SEX DIFFERENCES IN RHETORICAL VISIONS
OF COMMUNICATION:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COMPETING MODELS

by

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ABSTRACT

Through the examination of rhetorical visions of men's and women's communication, this study examined the efficacy of two competing explanations of sex differences in communication, the dual cultures perspective and the single culture perspective. Participants responded to one of five randomly distributed scenarios designed to yield rhetorical visions, as well as a 114 item questionnaire that included scales designed to measure communication locus of control, relationship locus of control, premarital anxiety and romantic relationship experience. No measurable sex differences in rhetorical visions were identified, lending support to the single culture view. Another significant finding indicated that participants with security issues about relationships also reported having anxiety regarding relationship separation, trust, and individuality. Implications of these findings indicate that men and women have more similarities than differences in terms of communication beliefs and attributes.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The topic of sex differences in communication has become a popular choice of study for researchers in recent decades. A host of variables in this line of research has been examined, including: differences between men and women in self-disclosure, empathy, aggression, persuasability, verbal and nonverbal communication styles, conflict, and others. Results of many studies have shown that, indeed, sex differences in communication do exist. These differences have led researchers to refer to many female communication behaviors as "expressive", and men's behaviors as "instrumental." One popular explanation for this distinction is that men and women exist in separate sociolinguistic cultures (Maltz & Borker, 1982; Wood, 1993). This claim has led to the formation of a perspective known as the dual cultures view. The dual cultures view claims that significant and meaningful sex differences in communication exist between men and women. Countering this perspective is the single culture view, which agrees with the claim that differences do exist, but argues that these differences are often small in magnitude and difficult to measure accurately. Critics of the dual cultures perspective have questioned the quality of methodologies employed, interpretations of results, and magnitude of findings in many of these studies (Canary & Hause, 1993; Wright, 1988). Irrespective of criticism, the research has shown that significant differences, although perhaps not large in magnitude, have been consistently reported for several decades. Abelson (1985) contended that findings that are small in magnitude should not be discounted because, over time, a cumulative effect of all the findings produces meaningful
information about the phenomenon being studied. It is important to note that these competing perspectives both maintain that sex differences in communication exist; however, the point of contention between them is whether the number of such differences indicate that men and women are raised in two significant sociolinguistic worlds, speak different languages and learn different sets of communication rules.

Scholars subscribing to the single culture perspective expressed doubt over the dichotomous nature of the findings regarding the strength of differences between women’s and men’s communication (e.g., Canary & Hause, 1993; Burleson, Kunkel, Samter & Werking, 1996; Wright, 1988). These scholars asserted that men and women do not grow up in distinct sociolinguistic cultures; instead, they argued, women and men learn the same “language”, or rules of communication. To explain differences, this perspective posits that, although men and women may exhibit differences in their manner of communication, both value the same types of communication skills and abilities (Burleson, et al., 1996).

The purpose of the present study is to examine the efficacy of these alternative views of sex differences in communication. This will be accomplished by scrutinizing the rhetorical visions (see Bormann, 1972) of men’s and women’s communication.

This chapter examines and defines the terms sex, gender, culture and rhetorical visions, and will demonstrate how these concepts are interrelated. A review of the relevant literature on sex differences in communication will ensue. The dual cultures and single culture views will be examined, as will each perspective’s explanation for sex differences in communication. Finally, a research question will be posed at the conclusion of this chapter.

Prior to reviewing the literature relevant to the dual and single culture views, the issue of cultural impact on gender and communication must be addressed, given that a
culture's communication characteristics and notion of gender are heavily shaped by society. It is also important that the terms “sex” and “gender” are differentiated, given that each term has a distinct meaning.

**Culture, Sex and Gender**

**Sex Versus Gender**

The term “sex” has historically referred to one's biological or physical self, and more specifically, to the biological differences between males and females (Kelly, 1991; Deaux & Kite, 1987). According to West and Zimmerman (1991), sex is defined as a social process by which society agrees upon biological criteria for classification as male or female. Gender, however, refers to social, psychological or interactive characteristics (Arliss & Borisoff, 1993). Gender is also related to sociological expectations that cultures have for males and females. In their explanation of gender, West and Zimmerman (1991) created distinctions among the terms sex, sex category and gender. They defined sex as the biological criteria agreed upon by society that physically distinguishes females from males, and sex category as the category of sex into which one places oneself. An example of sex category is a male transvestite who, while biologically defined as a male, chooses to identify himself as a female. More complex is their conceptualization of gender, which is defined as “the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category” (West & Zimmerman, 1991, p. 14). These “normative conceptions” are created by the culture in which one belongs; hence, it follows that gender is both defined by, and a reflection of, culture (Deaux Kite, 1987; West & Zimmerman, 1991). That is, society defines, implicitly and explicitly, what rules of communication should be followed and what behavior is appropriate for men and women. Therefore, gender is a sociologically and psychologically constructed concept,
and is not arbitrarily defined by biological sex. In essence, gender is shaped by culture and vice versa. For example, in the United States, it is considered "unfeminine" for women to use vulgar language. Similarly, for men it is considered "unmanly" to cry in public. In this study, the term sex will refer to the biological association and gender will refer to the normative and psychological realm of behavior.

**Historical Portrait of Gender Difference Research**

**Instrumentality and Expressivity**

The roots of contemporary studies of gender differences in communication can be traced back about forty years to sociologist Talcott Parsons' proposed Theory of Family Socialization (Parsons & Bales, 1955; see also Aldous, 1977; Hyde & Rosenberg, 1980). Parsons developed the Theory of Family Socialization by generalizing small group function analysis findings to the family unit. Like any other small group, Parsons reasoned, the family must perform two basic functions in order to continue to exist and sustain itself: expressive and instrumental functions. "Expressive" functions are functions related to the internal affairs of the group, or family. The purpose of expressive functions is to integrate and maintain harmonious relationships between members within the group. "Instrumental" functions, on the other hand, are activities which maintain relationships between the group and the outside world (Parsons & Bales, 1955). The nature of these functions consequently led to a common assumption that instrumental and expressive functions represent two ends of a continuum, rather than exist on two distinct dimensions.

Continuing to use small group theory as a foundation for his own work, Parsons viewed the family as a unit in which different members specialize in fulfilling specific functions. More importantly, he asserted that these specialized functions correspond to male and female sex roles out of necessity. That is, within family units,
females perform expressive functions and males perform instrumental functions. Parsons supported this claim by arguing that the biological functions of women arbitrarily place them in an expressive role. He asserted that the purpose of the expressive role is to maintain relationships among family members, and given that women have the biological ability to bear and care for children, women therefore assume the expressive role. Parsons argued that when women have children, a natural mother-child, within-system relationship is created and perpetuated. For example, the mother in a family not only cares for her children, but also tend to the family's social and emotional needs by providing comfort and behavioral guidance. On the other hand, Parsons argued that because men are excluded from child-bearing, they engage predominantly in activities outside of the expressive role, including working outside the home, breadwinning, providing financial guidance, etc. Parsons labeled these types of functions instrumental functions. In sum, Parsons maintained that biological functions of men and women necessitate their roles within the family unit.

Parson's ideas subsequently spurred three decades of research aimed at supporting the proposition that men's behaviors are instrumentally-oriented and women's behaviors are expressively-oriented. Research conducted on small group communication throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, (including studies in which "sex" was explored and differences were reported post hoc) predominantly focused on instrumental contexts (i.e., decision making, conflict, and negotiation). Baird (1976) comprehensively reviewed this body of research and found that the expected sex differences in communication had been documented across a variety of variables, including verbal and nonverbal interaction, task performance, conformity, bargaining, coalition formation, and leadership. With respect to verbal interaction, Baird (1976) summarized studies indicating that a) males tended to initiate activity while females were more likely to enact a respondent role, b)
males’ language was more informational, opinionated, objective, and goal-oriented than females’ language use, and c) males talked more often, used more words and interrupted more than females when in mixed-gender groups. In a similar vein, Baird (1976) found studies showing that females exceeded males in their expressions of helpfulness, warmth and affiliation. Females were also found to be better able than males to communicate emotions and more effective in conveying love, happiness, fear and anger (Baird, 1976). Consistent with Parsons, Baird concluded that males tended to enact an instrumental role and that women tended to enact an expressive, socioemotional role:

Males, encouraged to be independent, aggressive, problem-oriented, and risk-taking generally are more task-oriented in their interactions, more active and aggressive verbally, more interested and capable in problem-solving, more willing to take risks, more resistant to social influence, more competitive when bargaining, and more likely to assume leadership in task-oriented situations. Females, taught to be non-competitive, dependent, empathic, passive, and interpersonally oriented, typically are more willing to self-disclose, more expressive of emotions and perceptive of others’ emotional states, more sensitive to nonverbal cues, less interested and able in problem-solving, relatively unwilling to assume risks, more yielding to social pressure, more cooperative in bargaining, and less likely to assume leadership, although capable of providing leadership in certain situations. (Baird, 1976, p.192)

Findings from studies conducted within small group contexts were interpreted to suggest that men were far more skillful, effective and successful communicators than women. For quite some time, empirically observed differences in women’s and men’s expressive and instrumental communication behaviors were explained by references to socialized skill deficiencies (see Henley & Kramarae, 1991; Noller, 1993; Uchida, 1992). Through the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, a “skills deficit” theory evolved, its main purpose aimed to “prove” that women lacked the skills necessary to succeed outside of the home
(Noller, 1993). Given the patriarchal climate during these decades, it is no surprise that women’s communication skills were reported to be inferior to those of men.

According to Kidd (1975), Baird’s summary of relevant past research reflected much of the thinking about sex differences that characterized the cultural era in which it was produced. In other words, it becomes evident while reading Baird’s summary that males’ communication behaviors were considered to be normative, and females’ behaviors were considered to be a deviation from this norm.Indeed, despite what appear to be genuine attempts to “describe” differences between women’s and men’s communicative behaviors, negative evaluations of women’s communication behaviors were, nevertheless, abundant (e.g., women were reported to be “capable” of providing leadership in certain situations; males were apparently presumed to be capable of providing leadership in all situations).

The tendency to view men’s communication more favorably in the early literature can be understood by examining the social context in which the literature was produced. Early studies focused on small decision making groups which are, by their nature, task-oriented (i.e., instrumental). This, in combination with the tendency for researchers to create ad hoc groups in which “traditional” sex roles were more likely to be enacted, probably accentuated the differences in women’s and men’s communicative behaviors (see Burggraf, 1993). Second, relatively few women had, as yet, entered the ranks of publishing scholars; thus, the majority of individuals studying sex differences and interpreting the findings of statistical analyses, did so from a male perspective (Kelly, 1991). Third, and perhaps most important, societal customs and beliefs across the United States were highly patriarchal at the time, resulting in an endorsement of the legitimacy of male dominance and the communication styles and behaviors common to men (see Kidd, 1975; Lakoff, 1975; Wood, 1994). This in turn led to the perception of sex-consistent
behaviors even when none occurred. Indeed, sex roles were defined narrowly, and prevailing wisdom of the era defined rigid adherence to these sex roles as the key to a happy life (Kidd, 1975).

