polish." Clothing should be appropriate for the job. See-through shirts, tight clothing and otherwise revealing clothes will most likely elicit comments from males on the job. One woman suggested, "Don't give men a reason to make you a sexual target." The women concurred that some men

think of women as sex objects and not as co-workers so if a woman wants to be related to as co-worker than she must dress the part.

It is suggested that women wear a bra on the job even if she normally would not wear one in order to minimize unwanted comments, stares and sexual propositions. "I have burns on my chest from sparks lodging underneath my bra, so I think they are a safety hazard, but I wear one anyway," one woman told us.

Intrapersonal Communication

One of the women said that she uses positive self-affirmations to help her maintain her mental health. She reminds herself that she is a worthy person. She tells herself that she is a good worker and after successfully completing a job she tells herself that she has done a good job. If men criticize her and she thinks that they are not accurate she tries not to internalize their criticism.

Another woman suggested that: "You should always forgive yourself. Every time you cry or don't react the way you would like to or whatever, know that the experience will make you more powerful the next time." A couple of the women write about their experiences in their diaries. This is useful, they say, for a number of reasons. First, writing can be therapeutic. Writing can also help a person sort out their feelings about a situation. Finally, if a

woman files a harassment grievance, journal records can be used as supportive documentation.

Communication With Men

It is important for a woman to assert herself and let men know when their words or deeds are not acceptable. One woman suggests that it is better for a woman to confront a man when a problem arises rather than repressing her feelings. The use of good judgement, however, is warranted. A woman must learn to "pick and weigh her fights," one woman commented.

The group agreed that it is usually better for a woman to initially confront a man when he is alone because he may be more willing to listen and less likely to become defensive. One woman noted that a woman should speak to a man about a problem in a one-on-one situation only if she feels safe. If not, then it is advisable for a woman to be accompanied by another co-worker, shop steward or supervisor.

One of the women said that short, simple declarative statements such as "I don't like being addressed that way" may be effective in situations where a woman thinks that a man is harassing her. Finally, it may be prudent to minimize the use of profanity in the company of males on the job.

Communication With Other Women

Communicating with other women and developing friendships with other women is a useful strategy for functioning within a predominately male environment. The participants offered a few suggestions on ways women can increase their interactions with other women. First, women's support groups can provide the opportunity to share ideas, complaints and strategies as well as the chance to socialize with other women. One woman said that "My greatest source of strength comes from my support group."

Also, women's trade groups sponsor workshops, conferences and mentoring programs designed to advance women's careers in the trades. One woman suggested carpooling as a means of getting to know women co-workers.

Communicating with other women, in the participants view, can help individual women reduce feelings of frustration and isolation that may occur from working in a male environment. Furthermore, communication between women may result in solutions to other problems that women have on the job that are not related to interactions between women and men.

Self-disclosure

Three of the four group's members said that will share varying degrees of self-disclosure with a male if they trust him. One woman stated that she rarely engages in any personal conversation and she lets her fellow co-workers

know that she does not discuss her personal life. She said that she is better served on the job by maintaining distance from male co-workers. One of the women said that she will not answer personal questions that she thinks are inappropriate. Another woman stated that she has developed male friendships and she will disclose personal information to them because she trusts her male friends not to use the information against her. All the women agreed that it is unwise to answer personal questions about female co-workers.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This section is devoted to the researcher's thoughts on the participants of the study and their responses to the five central topics that were explored during the interviews. The topics were: perceived male/female communicative differences, perceived problems, responses to problems, self-esteem and coping strategies.

It is noteworthy that the experiences reported by the participants echo the experiences of numerous other tradeswomen whose life-stories have been chronicled by qualitative researchers and are consistent with the findings of quantitative studies on women in nontraditional jobs.

The first topic explored by the group was male/female differences in communication. One of the most salient differences was refusal on the part of some men to listen to or speak to women. When a man speaks only to the man in situations where both sexes are present, women may justifiably think that they are being treated unequally. The women reported that when men ignore them, they do not like it and they expressed frustration about "being seen but not heard." When a man only speaks to other men, he confirms the man and disconfirms the woman. This situation

is, at best, only tolerable and clearly undesirable from a woman's perspective. It may be true, however, that this is not a gender preferential difference.