All of these factors created a climate in which women's communication characteristics and the expressive dimension of communication were viewed as less capable at best and inferior at worst. Moreover, differences were often described using disparaging language. For example, many of the adjectives characterizing women tended to portray them as less capable than men, describing them as "dependent, less interested and capable of problem-solving, and unwilling to assume risks," while the characteristics depicting the male-oriented instrumental dimension presented a positive and more favorable image of men ("independent, more interested and capable in problem-solving, more willing to take risks and more resistant to social influence") (Baird, 1976, p. 194).

One of the more outspoken researchers on women's language is Lakoff (1975). Her examination of the origins, descriptions, and consequences of women's speech led her to conclude that women's language is inherently unequal to that of men's. She found that women's language does not encourage strong self-expression and is characterized by weaker, less assertive language. As a result, the language used by women situates them in an inferior, less powerful position than men (Lakoff, 1975).

In sum, past research tended to exhibit obvious biases toward men and exaggerated sex differences. For decades many researchers, the majority of whom were male, often concluded that males were superior to females in, among other areas, intellect, mathematics, and visual-spatial ability (Deaux & Kite, 1987; Kelly, 1991). Until the 1980s, men were consistently found to be more aggressive than women; however since then, some evidence (e.g. Kelly, 1991) suggests that men and women can be equally aggressive, but different stimuli can trigger the aggression. Current research proposes that
men are considered to be superior in some areas of visual-spatial ability, while females are considered superior in verbal ability (see Kelly, 1991). Rather than viewing sex differences in polar terms, current research tends to support the idea that sex differences vary in degree and breadth (Burleson, et al., 1996; Kelly, 1991; Wright, 1988).

**Culture and Communication**

Although the history of this line of research sheds light on how present-day research has evolved, it is also important to consider the cultural context in which communication occurs. This section addresses the impact that culture has on communication.

The concepts of culture and communication are closely intertwined in the sense that a culture determines the rules and standards for appropriate communication (Philipsen, 1987). Philipsen (1987) studied societal trends throughout history to define and explain the relationship between culture and communication. He claimed that a shift has occurred in the last four centuries -- a shift from a culture formerly communal in nature, to one that presently emphasizes individual consciousness and self-focus. Philipsen correlated this shift with trends in human communication, arguing that public communication, which used to be the standard for appropriate communication conduct, has been replaced by intimate, or interpersonal, communication. In the past, society set the standards for communication behavior, however, this new trend has resulted in individuals negotiating their own actions and communication.

With this in mind, Philipsen (1987) defined cultural communication by breaking it into three components: culture as code, culture as conversation, and culture as community. Culture as code is defined as a society's "system of beliefs, values, and images of the ideal" (p. 249). Essentially, code refers to the fixed "rules" and constraints a
culture imposes on its members. Culture as conversation is described as a "patterned representation of a people's lived experience of work, play, and worship" (p. 249). In other words, the conversation of a culture reflects the creativity and ever-changing qualities that make it unique. In practice, this translates into the stories and dialogue that provide a culture with its historical fabric. This concept juxtaposes culture as code, which serves as a "source of order" (p. 249). Culture as community refers to the places and contexts where codes are learned and conversations are enacted. This may refer to the contexts of one's family, school, religious organization, etc. Cultural communication, as Philipsen defines it, is the "process by which a code is realized and negotiated in a communal conversation" (p. 249). Key to Philipsen's perspective is the idea that cultural communication leads to shared meaning among its constituents. Understanding the relationship between culture and communication provides a richer background for understanding how the dual and single culture views are conceptualized and enacted. The next section explores these contrasting views.

The Dual Cultures Approach

As mentioned earlier, two common, yet opposing, explanations for sex differences in communication have emerged in recent years: the dual cultures view and the single culture view. In this section, the origins of the dual cultures view will be examined, relevant literature will be reviewed, explanations for sex differences in communication will be addressed and criticisms of this perspective will be presented.

The dual cultures view asserts that girls and boys are raised in two virtually distinct sociolinguistic worlds, and when they become adults and interact with the opposite sex, miscommunication often becomes a byproduct of their communication (see Maltz & Borker, 1982; Tannen, 1991b). Differences are explained by contrasting
assumptions about the nature and functions of communication, rather than the skill deficiencies within the sexes. In line with Philipsen’s approach, this “new” theoretical orientation suggests boys’ and girls’ socialization processes are so different as to be tantamount to cross-cultural socialization. That is, because little girls learn what it means to be female within a relationship bond with their mothers, and by being like one’s primary care-giver, little girls’ “culture” emphasizes closeness, connection, and sensitivity to relationships (which is manifested in emotionally expressive communication). In contrast, little boys must learn what it means to be male by being “not” female. Thus, little boys (and later, men) turn away from relationships as the primary source of personal gratification, and learn instead to seek personal gratification from autonomy and goal accomplishment (through instrumental communication skills). If females and males are essentially members of two different cultures, then, according to Philipsen (1987), each of these cultures creates its own codes, conversation, and ultimately, shared meaning among its members. In other words, men’s culture has its own language that results in shared meaning between men about the nature and functions of communication, as does women’s culture. This may explain why women and men may not always understand and accurately “decipher” one another’s language.

Maltz and Borker (1982) pioneered the dual cultures perspective by modeling their ideas after Gumperz’ (1982) work regarding problems in interethnic communication. An example of the sort of interethnic miscommunication that can occur is the nonverbal gesture of two fingers displayed in a “v” sign. In the United States, this gesture denotes the peace symbol and is typically associated with a positive, desired outcome. However in China, this same gesture designates a vulgar and offensive expletive. Similarly, Maltz and Borker (1982) claimed that when men and women interact, miscommunication often results because the two sexes essentially grow up learning two distinct languages, the
patterns of language learned in same-sex peer groups are then carried over into adult cross-sex conversations, which ultimately serve as the primary source of cross-sex miscommunication. According to this model, the cultural world of females is one in which they learn to create and maintain relationships of closeness and equality, criticize others in acceptable ways and accurately interpret the speech of other females. The cultural world of males is quite different. Males learn to assert positions of dominance among other males, attract and maintain an audience and assert themselves when other speakers have the floor (Maltz & Borker, 1982).

In literature supporting the dual cultures view, scholars have argued that sex differences in communication originate in the socialization, from birth onward, of boys and girls -- particularly in the act of modeling one’s parents. It has been shown that from the time of birth, male and female infants tend to be treated differently. Aside from our culture’s tendency to dress infants in different-colored clothing (Bell & Carver, 1980), female and male babies are perceived differently by adults. Male infants are more likely to be described as “strong” or “independent,” while female babies are often described as “cute” and “sweet” (Condry & Condry, 1976). The reactions of a child’s parents to a situation often hinges on the sex of the child. It is not unusual for parents to coddle a girl and encourage the expression of her emotions; nor it is uncommon to witness a parent admonish a boy when he is found crying. Maccoby’s (see Maccoby, 1988; Maccoby, 1990; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1987)) extensive body of work has led to various conclusions about gender role socialization. Maccoby (1990) found that children tend to choose same-sex playmates because they find same-sex partners more compatible. Distinct interaction patterns are formed in these same-sex groups, and these patterns carry over into cross-sex interactions as children progress to adolescence and on to adulthood. These distinctive interaction styles become manifested in the roles and relationships of and
between men and women (Maccoby, 1990). Quite revealing of gendered socialization is overhearing a parent tell his or her son to stop “acting like a girl,” the assumption being (aside from the degradation of females) that crying should be done only by girls.

It is often postulated that such differential treatment of males and females from very early in life undoubtedly has an impact on the communication styles of boys and girls. In a study of children from middle class backgrounds whose parents were present in their lives, Fagot (1984) found that the children, by three years of age, had learned traditional female and male expectations and reacted to the parents based on this learned differentiation. Specifically, the children were more likely to seek female adults for personal assistance and male adults to play with them. On modeling, Kelly (1990) claims:

Boys will tend to imitate their fathers or a favored older male, whereas girls will tend to imitate their mothers or a favored older female. If these parents act out and believe in the traditional sex-role stereotypes, they are likely to reward boys for being leaders, encouraging competitiveness, autonomy, aggressiveness, and independence, and to discourage girls from similar behavior. Seeing that they are rewarded for being gentle, caring, nurturing, and supportive of others, girls respond increasingly in these ways until such behavior becomes habitual. To break out of this pattern is difficult. (p.65)

Mothers tend to identify with daughters more closely than with sons and encourage daughters to feel more closely connected to them (Apter, 1990; Chodorow, 1989). Mothers tend to emphasize the differences with their sons and encourage their sons to differentiate from them (Wood, 1994).

Observation of children has provided insight into how girls and boys learn the rules of communication. Maltz and Borker (1982) found that boys use communication to assert themselves, attract and maintain an audience and compete with others to focus attention on themselves, while girls communicate collaboratively and cooperatively to
create and maintain relationships, avoid criticism of others and focus on interpreting and responding sensitively to others’ feelings. More recent research confirms these sex-specific patterns of behavior, indicating that girls teach one another to be kind and cooperative, while boys teach one another to competitive and controlling (“How Boys and Girls Teach Each Other,” 1992). In addition to the finding that the groups in which children play are nearly always segregated by sex, girls and boys tend to play different games (Maltz and Borker, 1982). Lever (1976) found that boys play more competitive games more often than girls, and children between the ages of eight and twelve prefer to play in sex-segregated groups. Girls tend to form intimate friendships with one or two other girls, and typically manifest their friendships through the sharing of confidences (Kraft & Vraa, 1975). Boys’ friendships, however, are centered around mutual interests in activities (Erwin, 1985). While boys are more likely to explicitly tell their play partners what to do during pretend play, girls, in an effort to keep their play partners involved, are more subtle and use milder directives (Sachs, 1987). In regard to conflict, Miller, Danaher, and Forbes (1986) found that girls are more likely to use “conflict mitigating strategies,” while boys use threats and physical force more often. Sheldon (1990) reported that while girls do work to achieve their own individual ends, they do so by focusing less on dominance and force, and more on collaborative agreement.

The dual cultures view strongly asserts that the socialization of boys and girls regarding appropriate communication behavior has a lasting effect into adulthood. Research on communication and gender differences in adults indicates that men and women make disparate assumptions about the goals and strategies of communication (Coates, 1986; Kramarae, 1981; Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1990b), lending further support to the dual cultures view. Others assert that women and men use styles of communication that reflect dissimilar purposes, different rules about communication and different ways of
interpreting language (e.g., Bate, 1988; Kramarae, 1981; Tannen, 1990a; Wood, 1993). Communication, for most women, is the primary way in which relationships are established and maintained. Talk is the most common activity in which women engage with their friends (Balswick & Peek, 1976). Within their friendships, women tend to focus on the discussion of feelings (Aries & Johnson, 1983; Burleson, Kunkel, Samter & Werking, 1996). An important point that differentiates women's communication from that of men is the understanding that talk is the essence of relationships (Aries & Johnson, 1983; Wood, 1994). Women use conversation as a means to establish and maintain rapport with others and to establish connections and negotiate relationships (Tannen, 1990b). Topics that women tend to focus on include their relationships and personal problems (Aries & Johnson, 1983). The concept of equality is also important in women's communication; women tend to match another's experience by sharing a similar story to show that both interactants are equal in status to one another and to display symmetry (Aries, 1987). The focus on equality yields a participatory style of interaction in which the participants, in the process of talking, respond to and build upon one another's ideas (Hall & Langellier, 1988). In general, women's friendships have been characterized as "expressive" in nature (McAdams, 1985).

For men, however, talk plays a very different role. Talk functions as a mechanism by which men assert independence and negotiate and maintain status in a hierarchical society (Tannen, 1990b). This goal is often manifested in certain actions, including demonstrating one's talents and knowledge, and seeking an audience for attention and to serve as recipient of stories and information (Tannen, 1990b). Men typically have a response style that tends to be more problem-solving or advice-giving in nature (Tannen, 1990b). While men do talk to one another, the central themes in their conversations tend to focus on sports, politics or careers (Aries & Johnson, 1983). Men
tend to base their friendships on activities and companionship (Burleson, et al., 1996). Talk is also used by men to exert control and preserve independence (Wood, 1994). Unlike women’s tendency to match stories for the purpose of empathizing and showing equality (Aries, 1987), men typically avoid disclosing personal information that may make them appear weak or vulnerable (Sauer & Eisler, 1990). The tendency for men to use talk as a vehicle for other goals has led men’s friendships to be characterized as “instrumental” (McAdams, 1985).

In sum, the dual cultures perspective purports that sex differences in communication are rooted in the sex-differentiated socialization of females and males from an early age. This differentiated socialization results in sex-specific styles of communication interaction, which, according to the dual cultures view, results in a myriad of communication differences between men and women.

**Criticism of the Dual Cultures View**

In recent years, the dual cultures view has come under close scrutiny, particularly in regard to research methodology and consequent findings. Canary and Hause (1993) reviewed meta-analyses results of more than 1,200 gender research studies to determine whether common conclusions about sex differences in communication are valid. They concluded that not only are the effects due to sex small in magnitude, but these differences are also affected by moderating factors, which even further lessens the magnitude of findings. For example, Dindia and Allen (1992) found that women disclose more than men, but the differences, though small, were moderated by factors such as the dyadic composition (i.e., whether the partners were friends or strangers) and sex (i.e., whether the partner was female or male). Similarly, Hyde and Lynn (1988) observed a small but significant difference in the superior verbal ability of women over men; however,
they also found that their results varied according to the type of verbal ability being measured. In their review of sex differences in adult verbal aggression, Eagly and Steffen (1986) found that men give and receive more verbally aggressive acts than women do, but the magnitude of the effect was modest. They also noted that several moderating factors decreased the effects due to sex; these included the settings of the studies, the private or public context, the amount of provocation and whether the notion of psychological or physical harm was set forth.

Stereotypes. Canary and Hause (1993) point to several explanations regarding why average sex difference findings are very small. One explanation for the lack of clear and consistent findings is the use of stereotypes when defining variables or providing explanations for behavior. They point to Ragan's (1989) argument that sex role differences are affected by sex-role stereotypes, and that perceived stereotyped differences may be greater than the actual differences in communication. For example, Stafford and Canary (1991) predicted that women are more likely to be perceived as carrying out relationship-maintenance strategies than men. This prediction may seem plausible because women are stereotyped as having more of the qualities related to relationship maintenance, including expressiveness and relational sensitivity (e.g., Deaux & Lewis, 1984). However, Stafford and Canary (1991) found that, contrary to their prediction, men are perceived as using more relational maintenance activities than women. Due to stereotypes, men are not expected to participate in relationship maintenance activities; however, when contrasted with low expectations, mens’ relationship maintenance efforts inevitably stand out. As a result, men are perceived as participating in more maintenance activities than women, even if women, in reality, engage in more relationship maintenance activities than men.

The use of stereotypes has also led to the polarization of the sexes in research by accenting women’s and men’s differences rather than their similarities. According to
Putnam (1982), this often results in unclear and questionable findings. According to Duck and Wright (1993) most studies on sex differences use only between-sex comparisons, which results in seemingly strong differences between men and women. However, when within-sex comparisons are also included in studies, stronger similarities between the sexes tend to materialize. Canary and Hause (1993) also argue that researchers use measures of gender that lack validity, particularly because the most commonly used assessments are based on stereotypes and thus "suspect." As an example, they refer to the Bem (1974) Sex Role Inventory, a well-known measure of gender which, they claim, relied on sex role stereotypes in its development.

**Dichotomization.** Another main criticism of the dual cultures view relates to the tendency for researchers to dichotomize findings. Given that the dual cultures view implies that men and women inhabit distinct cultures, one could reasonably expect to find strong sex differences in communication. The dichotomous nature of the dual cultures view suggests that sex difference research outcomes should also be dichotomous in nature (Johnson, 1989; Thorne, 1993). However, as Canary and Hause (1993) found in their review of meta-analyses of communication research, effects due to sex in communication are extremely small and often have moderating factors which even further reduce their magnitude.

**Single Culture View**

Given the voluminous criticism of the dual cultures view, an alternative perspective has emerged in recent literature, which, in this paper, is referred to as the single culture perspective. This viewpoint emerged in response to the tendency of dual cultures proponents to overstate sex differences in communication and consequently dichotomize differences between the sexes. Wood and Inman (1993) found that during
the last few decades researchers focused specifically on finding differences between the sexes. However, the current trend speculates that studies seeking to identify only differences do not consider the type and degree of similarities in communication men and women actually share (Burleson, et al., 1996; Canary & Hause, 1993). The single culture perspective recognizes that, while socialization may lead to differences in women’s and men’s communication, “similarities between the sexes far outweigh the differences” (Burleson et al., 1996, p.206). This view counters the popular notion that men and women occupy two distinct sociolinguistic cultures. Instead, supporters of this perspective suggest that women and men have similar values with respect to relational communication. Burleson et al. (1996) maintain that men and women not only seek similar things and behave similarly in intimate relationships, but also value similar communication skills in their partners.

Substantial evidence exists to support the single culture perspective. Maccoby (1990) claims that sex differences result less from gendered socialization and more from behavioral styles and interaction between boys and girls. She suggests that the makeup of a dyad (e.g., male-male, female-male, etc) and situational context greatly impact communication behavior between boys and girls, and that these factors carry over into adulthood. Maccoby (1990) points to various studies in which girls’ and boys’ communicative reactions hinge on contextual issues. For example, one study (Greeno, 1989) found that in all-girl small groups of kindergarten children at play, the presence of an adult repeatedly resulted in the girls moving farther away from the adult in the playroom. However, in a mixed-sex context, the girls repeatedly tended to stay close to the adult in the room. Rather than identifying the girls’ behavior as an inherent trait or a socialized phenomenon (as has been done frequently in the past), Greeno suggests that this
tendency is a result of the group's composition and the girls' reaction to the presence of boys in the room.

Work done by Burleson et al. (1996) also lends support to the single culture perspective. While these scholars recognize that meaningful sex differences in communication between women and men exist, they claim that the magnitude of differences supported by the dual cultures view has been exaggerated. Burleson et al. (1996) further assert that more similarities than differences are evident between men and women regarding intimate communication. To examine sex differences in communication, Burleson et al. (1996) explored the values that men and women espouse concerning intimate communication. They hypothesized that both men and women would view affectively-oriented communication skills as more important than instrumentally-oriented skills, and that women and men would demonstrate similar patterns in their evaluations of the importance of varying communication skills. They utilized Burleson and Sarnter's (1990) Communication Functions Questionnaire, which measures the importance of eight communication skills: comforting; ego support; conflict management; persuasion; referential skill; regulative skill; narrative skill; and conversational skill. They found that overall, affectively-oriented communication skills such as ego support, comforting and conflict management, were viewed as important by both men and women in the context of intimate romantic relationships or friendships.

Others have reported similar findings. Fox, Gibbs, and Auerbach (1985) found that women and men both view trust and empathy as main components of friendship, while Wright (1982) found that both men and women seek intimacy from same-sex friendships. In a similar vein, Monsour (1992) conducted a study to determine how same and cross-sex friends define intimacy and whether or not participants differ in their definitions. By examining past research, Monsour determined that intimacy was
most commonly defined by two themes: the degree of self-disclosure in a relationship and emotional expressiveness. Monsour distributed a five page survey to 164 male and female participants designed to determine subjects’ definition of intimacy, and whether sex differences in their definitions would emerge. Results indicated that more similarities than differences in definitions of intimacy among male and female participants emerged. Given the common belief that men in same-sex friendships express intimacy through activity sharing (Helgeson, Shaver & Dyer, 1987), Monsour’s finding that 56 percent of males in same-sex friendships specified self-disclosure as a meaning of intimacy is rather remarkable. Monsour’s discovery appears to undermine the dual cultures perspective’s position that men tend to communicate by engaging in shared activities with others.

Riveting evidence in support of the single culture view can be found in the work of Cupach and Canary. Cupach and Canary (1995) created the term “sex stereotype hypothesis” and examined this hypothesis within the context of conflict and anger. The sex role stereotype comprises the generalized assumption that men are perceived as assertive, task-oriented, competitive and competent, while women are perceived as nurturing, expressive, and sensitive. Cupach and Canary argue that perceived stereotypical differences between women and men outweigh actual behavioral differences regarding conflict management. They found that sex differences in conflict tend to be “small in magnitude and are often greatly overshadowed by other contextual, personal and relational factors” (Cupach & Canary, 1995, p.237). They also found that men and women do not consistently behave in accordance with the sex stereotype hypothesis. Found that women tend to be more competitive than men, express anger in similar ways. In other words, far more between women and men in terms of observable conflict m behaviors.
In sum, the single culture perspective maintains that reported differences in communication between the sexes have been exaggerated and that sex stereotypes often lead to misleading and misguided findings. The perspective also maintains that, while men’s and women’s communication may differ, their communication behaviors and styles are more similar than different.

**Focus of the Present Study**

While scholars have shown that findings supporting the dual cultures perspective are methodologically and theoretically flawed (e.g., Burleson, et al., 1996; Canary & Hause, 1993), it should be brought to light that even small findings can become significant in the long term (Abelson, 1985). It is important to note that while the effects of sex may be small, they have occurred consistently and frequently over time and, as dual cultures theorists argue, have become meaningful in attempting to understand differences in communication between the sexes. As Abelson (1985) asserts, “it is the process through which variables operate in the real world that is important...it is quite possible that small variance contributions of independent variables in single-shot studies grossly understate the variance contribution in the long run” (p. 133).

Both the single culture and dual cultures perspectives predict and explain the same empirical differences that are (and have been) observed in women’s and men’s communication behaviors for 40 or 50 years. Hence, what is needed is a study that will allow social scientists to ascertain which of the two, the dual cultures view or single culture view, is the more valid theory.

Such a study can be done if it is noted that an implicit assumption underlying the single culture perspective of gender differences is that individuals raised within the geographic boundaries of the United States share a single standard for evaluating the
skillfulness and appropriateness of both instrumental and expressive communicative behaviors. In contrast, however, the dual cultures perspective is based on the assumption that women and men within the United States will not share a cultural standard for evaluating communication behaviors, but will instead hold discrete standards for judging the skillfulness and appropriateness of instrumental and expressive communicative behaviors.

One method of understanding the communication of a culture is examining what some scholars call “rhetorical visions.” Let us turn to rhetorical visions next.