This phenomena is most likely a function of a male's assertion of power. Male's exclusion of women from conversation could be categorized as a tactic utilized to assert status and domination. If this is true, than any person, male or female could use this tactic. It may be true that in various work and social contexts men do direct more of their conversation toward other men, but again this may be a function of maintaining status and power within a hierarchical structure. Kanter (1982) stated that "structural position can account for what at first glance appear to be sex differences and perhaps even explain more of the variance in the behavior of men and women" (p. 235).

It may be the case that the use of exclusionary communication is a tactic that men use in some situations and not in others. Or perhaps, in some cases, men are not asserting their privilege status on the job, maybe they are just uncomfortable talking to women. One of the women in the study commented that in most cases men's behavior toward women is unconscious in that they do not intentionally set out to give women a hard time. Nor do men conspire together to keep women out of the trades. They are just reacting to women invading their territory.

One of the most significant problems reported by the group is male hostility and resentment toward women on the job. It was surprising to discover that women are least accepted by the trade group to which they belong. One might speculate that over time, bonds would develop between the male and female members within a trade or at the very least, the men would become more accepting.

Women's responses to problematic interactions with male co-workers vary. Sometimes women cry. Sometimes they are angry. The women said they try not to cry in front of men on the job. One woman stated that sometimes the men can tell that she has been crying and occasionally a man will say something like "don't let things get you down" to comfort her. Sometimes women experience depression and fatigue from their battles at work. The relationship between men and women co-workers seems to be distinctly adversarial. One woman remarked that men and women are supposed to be working together as a team, but they are often at odds with each other. As a result, much time and energy is wasted.

It was found that the women in this group enjoyed a relatively high amount of job satisfaction. They reported that they take pride in their work and derive a sense of satisfaction from knowing that they have earned journeyman status. The researcher questioned them about the title of journeyman.

The group was divided on whether or not women should be addressed as journeymen. One woman said that she is a "journeyperson" and another woman said she was offended when she received her graduation diploma because even though her name was listed on top of the form, the text read, "he has reached the status of journeyman." Two of the women said that they did not mind the title. In fact, they both agreed that the title has nothing to do with a persons's sex. One woman commented: "The title of journeyman means that you have reached a master status in your craft and I want to be called a journeyman." Another woman said, "Actually, men have a harder time with the title than women do."

In praise of the women in this study, the researcher developed a great level of respect for the strength, creativity and resourcefulness of the group members. They are remarkably resilient to adversity and very self-reliant. They help themselves through self-affirmation and writing in their journals and they support other women in the trades. The small victories they reveled in like the Black woman's story about earning the freedom to talk on-the-job with other Black workers undoubtedly helps them survive long hours, extreme climates, frequent lay-offs, hazardous working conditions and hostile co-workers.

It was clear that their self-esteem is intrinsically related to their jobs. They enjoy the fact that they are in the top earnings category of all blue-collar workers and

they are proud of the fact that they worked many years to arrive at their level of craftsmanship. They are challenged by the work they do and the women are constantly learning new job skills.

Listening to the taped sessions, the researcher made several observations about the women and the way they related to one another. They worked together as conversationalists. They listened well. They were confirming of each other in all their remarks. If they disagreed with each other, they apologized for breaking in too soon. All of the participants did exhibit communicative habits that have been categorized by researchers as "women's speech" such as false starts, insertions of uhm's and prefatory qualifiers. The women were polite, supportive and affective in their communication. They referred to how they "felt" about things quite often. They were empathic in their remarks. They made statements such as, "I heard that," "Yes, I know what you mean," "Isn't that the truth," and other responses that indicate support and confirmation of the other speaker.

The women did not make men out to be villains. In fact, most of the time, statements made about men's behavior was tempered with feminine support and understanding. This group of blue-collar women would like men to accept the fact that they have the right to work alongside them and they

would like men to respect them for the work they do. They want to work with men, not against them.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this thesis is to gather personal accounts from women in the trades with the intention of adding to the existing data base on the experiences of blue-collar women. To this extent, the study was successful. There are several factors, however that should be noted by other researchers interested in conducting a similar qualitative study.

First, the sample of four women was quite small. In fact, one of the participants commented that she wished that more women could have been involved. A higher number of subjects would most likely yield a greater diversity in responses.

Second, there was not enough time to address all the questions on the interview schedule adequately. For this reason, the researcher recommends limiting the number of topics to a more reasonable number in order to more fully explore each area.

Third, two interviewing techniques--probing and paraphrasing--should have been used more often as a method for clarifying subjects' responses. After listening to the taped interview sessions, the researcher noted several occasions when the subjects could have been queried for

further details. This insufficiency was partially corrected by follow-up phone interviews.