**Rhetorical Visions**

The term “rhetorical vision” was invented by Earnest Bormann (1972) to describe “composite dramas which catch up large groups of people in a symbolic reality” (p. 213). The term was created to describe the collective social realities and situations in people’s lives that are expressed through communication. Rhetorical visions are recollections of past occurrences or fantasies about what will happen to a group in the future. These visions chain out and occur in “all the diverse settings for public and intimate communication in a society” (Bormann, 1972, p. 213). For example, a microcosm of a rhetorical vision can emerge through a mixed-gender group discussion about marital success. One group member may give an account of a friend’s impending divorce after only one year of marriage. Another member may share a similar story about an acquaintance’s failed marriage. Yet another group member may theorize that a lack of communication led to the demise of the marriages. Someone else might begin to discuss specific reasons couples have trouble communicating, while other group members may chime in with their ideas. This chaining out phenomenon of “fantasy themes” ultimately leads to the formation of rhetorical visions about communication in relationships and
For its subscribers, rhetorical visions provide an understanding of the world, motivation for behavior, and cues for meaning to be given to various verbal and nonverbal interactions (Bormann, 1972). They are considered social realities that people come to accept. According to Bormann (1985), the participants of a rhetorical vision form a “rhetorical community” when a rhetorical vision emerges. When a vision begins to dominate an individual’s social reality in all aspects of one’s life, it becomes a “life-style rhetorical vision” (Bormann, 1985, p. 133).

While Bormann was more concerned with the formation of rhetorical visions among small groups, Kidd’s (1975) work provides a slightly more concrete explanation of rhetorical visions by describing them as an “indication of popular mood.” Kidd was interested in extrapolating rhetorical visions of interpersonal relations from three decades of advice-giving articles in popular magazines. She identified and analyzed themes related to interpersonal relationships in the articles and thus inductively developed descriptions of rhetorical visions that captured the essence of attitudes and beliefs about relationships in each decade of magazines examined. Kidd’s (1975) method of extracting rhetorical visions will be emulated in the present study.

Given that culture influences the communication of its constituents, and rhetorical visions are expressed through the vehicle of communication, then it follows that rhetorical visions are influenced by one’s culture and that rhetorical visions may differ from culture to culture. Maltz and Borker (1982) claim that women and men are raised in two distinct cultures regarding communication. Assuming this claim is true, it would therefore make sense that men and women form their own “rhetorical communities” and hence their own rhetorical visions.

Kidd’s definition of rhetorical visions as an indication of popular mood and a reflection of people’s attitudes and beliefs will guide this study. A similar method of
inductively extrapolating the collective rhetorical visions of participants will be used to
determine whether women and men share similar rhetorical visions about communication
in relationships. If the rhetorical visions of male and female participants are similar, this
finding lends support to the validity of the single culture perspective. However, if the
rhetorical visions of male and female participants differ, this finding would lend support to
the dual cultures perspective. The goal of this paper is to explore the extent to which
women and men share a single, or hold different, rhetorical visions of communication in
intimate interpersonal relationships. It thus tests the validity of the assumptions on which
the single and dual culture theories of gender-linked communication rest.

The following research question is proposed:

Are there significant sex differences in the rhetorical visions of communication
in intimate, interpersonal relationships?
Chapter 2

METHODS

This study was designed to examine the efficacy of two competing explanations of sex differences in communication, the dual cultures view and the single culture view. The author chose to study rhetorical visions in the context of romantic relationships primarily because of the fact that no existing literature could be found that examined marital/relationship communication through the lens of rhetorical vision perspective. This research effort is an attempt to begin to fill this gap in the literature.

Prior to the main study, a pretest carried out for the purpose of testing scenarios posed to participants determined that the scenarios satisfactorily elicited rhetorical visions. The main study included two components: an open-ended question designed to elicit rhetorical visions, and a 114 item questionnaire consisting of three scales and various demographic variables, to be discussed below.

Rhetorical Visions

Scenario Construction

Given that rhetorical visions describe the collective social realities and situations in people’s lives and that these visions can be quite rich and detailed, the author decided that employing randomly assigned open-ended-response style stimulus condition scenarios would provide participants the opportunity to fully describe their rhetorical visions of relational communication. The stimulus condition scenarios were developed and refined during the pretest phase of this study. Rather than ask the participant directly
how he or she feels about communication in relationships, it was thought that placing participants in hypothetical situations would yield more “fantasy themes,” (see Bormann, 1972) thus providing more accurate rhetorical visions about relational communication. The author decided that each scenario should ask the participant to put themselves in the shoes of a particular character (i.e., a communication consultant, neighbor, presenter or marriage partner) to extract the varied views a participant might put forth in any of these roles and that overall, the scenarios should reflect diverse viewpoints. As an example, one scenario asks the participant to describe a couple whose marriage is successful, while another asks for a description of a couple whose communication is problematic.

To follow is a description of the stimulus condition scenarios. The first scenario informed the participant that he/she has been asked to act as a communication consultant to a Hollywood producer for a new television show. The participant was asked to describe how a couple, who has a “marriage made in heaven,” communicates. The second scenario also asked the participant to act as a communication consultant to a Hollywood producer for a new television show; however in this case, he/she was asked to describe the communication of a couple that engages in problematic communication. The third scenario asked the participant to make an opening statement at a family values conference about the nature of good, functional, and satisfying communication. The fourth scenario asked the participant, who was hypothetically depicted as a partner in a happy marriage, to advise a neighbor’s soon-to-be-wed daughter/son about the nature of communication that allowed that participant and his/her hypothetical spouse to maintain a satisfying relationship. The fifth scenario depicted a situation in which the participant had hypothetically filed for divorce with his/her spouse and was asked to provide an explanation of how the relationship digressed from a complete and fulfilling one to one in which the spouses harbored so much mutual animosity that neither could no longer
maintain any eye contact between one another. (See Appendix A for full scenario descriptions).

**Pretest**

The goal of the pretest was to determine whether the scenarios created by the author would successfully elicit rhetorical visions from the subjects.

The participants in this study were students enrolled in a gender and communication course at a mid-size east coast university. The opportunity to participate in the study was offered to all of the 85 students in the course. Each participant was asked to provide an essay-style response to one of the five randomly distributed scenarios. The pretest administrator informed the participants that the purpose of the study was to examine communication in interpersonal relationships, and that all participants' responses would be kept confidential. Seventy-nine completed essays were returned. The author and her coding partner devised a coding system in which sentences or phrases that expressed a complete thought about communication ("idea units") were highlighted, aggregated and reviewed to determine whether these idea units led to the formation of rhetorical visions of communication. Given that many similar themes appeared throughout the essays (e.g., communication is the key to relational success; disclosing feelings is very important; never go to bed angry), the author felt confident that meaningful rhetorical versions of communication emerged from this data and that this method would be successful for measuring rhetorical visions of participants in the main study of this investigation.

It should be noted that since the pretest sample originated from a gender communication course, participants' responses may have reflected a greater sensitivity to relational communication processes.
Scales

The second mode of observation consisted of a questionnaire containing a variety of scales and instruments. It was necessary to test the personal characteristics of participants to distinguish the two possible explanations for sex differences in rhetorical visions of communication. The dual cultures approach postulates that men value power while women value intimacy, primarily due to the divergent ways in which women and men are socialized (Maltz & Borker, 1982; Tannen, 1990b). However, an alternative to this explanation is that men and women, regardless of the reason, happen to differ in personal attributes that directly affect their interest in power or intimacy, and that socialization is not the critical explanation for these attributes. With this line of thinking in mind, the author had participants respond to scales that measure personal attributes relevant to power and intimacy to test whether any sex differences in the content themes are due to personal attribute differences that happen to be associated with sex, and not to cultural differences. Each of the scales is described below.

Premarital Anxiety Scale

Premarital anxieties of participants were examined using the Premarital Anxiety Scale (Zimmer, 1986). Zimmer defines premarital anxieties as concern regarding the extent to which marriage will be rewarding, if critical problems in marriage will develop, and whether or not a marriage will last over time. The Premarital Anxiety Scale (Zimmer, 1986) consists of 13 items representing concerns reflecting trust, stability, equality and closeness. Two of three subscales identified by Zimmer (1986) are relevant to this study: security and fulfillment. The security subscale is similar to the control/dominance dimension of communication frequently attributed to the masculine style of communication, whereas the fulfillment subscale reflects similarities to the intimacy/closeness dimension of communication often attributed to females. Both
subscales consist of four items. The security subscale loaded items concerning abandonment, manipulation, infidelity, and breakup. The fulfillment subscale loaded items regarding close rapport, equality, emotional fulfillment, and staying romantic. The items on the Premarital Anxiety Scale (Zimmer, 1986) were originally measured on an 11-point scale of agree (+1 to +5), unsure or neutral (0), or disagree (-1 to -5). For the purpose of brevity, in this study the items were measured on a seven-point scale of agree (+1 to +3), neutral (0), or disagree (-1 to -3). Zimmer reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87 for the security subscale and 0.82 for the fulfillment subscale.

**Communication Locus of Control Scale**

The Communication Locus of Control Scale (CLCS) is a unidimensional scale that measures the extent to which a person has control in a communicative situation (Hamilton, 1991). The development of the CLCS is rooted in Rotter's (1966) definition of generalized internal and external locus of control. Internal locus of control is the belief that one's personal actions determine the outcomes of situations (Rotter, 1966). External locus of control is the belief that external factors, such as fate or luck, determine one's activities or events (Rotter, 1966). Hamilton (1991) modified the traditional concept of locus of control to relate it to the study of communication, since at the time no such instrument existed to measure locus of control in communication contexts. The control element of this scale is similar to the hypothesized control/dominance dimension purported in the dual cultures perspective. The CLCS's purpose is to assess participants' feelings about the extent of control they may have in a communicative situation. For example, a person that believes the ability to speak well is something one is born with is exhibiting an external communication locus of control. The belief that hard work and practice produce a good public speaker is indicative of an internal communication locus of control.
The CLCS is comprised of seventeen items, half of which reflect an internal locus of control orientation, and half of which represent an external locus of control orientation. The responses were structured in a Likert format composed of four possible responses: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Hamilton reported a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.79 for this scale.

Relationship Locus of Control Scale

To gage one’s locus of control in regard to relationships, Burggraf (1993) created a more specialized scale called the Relationship Locus of Control Scale (RLCS). It is similar to the Communication Locus of Control Scale in that it attempts to determine the extent to which participants demonstrate an internal or external locus of control when asked about relationships in their lives. In other words, the RLCS measures participants’ perceptions about the amount of control they have over their personal relationships. Like the CLCS, the control element of this scale is similar to the control/dominance dimension in the dual cultures perspective. The author chose to use this scale in hopes that it would provide greater insight into differences in locus of control in terms of participants’ relationship fears and anxieties, (versus communication locus of control, which does not address relationship issues in the context of communication), and which may shed light on sex differences in subjects’ rhetorical visions.

The RLCS contains 11 items. Each item consists of two statements, one representing an external locus of control orientation and the other representing an internal locus of control orientation. Participants were instructed to choose one of the two statements that most accurately reflected their response.
Main Study

Procedure

Participants were recruited from a business communication course and introductory communication theory course at a mid-sized east coast university. Questionnaires were distributed to the selected classes at the end of the class period. The participants were issued a multiple-page survey, a response sheet and a document containing an open-ended scenario question requiring an essay-style response. In other words, each participant received both a 114-item questionnaire and one randomly distributed scenario question out of the five possible scenarios.

The Sample

195 of 201 participants completed and returned the questionnaire and essay response. Forty-two participants’ responses were unusable due to factors including illegible print, incomplete essays or questionnaires, or the failure of a participant to place his or her social security number on the response sheet of the survey or essay questionnaire. Thus, the total number of viable questionnaires utilized in this study is 153.

Demographics

Various demographics were included in the questionnaire (see Appendix B). Participants were asked to identify their sex, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity, cultural citizenship, marital/engagement status, status of romantic involvement and number of relationships in which they have been engaged.

Of the 153 participants, 59 were female and 94 were male. Fifty-two percent of the participants classified themselves as coming from upper middle class families, 35% described themselves as coming from middle class families, 6% identified themselves as coming from working class/blue collar families, 5% identified themselves as coming from
lower middle class families and 3% as coming from a privileged or wealthy class family. The majority of participants described themselves as Caucasian (88%).

Ninety-eight percent of the participants identified themselves as members of the North American culture. Sixty-one percent of the participants indicated that they were presently involved in a romantic relationship, and 47% indicated that they were in love with their romantic partner. The vast majority (97%) were unmarried and had never been married (99%). The three latter questions were posed in order to gauge the romantic relationship experience of participants.

**Questionnaire and Instructions**

The structure of the questionnaire was straightforward. Given that each scale used a different system for measuring responses (Premarital Anxieties Scale used a seven point Likert scale; the Communication Locus of Control Scale used a four point Likert scale; and the Relationship Locus of Control Scale was based on rating two statements with a two point response), it was most prudent to place the scales in consecutive fashion, with the demographic items situated at the end of the questionnaire.

Corresponding with the survey and the open-ended questionnaire, the participants were instructed that two different studies were being conducted, so that the participants would not assume a conceptual relationship existed between the survey and the open-ended question sheet. They were told that the purpose of one of the studies was to explore communication in interpersonal relationships, and the purpose of the other was to examine participants' attitudes about marital communication.

Participants were informed that they would receive five extra credit points if they returned completed responses to both the questionnaire and the survey by a specified date. Emphasized was the fact that it was imperative that participants enter their social
security numbers on both the survey and essay response sheets so that they could be properly identified to receive the extra credit points. At the specified date (one week after the materials were distributed), the response sheets were collected and returned to the author.

Thirty-six participants (15 women, 21 men) completed scenario one (divorcing couple), 24 (eight women, 16 men) completed scenario two (U.N. opening statement), 36 (13 women, 23 men) completed scenario three (neighborly advice), 31 (12 women, 19 men) completed scenario four (positive dialogue script), and 26 (11 women, 15 men) completed scenario five (negative dialogue script).

**Content Analysis and Coding Procedures**

The purpose of the content analysis of the essays was to glean the participants' rhetorical visions of relational communication in intimate relationships. The essays were coded through the process of identifying idea units in each essay, creating appropriate content themes for them, then listing each theme at the top of every essay. An idea unit was defined as a complete thought about communication. In other words, whenever a phrase or sentence in a participant's essay expressed a complete thought about communication, it was considered by the coders as an idea unit. These idea units (i.e., expressions oriented around communication) were then noted at the top of the participant's essay. The idea units from all of the essays were compiled and examined. From this list, similarities among the idea units began to emerge. For example, a common idea unit found in the essays was the expression that couples should "never lie to each other." Another thought frequently expressed was that being truthful is very important in relational communication. As a result of these types of conceptually related idea units (and ideas similar to them), it was decided these particular idea units fell under the content

34
theme of “honesty.” A content theme was defined as a category that reflects important dimensions of communication in relationships that participants frequently expressed in their essays. Hence, the process of developing content themes was inductive. As all of the idea units were examined and similarities among them emerged, similar groups of idea units were given an appropriate name (i.e., a content theme) that reflected the nature of the idea units. An example of idea units that led to a formation of the content theme “conflict” include participant comments such as: don’t avoid conflict; accept conflict as part of relationship; and empathize and understand during conflict. The content theme “spousal priority” included idea units like: spouse must be number one priority; one partner’s life is the other’s; and spouses would die for each other. The content theme “communication is key” included idea units that reflect the importance of communication in relationships, such as: communication is the key to satisfying relationships; communication is paramount; and good communication is a key ingredient to successful relationships.

A total of 35 content themes emerged from the data. They include: communication is key; self disclosure; nonverbal communication; conflict; avoiding conflict; causes of conflict; externals; trust; activities/togetherness; honesty; understanding; communication is work; communication is a two-way street; openness; criticism; love; compromise; equality; listen; friends; confrontation; respect; doing things for spouse; individuality; separation; talk about anything with spouse/keep communication lines open; mind reading; honeymoon to hatred; humor; spousal priority; spousal support; be yourself; general communication; reasons for breakup; and conditions. These 35 themes inductively formed the coding manual for this thesis (see Appendix C for coding manual).

As noted earlier, the scenarios asked participants to describe various aspects of communication in different contexts. As a result, many of the categories reflect positive
and negative aspects of the same content themes. For example, in a scenario in which the participant was asked to describe the communication of a happy couple, a response might include that happy couples “tell each other everything.” This item was categorized under the content theme of “self-disclosure.” Conversely, in a scenario in which the participant was asked to describe the communication of an unhappy couple, a response may include “hide things from your spouse.” This item was also placed into the “self-disclosure” content theme. Thus, statements made by participants may reflect a positive or negative component to the same content theme; regardless, both of these idea units were categorized into the same content theme of “self-disclosure.”

Content analyses and coding of the essay-style responses was conducted over a one month period. To test intercoder reliability, twenty-five essays were randomly chosen, duplicated, and dispersed to the coding team (comprised of the author and her adviser at the time). Once both coders agreed upon the coding criteria for the themes in the essays, they individually coded the twenty-five essays and compared results. When the coding team met on three separate occasions to code the data and check for reliability, the Scott’s pi calculations for the coding sessions were .83, .82 and .88 respectively. Calculation of reliability yielded a simple percentage of agreement of 96%. The research team felt that this percentage of intercoder reliability was adequate enough to permit the coders to continue individually coding the remaining essays. Unfortunately, due to lost data, the author is unable to report unitizing reliability or reliability of the categorization of content themes.
Statistical Analysis

Cronbach’s alpha coefficient will be utilized by the author to evaluate the reliability of the Premarital Anxiety Scale and the Communication Locus of Control Scale. The results of this test can be found in the next chapter.

To test whether sex differences in content themes are due to personal attribute differences associated with sex (not to cultural differences), the security and the fulfillment subscales in the Premarital Anxiety Scale (Zimmer, 1986), as well as the Communication Locus of Control Scale (Hamilton, 1991) were analyzed by running chi square analyses of the subscales against each of the 35 content themes. This was accomplished by dividing each of the scales at the median and assigning them “high” and “low” categories so that they could be crosstabulated against the “yes” or “no” responses in each content theme.

In order to determine whether sex differences exist in rhetorical visions, 35 2x2 chi square tests were executed, one test for each content theme. The independent variables included sex of the participant (female or male) and the presence or absence of the content theme in the participants’ essays. A statistically significant chi square result for a given theme implies a gender difference between sexes in the proportion of responses containing that theme. The results of these calculations can be found in the next chapter.

Given that there are 35 chi squares in each analysis, we must assume that five percent (1.75 chi squares) will be statistically significant by chance. Blalock (1960) has provided a formula that allows us to determine if the number of significant chi squares in each of the analyses is significantly greater than 1.96. Therefore, the significant results will be considered truly nonrandom and interpretable only if the number of significant chi squares is significantly greater than 1.96. Only if that is the case can we conclude that there are significant results; otherwise the results will be considered random, having occurred by chance.
Blalock's (1960) formula consists of a fraction. The numerator represents the proportion of significant chi squares divided by the total number of content themes (3/35 in the case of the fulfillment subscale, 6/35 in the case of the security subscale), minus the proportions of chi squares significant by chance (.05). The denominator represents the square root of the following: the proportion of significant comparisons by chance (.05), multiplied by the proportion of insignificant comparisons by chance (.95), divided by the number of chi squares (35). The results of this test are compared to a critical value (for two-tailed z-scores at a .05 significance level) of 1.96. Therefore, if the result of this equation is less than 1.96, then the significant chi squares in question are considered to have occurred by chance. Likewise, if the formula yields a figure greater than 1.96, the results are nonrandom and therefore significant. The results of Blalock's formula are discussed in the next chapter.

To gage reliability of the Relationship Locus of Control scale, chi squares were calculated for each paired comparison between items. In other words, chi squares were run between the first item and the second item, the first item and the second item, the first item and the third item, and so on until all variables were exhausted. This procedure was executed for all items, resulting in a total of 55 chi square calculations. All of the results of the chi square calculations, which reflected both the internal and external components of each variable, were converted into simple percentages in order to gage whether subjects responded consistently from item to item. For example, in a chi square analysis of the items "misfortune" and "advantage", of the people who scored high on the external locus of control in the "misfortune" variable, only 22% scored high on the external locus of control in the "advantage" variable. In other words, high percentages of agreement on comparisons of both internal and external locus of control items would be
necessary for this scale to be considered reliable. The following chapter reports the results of analyses conducted for this project.
Chapter 3

RESULTS

Scale Reliabilities

Premarital Anxiety Scale

The author utilized Cronbach's alpha coefficient to determine scale reliability. Calculation of the security subscale of the Premarital Anxiety Scale (Zimmer, 1986) yielded an alpha of 0.85, while the fulfillment subscale yielded a result of 0.87. These scores indicate high reliability for this scale.

Communication Locus of Control Scale

Regarding the Communication Locus of Control Scale (Hamilton, 1991) this author calculated a Cronbach's alpha of 0.68. The reliability score calculated is somewhat lower than Hamilton's calculation. It is a less than desirable reliability score for the scale.

Relationship Locus of Control Scale

With respect to the reliability of the Relationship Locus of Control Scale, a calculation of the averages of the internal and external paired comparisons yielded means of 66.8 percent and 42.7 percent, respectively. This clearly indicates that this scale was unreliable. In light of this fact, the scale was not used in further analysis. The external and internal locus of control comparison matrixes appear in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 respectively at the end of this chapter.
Statistical Results

Chi Square Analyses

To test whether sex differences are present in rhetorical visions, 35 2x2 chi square tests were executed, one test for each content theme. Three content themes showed a significant difference between men and women: self disclosure (p=.046); trust (p=.048); and talk about anything with spouse (p=.038). Regarding self disclosure, 39.4% of males reported this theme in their essays, compared to only 23.7% of women. In other words, men were more likely than women to include the content theme of self disclosure in their essays. The content theme of trust (p=.048) was reported by 6.8% of women and 18.1% of men, indicating that men were more likely to list trust as an important component of relational communication. Regarding the content theme of talk about anything (p=.038), 15.3% of females, versus 5.3% of males, reported this theme in their essays, signifying that women were more likely to indicate that being able to “talk about anything” with their partner is an important element in relationships. These crosstabulations appear in Table 3.3. It is important to note that Blalock’s (1960) Test of Proportions on this crosstabulation yielded a result of .97, suggesting that the occurrence of statistically significant results for these three items was random. No other content themes were found to show significant sex differences.