Fourth, it was difficult at times to keep the subjects talking about the topics listed on the interview schedule. Conversations tended to stray and sometimes it seemed wise not to interrupt.

Finally, the subjects were recruited from a local tradeswomen's organization. Although it was not intentional, all the respondents are active in labor organizations and demonstrated a high degree of expertise in labor problems. For this reason they may not be a representative sample of women in the trades.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In 1973, Seifer called for research on women in nontraditional skilled trades. Over the past 20 years few studies have been conducted on behalf of this sector of blue-collar women. Grossman and Chester (1990) state, that "research is needed that looks for a deeper understanding of women workers' experiences" (p. 5). What is needed, Grossman and Chester suggest, is useable research to provide the basis for creating action agendas that will help women in nontraditional jobs.

Qualitative research that describes women's experiences can provide a data base from which hypothesis can be formulated and tested in empirical studies. Research is

necessary to determine the kinds of problems that women in the blue-collar trades encounter, their responses to working in nontraditional jobs and the role that males play in either supporting or discouraging women.

This thesis offers a few examples of strategies that women use to function in a predominately male environment. Since the sample was small--only four women were interviewed--a similar project conducted on a larger scale might provide additional information on women's experiences in the trades.

Researchers report that sex discrimination and sexual harassment is still a very real problem for women in the blue-collar work sector. Padavic and Reskin (1990) found that one in five women plantworkers were harassed by male co-workers. In O'Farrell and Harlan's (1982) study of craftworkers and clerks, thirty percent of the respondents reported perceived male co-worker harassment and eighteen percent of the subjects reported that men strongly disapproved of their presence. Schroedel (1988) reported that eighty-eight percent of the women in her sample said they were verbally harassed by males on the job and twenty-nine percent claimed they were the victims of unwanted physical contact such as pinching or fondling. The inconsistencies in the numbers of women who report incidences of harassment by males raises several questions.

First, are women more accepted by men in particular crafts? Would carpenters, for example, be more accepting of women than construction workers? One of the interviewees in this study said that she was most accepted by the men in hard-core industrial jobs such as shipyard workers.

Second, is there a relationship between the type of work setting and male resistance to female co-workers? Another one of the participants in this study has worked in a small shop for seventeen years. She reported the least amount of harassment of all the women in the group. It may be true that people who work in smaller, more intimate settings tend to be more accommodating. Conversely, one of the group members who works in a large lumbermill reported severe and frequent harassment. She said that "mills are the worst." In a larger, less intimate environment, harassment may be more commonplace.

Third, it is interesting to note that the Padavic and Reskin (1990) figure of twenty percent harassment of female workers by male co-workers is the lowest figure of all studies located by the researcher. Their study sample was comprised of women who were working during a strike. This figure may be low because of the women's temporary status in the plant. The two women in this focus group who have worked for extensive periods of time at different locations around the country stated that they received better

treatment from male co-workers because their co-workers knew that they would be on the job for a limited time period.

It is clear that there are many variables that may affect women's experiences in nontraditional jobs. A woman's length of employment, her personality and the ratio of women to men are factors that may have an impact on a woman's on-the-job experiences. One of the group's members said that in her experience, minority males tend to be more supportive toward women.

O'Farrell and Harlan (1990) state that "research is needed to explore the reasons and motivations behind men's reaction to women" (p. 262). Roby (1981) and Palmer and Lee (1990) also stress the importance of research on males and their attitudes toward women on the job. A study of men who are supportive of women on the job would provide a comparison of attitudes and could be used by unions and management to help change the attitudes of those men who are resistant to women's entry into nontraditional jobs.

Researchers have suggested that the role of management in women's acceptance deserves further examination. Schroedel (1990) states: "There needs to be a major effort to change attitudes and practices of men in direct authority over women blue-collar workers, since they set the tone for all workplace interactions" (p. 258).

Kanter (1977) and Seidman (1978) argue that it is critical for women to assume roles in union leadership.

Kanter states:

The labor union is a central focus of concern because each of the functions of the union-- collective bargaining, political action and worker education carry the potential for furthering the priorities of women workers" (1977, p. 216).

Currently, there are very few blue-collar women in union leadership positions. Research that seeks to find out why women are not represented in union leadership would be of value and programs that teach women how to assume leadership positions would be most beneficial.