No significant findings emerged when testing the Communication Locus of Control Scale against the 35 content themes. Please see Table 3.4 for crosstabulation results.

Three content themes emerged as significant when crosstabulated with the Premarital Anxiety Scale’s fulfillment subscale: confrontation (p=.033); separation (p=.006); and humor (p=.036). These crosstabulations appear in Table 3.5. Utilizing Blalock’s (1960) Test of Proportions, the fulfillment subscale yielded a result of .97,
indicating that the occurrence of statistically significant results for the three items was random. Given this random result, no further interpretation of the results could be made. Six content themes were significant when crosstabulated with the Premarital Anxiety’s security subscale: trust (p=.022); openness (p=.008); criticism (p=.009); individuality (p=.032); separation (p=.013); and mindreading (p=.044). These crosstabulations appear in Table 3.6. Applying Blalock’s (1960) Test of Proportions, the six items from the security subscale yielded a result of 3.27, which indicates that this subscale is statistically significant and not a circumstance of random occurrence. Noting that the security subscale was divided at the median, with scores above the median labeled “high” and scores below the median labeled “low,” the following percentages emerged when the subscale was crosstabulated against the content themes: trust (7% high and 20% low); openness (14% high and 32% low); criticism (1% high and 12% low); individuality (0% high and 6% low); separation (15% high and 4% low); and mindreading (1% high and 9% low). These results indicate overall that participants who scored low on the security subscale, also reported content themes relating to insecurity, such as trust, openness, etc. The implications of these results will be discussed in the next chapter.
Table 3.1 Relationship Locus of Control Scale: Report of Means on External Locus of Control Responses (in Percentages).

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Table 3.2 Relationship Locus of Control Scale: Report of Means on Internal Locus of Control Responses (in Percentages).

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* indicates significant chi squares
Table 3.4  Crosstabulation of Communication Locus of Control Scale and Content Themes.

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Table 3.5 Crosstabulation of Fulfillment Subscale of the Premarital Anxiety Scale and Content Themes.

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* indicates significant chi squares
Table 3.6  Crosstabulation of Security Subscale of the Premarital Anxiety Scale and Content Themes.

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* indicates significant chi squares
Chapter 4

DISCUSSION

This study examined whether there are significant sex differences in the rhetorical visions of communication in intimate, interpersonal relationships. This research question was addressed predominantly through chi square analyses. Little support was found for the existence of sex differences in rhetorical visions, thereby lending support for the single culture perspective. Only three content themes from the open-ended essay responses were significant when crosstabulated against sex. Three scales were employed in the 114-item questionnaire: Communication Locus of Control (Hamilton, 1991); Relationship Locus of Control (Burggraf, 1993); and Premarital Anxiety Scale (Zimmer, 1986). No significant results emerged when the Communication Locus of Control Scale was crosstabulated with the 35 content themes from the open-ended essays. The Relationship Locus of Control scale was found to be unreliable and therefore not used for further analysis. The Premarital Anxiety Scale consisted of two subscales that were relevant to this study, the fulfillment and security subscales. Chi square analyses were tabulated using the security and fulfillment subscales and content themes from participants' essays. While initial findings indicated that three items from the fulfillment subscale were significant, closer inspection by way of Blalock's (1960) Test of Proportions revealed the occurrence of these findings were indeed random. However, six items from the security subscale were significant and not a circumstance of random occurrence. This chapter will begin with a discussion of the findings, and will be followed by a discussion of why this study found little support for sex differences in rhetorical
visions. The last section will address the limitations of this study and provide suggestions for future research.

**Sex Differences**

Bodies of research have shown that sex differences exist in communicative behavior. Although these differences have generally been found to be small in magnitude, they are consistent across many studies and content areas. While these findings have come under close scrutiny and criticism, it is important to acknowledge Abelson’s (1985) assertion that findings small in magnitude cumulate over time to produce meaningful, real world information about the phenomenon in question.

In the early years of research on sex differences in communication (the 1940s through the 1960s), a skills deficit theory evolved in which women’s communication skills were reported to be inferior to those of men. Male communication behaviors were far more valued during that highly patriarchal and sexist era, which led to a predictably disparaging evaluation of female communication behaviors. As a result, both women and their communication styles were devalued perhaps not only in the academic community, but in greater society as well.

Two possible explanations have been put forth to explain sex differences in communication: the dual cultures approach and the single culture approach. The dual cultures approach claims that males and females are reared in two virtually distinct sociolinguistic worlds, ultimately resulting in frequent miscommunication. For example, according to this model, some behaviors that females learn include creating and maintaining relationships of closeness and equality, and criticizing others in acceptable ways. Some behaviors that males learn include asserting one’s dominance, being assertive when others have the floor, and attracting and maintaining an audience. The roots of this
approach can be traced back to Maltz & Borker (1982), who based their theory on Gumperz' (1982) work on misunderstandings in interethnic communication.

The dual cultures approach has been widely criticized. Critics argue that sex difference findings are small in magnitude (therefore lacking in real-world meaning) and suffer from a variety of problems, including the use of stereotypes in defining variables and interpreting results, unsound methodology, and excluding same-sex comparisons (in which stronger similarities between the sexes tend to be found).

The single culture approach was developed as an alternative to the dual cultures perspective of sex differences in communication. Proponents of the single culture perspective argue that dual cultures researchers largely fail to recognize the types and degrees of similarities in communication that men women actually share (Burleson, et al., 1996; Canary & Hause, 1993), and that these similarities far outweigh differences. In lay terms, single culture theorists claim that women and men learn the same "language" of relational communication and share similar values about it, but that women and men differ in their skill levels in relational communication. While each sex has strengths and weaknesses in how they communicate, overall men and women share more similarities than differences in terms of communication attributes.

One method used in this project to extract men's and women's cultural views about communication was the employment of an open-ended question in which participants provided an essay-style response. The purpose of analyzing the inductively-created content themes in participants' responses was to determine whether clear rhetorical visions would emerge out of these collective themes. Utilizing chi square analysis, only three out of 35 content themes showed significant differences between men and women: self-disclosure; trust; and talking about anything with one's spouse. Respectively, these items indicated that men were more likely to consider self-disclosure
and trust as important elements in intimate communication, while women were more likely
to indicate that being able to talk about anything with their partners is an important
element in relationships. Additionally, when Blalock’s (1960) Test of Proportions was
administered to this data, results indicated that these findings were in fact random.

**Explanation of Results**

As mentioned previously, findings in this study supported the single culture
perspective. The fact that sex differences could not be identified in rhetorical visions leads
to the conclusion that men and women are more similar than different and that they exist
in the same sociolinguistic world, as the single culture view asserts. Assuming that this is
true, an explanation is needed to account for sex differences in communication in the
context of a single culture in which women and men learn and share similar values about
communication. One explanation is the skills deficit view, which posits that men are
deficient in terms of relational or “expressive” communication (i.e., communication of
emotions and a focus on nurturing of relationships) and women are deficient in terms of
task-oriented or “instrumental” communication (i.e., informational, hierarchical, and
goal-oriented communication (see Baird, 1976; Henley & Kramarae, 1991; Noller, 1993).
In other words, women and men share similar values regarding communication, but
women are less skilled than men in task-oriented communication and men are less skilled
than women in relational communication.

Methodological problems were evident in this study. These issues are
discussed below.

**Definition of Rhetorical Visions**

While the focus of this study was to discover whether men and women report
differing rhetorical visions about communication in relationships, a key difficulty
encountered was the lack of a clear and consistent definition of rhetorical visions. Bormann (1972) defined rhetorical visions as “composite dramas which catch up large groups of people in a symbolic reality” (p. 213). Kidd (1975) attempted to create a more accessible definition of the phrase, calling a rhetorical vision an “indication of popular mood.” Unfortunately, however, Kidd’s definition was nearly as abstract as Bormann’s. Further inquiry to locate a more specific definition was unsuccessful. Therefore, the manner in which the author attempted to glean rhetorical visions from subjects’ essays was guided by a somewhat vague and abstract definition. As a result of the author not having a clear and concrete definition of rhetorical visions, the determination of whether rhetorical visions were present in participants’ essays was a highly subjective and potentially flawed process. Additionally, rhetorical visions were identified in past research through the use of group discussion (Bormann, 1972) and analysis of popular culture magazines (Kidd, 1975). These methods involved subjective interpretations of rhetorical visions and offered little protocol for replicating the procedure for further experimentation. Given that both of these methods differed greatly from one another, yet had the similar end result of identifying collective rhetorical visions, this author surmised that rhetorical visions could also be gleaned from essays that participants wrote about communication in relationships. Clearly, this method was flawed in that it was difficult to identify rhetorical visions in participants’ responses. Of the rhetorical visions that were identified, no sex effects were found.

**Sample Limitations**

The sample utilized for this study was limited in several ways. The population surveyed was a sample comprised of undergraduate college students. Over half of the subjects described themselves as upper-middle class, and 88% of the subjects were
Caucasian. Ninety-seven percent of the sample had never been married. These demographics raise significant issues about the generalization of the author's findings to the general population, since the sample did not reflect the characteristics of a randomly selected sample of the public at large. The sample reflected very little racial and socioeconomic diversity, which again does not reflect society at large.

In addition, given that the participants were college students, never married, and relatively young, the sample as a whole most likely did not have substantive romantic relationship experience. Therefore, it is plausible that the subjects were responding based on how they believe they would think, act or feel, rather than issuing a response based on direct personal experience. This raises some interesting questions about the source of the participants' beliefs -- in other words, where do their beliefs about communication in romantic relationships come from, if not from experience? Several explanations are offered below.

Perhaps the participants of this study made a similar unintentional error that Canary and Hause (1993) reported that many researchers make when evaluating data regarding sex differences in communication: stereotyping. It is possible that the participants created their descriptions of romantic communication based on stereotypical notions of how men and women behave in relationships. Even though the participants may learned what is deemed "appropriate" from parental modeling, peers, or the media, it does not mean that what they have learned is not stereotyped in and of itself. Given the fact that the participants reported having very little romantic relationship experience, this author would argue that they based much, if not most, of their responses on stereotyped notions of how women and men communicate in relationships. This calls into question the validity of the participants' responses and the consequent impact on the analyzed data. Perhaps this study simply measured participants' perceived stereotypes about
communication in relationships. Nonetheless, since there were very few significant results, it can be said that there were little or no sex differences among men's and women's perceived stereotypes about communication in relationships.

**Scales**

**Relationship Locus of Control Scale**

The purpose of using the Relationship Locus of Control Scale (Burggraf, 1993) was to determine the extent to which participants demonstrated an internal or external locus of control regarding romantic relationships. When this scale was tested, it was found to be unreliable and therefore could not be used in the study. There may be various possible explanations for the scale's lack of reliability. One possibility is that the structure of the scale, which forced participants to respond to one of two statements for each item, provided an inaccurate picture of what participants may have actually believed or felt about the topics in the survey, because they had to choose one of only two statements. In other words, a participant may not have agreed with either of the statements in each of the items, but she or he had no choice but to choose one of the two statements. The statements were arbitrary and did not permit the respondent to indicate "not applicable" or "none of the above" response options, which could have yielded a richer picture of participants' beliefs. In addition, because two dichotomous statements were used in the scale, it is impossible to know the degree to which participants agreed or disagreed with the statements.