Communication researchers interested in gender equity can contribute to the data base that is growing on women in the trades. Researchers, however, should be aware of the implications of research that focuses on individual solutions to problems that are structural in nature. Fox (1984) cautions against the development of strategies that emphasize alterations in attitudes and behaviors of individual women. She asserts that "a male bias has pervaded the methods, concepts and theories of social science" (p. 6). This has resulted in an individual approach to women's lower status in the labor force. A structural approach to women's depressed position in the labor force focuses on societal institutions. She points out that an individual approach encourages women to adapt to male structures. She states:

The message of the individual perspective translates into policies and programs to correct women's deficiencies and develop needed competencies. These programs range from self-help literature in decision making or communication, to assertiveness training workshops and seminars in career planning and improvement. These programs may help personal esteem and job skills. It is not clear that they have any impact on the organization of industry.

Fox's point is well taken. Women in the workplace are hampered by problems that require structural changes such as childcare, maternity leave, affirmative action programs, flex schedules and the like. This does not mean that increasing women's assertiveness and developing competencies are not useful. As individual women gain strength in these areas, they can work more effectively with others to instigate changes on a broader level.

Women in the trades have several problems specific to working in an all-male environment. The women in this study reported that working in the trades is difficult because everything that women need to do the job is oriented toward the male worker. Workclothes, gloves, boots, tools and table heights, for example, are all designed for the male worker. One woman said that she asked numerous supervisors to order gloves to fit a woman's hand. It took her one year to find a supervisor that would comply with her request. Problems like those just mentioned indicate that companies that hire women and do not provide for their special needs do not actually support women on the job.

In summary, women's entry into nontraditional jobs has been problematic. Usable action-oriented research is needed to help people in industry adapt to current changes in the labor-force. Research that offers recommendations for action on a micro-level may help individuals, but does not address the larger task of women's incorporation into male-dominated blue-collar occupations. Communication scholars are in a position to help change women's status in the trades by conducting studies on their behalf.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Appendix A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

I. Communication with co-workers and supervisors

Communicator style: differences and problems between the sexes.

Key words:

Dominant/Submissive, Friendly/Aloof, Relaxed/Nervous, Argumentative/Cooperative, Attentive/Poor Listening, Precise/Vague, Encouraging/Discouraging, Politeness/Rudeness/Profanity, Conversational Dominance (controlling topics, taking more floor time and interruptions).

Please consider the above terms when thinking about the following questions.

1. What differences, if any, have you observed in the ways that women and men communicate at work?
2. What differences, if any, have you noticed in the ways that men talk with each other compared to the ways that women talk with other women? Also, are there differences in the ways that men talk with each other compared to how they talk to women?
3. Do you perceive any differences in the effectiveness of males and females as communicators?
4. When you are assigned a particular task, have you noticed any difference in the way men and women tell you what needs to be accomplished?
5. To what extent, if any, do men/women exhibit patterns of conversational dominance?
6. When women and men have the opportunity to talk socially on the job, what kinds of topics are discussed?
7. Have you witnessed or experienced incidents of verbal sexual harassment on the job? If so, please describe them.
8. Have you experienced or witnessed instances of verbal hostility between men and women on the job? If so, please describe them.

9. In your opinion, are there problems on the job caused by differences in the ways that women and men communicate?
10. In the event that you have ever experienced a male expressing anger by yelling at you, how have you responded?
11. Do you find that the age of a male co-worker or supervisor is related to whether or not he is likely to be supportive of women on the job?
12. How do men treat new women on the job? What patterns, if any, develop over time between men and women who work together in the trades?

II. Self-perceptions

1. How do you feel about yourself as a worker in the trades?
2. If you were going to have an "ideal self" at work, what personal characteristics would you change?
3. Do you feel that you could be more assertive in your communication with male co-workers and supervisors? In what instances would you like to be more assertive?
4. What aspects of your job bring you the greatest amount of personal satisfaction?
5. What contributions do you feel that you bring to your job?
6. Do you think that men respect the contributions you make on the job? Please describe experiences that you have had with men where you felt positively evaluated on your performance. What experiences, if any, have you had which lowered your sense of self-worth?
7. Do you find that interactions with men affects how you feel about yourself? If so, please elaborate.
8. What experiences (positive and negative) on the job have been the most significant to you?

III. Strategies

1. What advice would you give to a woman who is new to the trades? What advice, if any, were you given by other tradeswomen when you entered the trades?