Another explanation lies on a conceptual level. Given that scales already existed to measure not only locus of control (Rotter, 1966), but communication locus of control (Hamilton, 1991) as well, one must question whether the creation of a relationship locus of control scale was necessary. One would anticipate that a person's general locus
of control or communication locus of control would be applicable or similar to one’s relationship locus of control. For example, if a person demonstrates strong communication locus of control and internal locus of control in both a general and communication context, it would seem likely that this person would also exhibit strong internal locus of control regarding relationships. If this is the case, then the creation of a relationship locus of control scale would be unnecessary.

**Communication Locus of Control Scale**

When crosstabulated with the 35 content themes, the Communication Locus of Control scale (Hamilton, 1991) yielded no significant results. However, it should be noted that the author’s reliability score for this scale was slightly on the lower end (0.68), which could have masked real differences. One possible explanation is that, given that this scale measures personal attributes relevant to control/dominance, and no sex differences were identified when crosstabulated with the 35 content themes, then it would be logical to conclude that no real world relationship exists between rhetorical visions and men and women’s personality attributes.

**Premarital Anxiety Scale**

Two subscales derived from the Premarital Anxiety Scale (Zimmer, 1986) were relevant to this study: the fulfillment and security subscales. While the fulfillment subscale, when crosstabulated with the content themes, yielded three significant items (confrontation, separation and humor), further testing via Blalock’s (1960) Test of Proportions revealed that the occurrence of these significant results for the three items was random. Six content themes emerged as statistically significant when crosstabulated with the Premarital Anxiety Scale’s (Zimmer, 1986) security subscale. The significant content themes include: trust; individuality; openness; criticism; separation; and
mindreading. A general interpretation of this finding is that it makes sense that participants who scored high versus low on the security subscale would differ on the above content themes, because the themes reflect issues about one’s self-confidence and independence regarding relationships, and the security subscale contains items concerning anxieties about abandonment, manipulation, infidelity and relationship breakup. The content themes reflect strong relationship characteristics, and if a participant scored high or low on the security subscale, it would be evident in the crosstabulation with the content themes. In other words, it makes sense that a participant who has security issues about relationships would also report having anxiety regarding, for example, relationship separation, trust, and individuality.

Specifically, however, the percentages reveal a more interesting story. Participants who scored low on the security subscale tended to report the aforementioned content themes more often than participants who scored high on the security subscale (see Chapter 3 for percentages). A low score on the security subscale suggests that the participant has insecure tendencies. Given that participants who scored low on the subscale are overall more concerned about issues relating to security, security-relevant content themes, such as trust, criticism and individuality, would be more likely to emerge than for participants who scored high on the scale. In other words, it makes sense that insecure people would be more likely to also report more concerns regarding themes such trust, criticism, and individuality.

**Conclusion**

The results of this study support the claim made by Burleson et al. (1996) that similarities in communication behaviors between men and women outweigh the differences. However, this author is troubled by the single culture view in that it appears
to focus heavily on disproving or debunking the dual cultures view mainly by arguing that most sex differences in communication are small in magnitude and therefore marginally meaningful. Perhaps our academic community has yet to find a measurable method that can capture statistically significant sex differences that appear obvious to lay people but elude scientists when studied in controlled conditions. The widespread and commercial success of books such as John Gray’s *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus: A Practical Guide for Improving Communication and Getting What You Want in Relationships* (1992) and Deborah Tannen’s *You Just Don’t Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (1990b) hint that the sexes seem to exist on a communication battleground, yet that they are eager to understand and work through their differences. The lay literature works from the assumption that differences exist in the real world, while the academic community remains mired in the argument over whether these differences actually exist. While it may be tempting to dismiss pop literature as baseless and lacking in scientific rigor, it has its finger, figuratively speaking, on the pulse of the American people when it comes to communication between the sexes.

It has been shown that small but dependable differences exist in communicative behavior between women and men. It is also apparent the general public believes that there are sex differences in values about communication. However, the academic community is divided on the existence, magnitude, and impact of these differences. The results of this study seem to imply that there are no dependable sex differences in values about communication, but that a lack of dependable sex differences may simply be a consequence of poor methodology. Finding dependable sex differences in communication has indeed proven to be elusive within the academic arena. Perhaps the inability of the academic community to find dependable differences in communication values is due to the reality that reliable quantitative methods have yet to be developed.
However, the possibility that dependable sex differences have not been identified simply because they do not exist is also a very real possibility. Regardless of the findings, the public’s perception that a “battle of the sexes” exists will continue indefinitely, providing eternal fodder for academics and others to ponder for many years to come.
SCENARIOS

Appendix A
1. You and your spouse have filed for a divorce. You are seated across one another at a conference table with your lawyers, and the animosity between you is so intense that you cannot even look at each other. Rather, your lawyers are communicating for you. While your lawyers are arguing about the distribution of your property assets, you begin to think back to the glorious period shortly after you were married. Your relationship was so fulfilling and complete back then—it seemed as if the two of you communicated perfectly. Now, you wonder how you went from “perfect communication” to being unable to look at one another. What explanation can you offer?

2. Because you studied communication (and other liberal arts) in college, you were automatically selected to be the United States’ student representative to the United Nations Annual Conference on Family Values. Congratulations! You will be traveling to New York for the conference this summer. Your first task at the conference is to make an opening statement in which you tell the delegates from all of the countries in the world about the nature of good, functional, and satisfying communication in intimate and family relationships (as we in the United States do it). What would you tell them? Please write your opening statement below.

3. You and your spouse have been married for about a year. You are so happy in your relationship that it is apparent to everyone who sees you. In fact your neighbor has often commented to you about how happy the two of you seem to be. This neighbor’s 20-year old daughter/son is getting married in a couple of months, and the neighbor has asked you to advise the soon-to-be-wed couple about the nature of the communication that allows you and your spouse to maintain such a satisfying relationship. What will you tell this couple about how communication works?
4. You have just been hired by a Hollywood producer to act as the communication consultant for a new television show. Your job is to help the writers prepare the dialogue between the married couples (and/or other intimate heterosexual romantic characters) on the show. The writers want on the couples on the show to have a perfectly happy relationship--a marriage made in heaven! The writers ask you, how does such a couple communicate? Please write what you would tell them.

5. You have just been hired by a Hollywood producer to act as the communication consultant for a new television show. Your job is to help the writers prepare the dialogue between the married couples (and/or other intimate heterosexual romantic characters) on the show. The writers want one of the couples to have problems with communication--this couple should communicate in ways that are less than satisfying, not very effective, or even harmful to the intimacy and long term stability of the couple. The writers ask you, how does such a couple communicate? Please write what you would tell them.
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE
The purpose of this project is to investigate college students’ attitudes about intimate relationships. Thus, on the following pages are several types of questions and/or statements in which we would like you to respond.

You should expect to spend about 20 minutes responding to the questions and statements contained within this questionnaire. You will be given 2 points of extra credit toward your COMM 312 grade for your efforts in this study.

Please sign below if you wish to participate. DO NOT put your name on your response sheet. Instead, please write the last five digits of your social security number on the top of your response sheet, in the box marked “Identification”. Then, please record the last five digits of your social security number in the first five columns of “Box B” on your computer answer sheet. For example, if your social security number is 555 34 3792, you would write “4-3792” in the “Identification Box” on the top of your response sheet and in the first five columns of Box B.

Members of the research team will have access to your response sheets, but neither this consent form nor any other information that could allow your name to be associated with your response will be marked on them.

The information you supply for us in this project may be published in the future in some type of aggregate form (e.g., statistical summaries), however no personally identifying information will be included. There are no apparent risks to you as participants, however filling out this questionnaire may be of benefit in that it will allow you to learn more about yourself and your ideas about marriage and marital communication, as well as earning you an additional two points toward your COMM 312 grade.

Please feel free to ask any questions that you have.

THANK YOU FOR HELPING US IN THIS STUDY!

Cynthia S. Burggraf, Ph.D.
Project Director
Department of Communication
(302) 831-2958

I give my consent to participate in this study.

Signature __________________________ Date __________________________

Name (Print) __________________________ SS# __________________________
Below are presented a large number of personality characteristics. We would like you to use these characteristics in order to describe yourself. That is, we would like you to indicate, using the scale below, how true of you each of the characteristics are. For each characteristic record the number of your response on the computer answer sheet, on the appropriate line. Please do not leave any characteristics unmarked. Thank you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never or Almost Never</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Sometimes True</th>
<th>Occasionally True</th>
<th>Often True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Always True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

EXAMPLE: a. Trustworthy

If you think this word describes you all the time, you would record "7"; if you think you are only occasionally trustworthy, you would record "4" on the appropriate line of your answer sheet.

1. Self-reliant
2. Yielding
3. Helpful
4. Defends own beliefs
5. Cheerful
6. Moody
7. Independent
8. Shy
9. Conscientious
10. Athletic
11. Affectionate
12. Theatrical
13. Assertive
14. Flatterable
15. Happy
16. Strong personality
17. Loyal
18. Unpredictable
19. Forceful
20. Feminine
21. Reliable
22. Analytical
23. Sympathetic
24. Jealous
25. Has leadership ability
26. Sensitive to needs of others
27. Truthful
28. Willing to take risks
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Never or Almost Never</th>
<th>Usually Not True</th>
<th>Sometimes True</th>
<th>Occasionally True</th>
<th>Often True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Always True</th>
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<td>29. Understanding</td>
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<td>30. Secretive</td>
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<td>31. Makes decisions easily</td>
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<td>32. Compassionate</td>
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<td>33. Sincere</td>
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<td>34. Self-sufficient</td>
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<td>35. Eager to soothe hurt feelings</td>
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<td>36. Conceited</td>
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<td>37. Dominant</td>
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<td>38. Soft-spoken</td>
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<td>39. Likeable</td>
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<td>40. Masculine</td>
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<td>41. Warm</td>
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<td>42. Solemn</td>
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<td>43. Willing to take a stand</td>
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<td>44. Tender</td>
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<td>45. Friendly</td>
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<td>46. Aggressive</td>
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<td>47. Gullible</td>
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<td>48. Inefficient</td>
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<td>49. Acts as a leader</td>
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<td>50. Childlike</td>
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<td>51. Adaptable</td>
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<td>52. Individualistic</td>
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<td>53. Does not use harsh language</td>
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<td>54. Unsystematic</td>
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<td>55. Competitive</td>
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<td>56. Loves children</td>
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<td>57. Tactful</td>
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<td>58. Ambitious</td>
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<td>59. Gentle</td>
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<td>60. Conversational</td>
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Please check to make sure that you finished on line "60" of your computer answer sheet. If you did not finish on line 60, please back up, find the place where you got off the correct line, and fix your responses. Finally, please fill in a "9" on line 61. Then go to the next page.