2. What do you think is the best response if a man is engaging in sexual harassment?
3. If males are resistant to women on the job, how can women help each other?
4. What do you think is the best plan of action for women to take when men on-the-job are hostile and determined to give women a hard time?
5. What are some of the most common stereotypes that people hold about women as trades-workers?
6. Are there female behavior patterns that seem to aggravate tensions between the sexes? If so, please elaborate.
7. If you could change the interpersonal relations between women and men on the job, what changes would you make?
8. What strategies, if any, have you developed in order to get along better with men on the job?
9. Considering the various problems that might exist between the sexes in your profession, what do you think are most important issues that need to be resolved?

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

Appendix B

Letter to Participants

Dear Participant,

Thank you for contributing to this research project. Your time, energy and thoughts are important and will add to a growing body of knowledge regarding women's communication experiences in the work setting.

The purpose of this study is to generate information from occupationally-atypical women about their communicative interactions in a work place which is predominately male (at least 75%). Specifically, the group will focus on the following four topics:

- (1) We will attempt to identify how men and women differ in the ways they communicate.
- (2) We will discuss how each woman feels about her communication with men and other women on the job.
- (3) We will discuss how each woman feels about her role as a woman in the trades.
- (4) We will explore strategies used to cope with the differences in style between men and women.

This study will consist of informal yet structured small group discussions (4 to 6 women). Each interview session will take approximately 3 to 4 hours unless the group chooses for a longer period of time. The group will meet once a week for a four-week period. The total interview time should amount to 12 to 15 hours. The sessions will be tape recorded for later use by the researcher. Your contribution will be absolutely confidential. All names will be withheld from discussion in the final thesis and no one but the researcher will listen to the tapes.

The questions on the next three pages encompass the central ideas for discussion. Please prepare by giving consideration to all the questions. If you have time before the interviews you may want to write down some of your thoughts. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to call me at my home number listed below.

I am looking forward to this project and hope that each participant will gain insight and satisfaction from the process of sharing experiences and reflections with other women who have faced the challenges of breaking new ground in the American workforce.

Best regards,

Jeri Sofka
231-6380

APPENDIX C

LETTER FROM PARTICIPANT

Appendix C

Letter from Participant

The advice I would give women new to the trades is to educate yourself on sexual harassment. Read books. Are you sure you want this added stress on the job site? Are you sure this is the career for you? I do like my career and am willing to fight the struggle to be treated as a co-worker.

Learn your union contract. Your union can be a big help with filing grievances against the company for not providing a harassment free atmosphere. If your union is also part of the problem, you have an even bigger problem. You might ask yourself those same questions again. Because if your union doesn't represent their female members that leaves them open for filing a complaint with the state.

When I was single, I made it a rule never to date the people I worked with. If the relationship ended in hard feelings, you would have a harder time. Plus, the relationship would be the talk of the work site. I try not to dress in a manner that might be considered inviting. I try also to conduct myself in the same manner. At this time the laws say your dress and speech can be brought into court and used against you.

I treat others with respect and want the same back. I treat others the way I want to be treated. If I slipped or realized that I had offended someone, I was never too proud

to apologize. I feel proud of what I have accomplished in my life and I take pride in the job I do at work.

The stronger you are the better you will be. If you decide to stand up for yourself, you will be known as a bitch. Oh well, it is better than being harassed. It may seem like a lose/lose situation, but women have just as much right to be on a job site as men. Do the best job you can, you are paving the way for other women to follow. So, what you do could affect other women.

The best response to give a man who is engaging in sexual harassment is to let him know you don't like it. How you do this depends on the kind of person you are. You can tell him to get fucked or you can walk away. You can get into trouble for using foul language if the man reports you to the company. I would tell the man in the presence of a shop steward or write him a letter and let the shop steward assist me.

The best way that I know for women to help each other is to start a support group at work or in your union. You can get help from a local women's resource center or local trades organizations and networks. There is more power in numbers and the company and the union will notice this power. You will also feel this power and support from your group. Our group chose to keep the identity of each member a secret.

Finally, decide what your boundries are and try to hold on to them. Educate yourself, read your contract, books on sexual harassment, join union women's groups, go to union meetings. Become active in your union; be a shop steward or hold a union office. Seek help from your union. If both the company and the union give you a deaf ear, you can file a complaint with the state Bureau of Labor, Civil Rights Division. Or you could file a class-action suit with the aid of an attorney. The more you educate yourself, the more ways you can find to deal with the situation.