66
The following questions address your feelings about marriage.

Please respond to each item as it completes the sentence “If I marry, I would be very concerned and would worry about:”

PLEASE USE THIS SCALE TO RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

1 = Strongly Agree
2 = Moderately Agree
3 = Slightly Agree
4 = Neutral
5 = Slightly DISagree
6 = Moderately DISagree
7 = Strongly DISagree

If I marry, I would be very concerned and would worry about:

62. losing my freedom and feeling trapped
63. my mate being sexually unfaithful to me
64. boredom and routine setting in
65. keeping the romance alive
66. having a comfortable and economically secure life
67. my mate leaving me for someone else
68. interference or lack of approval from our parents
69. being lied to or manipulated by my mate
70. possible conflicts with career needs
71. being able to achieve a close, warm and special rapport with my mate
72. being able to have an equal relationship, a true partnership with my mate
73. my marriage ending in divorce
74. being emotionally and sexually fulfilled with my mate
75. Please check to make sure that you finished this section on line “74”. If you did not, please go back and find the place where you got “off-line” and correct your responses. Then fill in a nine (9) on line 75.
The next questions assess some of your general feelings about communication. There are no right or wrong answers. You are asked to register the amount of agreement or disagreement that you have with each statement, using the scale below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

76. I can influence nearly anyone if I try.
77. Even when I know what I want to say, I can’t seem to control how I say it.
78. People who speak well are just plain lucky.
79. There are so many variables in a communication situation that communicating well in nearly an impossibility.
80. When I have something important to say, my self-confidence flies out the window.
81. How much I contribute to a conversation depends on how much others will allow me to contribute.
82. The ability to speak well is something you just happen to be born with.
83. I am usually in control of my behavior when I speak.
84. Good fortune or luck is created by the speaker, it doesn’t just happen.
85. Given the chance, I can control almost any conversation.
86. If I am aware of a personal communication behavior that is bad, I can control it.
87. Since there is really no such thing as luck, being a good speaker is the result of personal effort.
88. No matter how hard I try, when I have something important to say, I just can’t seem to make things come out right.
89. When I have something important to say, it is almost as if my conversational partner controls me more than I control myself.
90. Persistence and hard work, not chance, will make you a better speaker.
91. Very few situations are so complicated that communication cannot help.
92. I can keep my wits about me in most communication situations.
Each of the following pairs of statements describes some aspect of your relationships, yourself, or your relationship experience. Reach each pair of statements and then record either "1" or "2" (the statement that most accurately reflects your response) on the appropriate lines of your computer answer sheet. Please don’t skip any statements.

93. 1. Many of the misfortunes I encounter in my relationships are mainly due to bad luck.  
   2. Most of the misfortune I encounter in my relationships result from mistakes I make.

94. 1. Without the right breaks, one cannot have good relationships.  
   2. Capable people who fail to have good relationships have not taken advantage of their opportunities.

95. 1. Having a successful relationship is a matter of hard work; luck has little or nothing to do with it.  
   2. Having a good relationship depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time.

96. 1. When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.  
   2. It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be out of our control anyhow.

97. 1. No matter how hard I try sometimes, my relationship partner just doesn’t appreciate me.  
   2. There is a direct connection between how hard I try and how much my relationship partner appreciates me.

98. 1. In the long run, people in relationships get the respect they deserve.  
   2. Unfortunately, an individual’s worth in a relationship often goes unrecognized, no matter how hard he or she tries.

99. 1. Relationship partners who act as if they deserve respect are rarely, if ever, treated unfairly.  
   2. Many times the way a relationship partner is treated has nothing to do with how she or he acts.

100. 1. Whether or not I succeed in my relationships depends mostly on my ability.  
     2. Success in relationships depends a great deal on luck.

101. 1. I have often found that what is going to happen will.  
     2. Trusting to fate has never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action.

102. 1. In the long run, the bad things that happen to individuals in their relationships are balanced by the good ones.  
     2. Most misfortunes individuals encounter in their relationships are the result of lack of ability, ignorance or laziness.

103. 1. What happens to me in my relationships is my own doing.  
     2. Most of the time, I feel that I don’t have enough control over the direction my relationships are taking.
Please read the following questions and fill in your answers on your response sheets. Thank you.

104. Are you:  1 = Female    2 = Male

105. Do you think of yourself as coming from:
1. a working class or blue collar family
2. a lower middle class family
3. a middle class family
4. an upper middle class family
5. a privileged or wealthy class family

106. Do you define yourself as:
1. a person of color
2. African American
3. Hispanic
4. oriental
5. Caucasian
6. other ______________________

107. Do you think of yourself as a member of the North American culture? (In other words, are your parents or guardians citizens of the United States and/or were you raised in the United States?)
1. yes, I think of myself as a member of the North American culture
2. no, I do not think of myself as a member of the North American culture

108. Are you involved in a romantic relationship at this time?
1. yes  2. no

109. If you answered yes to question #70, are you in love with your romantic partner?
1. yes  2. no  3. does not apply

110. How many times have you been in a serious romantic relationship?
0. zero (never)  4. four times
1. once  5. five times
2. twice  6. six or more times
3. three times

111. Are you currently married?  1. yes  2. no

IF YOU ARE NOT CURRENTLY MARRIED:

112. Have you ever been married?  1. yes  2. no
113. Are you engaged?  1. yes  2. no
114. Do you think you will marry in the future?  1. yes  2. no
115. Please fill in a "2" on line 77.
Appendix C
CODING MANUAL

1. Communication is Key...

Good communication is key ingredient (2)
Communication is paramount
Talk leads to successful relationship
Good communication leads to happiness
Good communication = successful relationship
Communication is key to satisfying relationships
Communication is vital part of relationships
Communication is key to reconciliation

2. Self Disclosure

Disclose feelings (8)
Disclose problems
100% self-disclosure
Self-disclosure = communication
Disclose thoughts
Disclose intimate feelings
Disclose innermost feelings
Express feelings clearly and effectively
Disclose feelings as soon as something is wrong
Communication is self-disclosure - Example: share feelings, etc
Be able to discuss anything without worrying about criticism
Communicate everything to partner, even if it hurts (but convolute the message first)
Tell each other everything
Know each other completely
Selectively disclose - Example: if admirer likes you & makes partner jealous, don't tell partner
Must really know partner as a person before marriage
Don't bottle feelings (11)
Bottled emotions lead to animosity
Bottled feelings lead to letting it all out at once
Bottled feelings lead to anger and dislike
Keep secrets from partner - to stay happy keep things that upset partner secret
Example: non-spouse making a pass at spouse
Limit amount of time discussing relationship - don't over-analyze
Limit partner from outside interference- because spouse is threatened by external interests in spouse
Couple doesn't share private language
Not open and honest
Bottle feelings
Hide stuff from partner
Have a third party manipulate spouse
Hide feelings

3. Nonverbal Communication

Interpret partner’s nonverbal communication - Example: body contact and vocalics
Intuitive of nonverbal cues
Use nonverbal feedback
Use caring nonverbal - Example: enter each other’s space, trust and love via eyes
Have secret nonverbal symbols to convey affection - Example: scratch partner’s palm to indicate sex in near future
Misinterpret nonverbal communication
Arguments caused by misinterpretation of gestures

4. Conflict

Accept conflict as part of relationship
Conflict should be viewed as relationship builder
OK to fight/get mad - try to resolve problems
Grow from conflict
Conflict may be beneficial
Arguing fosters healthy relationship
Don't avoid conflict (2)
Confront conflict (3)
Handle conflict immediately and maturely
Never go to bed angry (4)
Willing to work out problems (2)
Talk out conflict, don’t yell
Sensibly talk problems out (5)
Negotiate disagreements
Work out conflict together (5)
Empathy leads to understanding partner’s argument
Empathize and understand during conflict
Don't bring up past arguments
Rise above differences in conflict
Resolve conflict before marriage - Example: career and children
During conflict, good to change atmosphere - Example: take walk
5. Avoiding Conflict

Avoid conflict (8)
Hide negative feelings (5)
Have difficulty discussing problems
Conflicts lie unresolved because partners are anxious to smooth things over
Talk about meaningless things
Deny existence of problems - Example: if there's a problem, deny it to partner, then say you'd rather not discuss it and hope partner accepts your request, then all will be ok

6. Causes of Conflict

Bringing up the past (4)
Not thinking before speaking (2)
Bring outside issues into relationships is harmful
Blame each other
Lack of mutual compliments
Using "you" statements instead of "I feel"
One partner will have affair
Opposite personality types caused relationship's demise
Negative attributes of partner hampers communication - Example: pigheaded males cause conflict by yelling and complaining, etc can be barrier for communication
Stubborn and dogmatic
Don't empathize
Focus on negative qualities
Adversarial communication
Talks end as arguments
Nagging- Example: not doing dishes, chores, causes fights
Third party involvement leads to fights - Example: tell parents about problems (2)
Gender traits cause problems - Example: Women like to discuss problems, men don't
Talking behind partner's back

7. Externals

External factors contributed to failed relationship - Example: partner careers bloomed
Boredom-leads to resentment or blame
Resentment
Got sick of each other and lead to fights
Conflicting personalities caused disharmony
Taboo subjects cause conflict - Example: ex lovers
Partners can't get along
Outside force caused loss of communication - Example: work, baby, friends or family
An event caused communication
Negative feelings lead to misunderstanding, lead to hurt relationship
Before marriage, had put best self forward
8. Trust

Trust (12) - Example: trust partner will hear you
   Example: regardless of what happens, partner will be told
Honesty leads to trust
Effective communication based on trust
Lack of trust (5)
Mutual suspicion when partner are apart
In beginning of relationship, were open and honest; then began to mistrust

9. Activities/Togetherness

Do activities both enjoy weekly - Example: tennis, dinner, shopping
Togetherness: a problem for one is a problem for both
They would be the Cosbys'
Compatibility is fundamental to marital success
Do things together
Keep active social life
Commitment
Little in common with partner
Superficial relationship - only phatic communication, avoid important issues
Stopped doing nice things for each other
Don't make time for each other - Example: Husband has demanding job, but won't make time for wife, even when she's upset
Not ready for permanent bond
Nothing in common
Didn't explore needs of self first

10. Honesty

Don't keep secrets
No secrets
Honesty (33)
   Examples: show true emotions & feelings
divulge all information about self
dishonesty leads to fights
be honest; if not, will get caught in lie
even share unpleasant information
not raw, but that which is used in respect to partner
share thoughts, regardless of conflict

Sincerity (3)
Put down guard
Don't lie - Example: admit cheating/gambling
Never lie/deceive
Not open and honest
11. Understanding

Communication leads to understanding –
   Example: wife debriefs, husband doesn't - communication allows understanding of preferences
Communication allows understanding of partner’s needs and views
Understand partner’s beliefs, values, etc. through role-taking
Paraphrase partner for understanding
Understanding partner for understanding
   -is key
   -is most important
Communication allows empathy - to understand partner’s thoughts and feelings
Empathize (3)

12. Communication is Work

Communication requires time and effort to work
Good communication is complex and challenging
Communication is continuous
To communicate equally is work
Communication isn’t inherited; must learn and practice it
Good communication conveys one’s meaning and indicates nature of relationship
Dedication needed to make communication work
Communication is work

13. Communication is 2-Way Street

Communication is 2-way
Communication is 2-way street (6)
   Example: must both talk and listen to each other
Stopped working at communication

14. Openness

Open communication - Example: talk about anything to partner (3)
Open communication - Example: share feelings, thoughts, info re selves, experiences, sex, problems, humor, social lives (8)
Open communication - Example always talk, relieves tension
Openness is successful ingredient to marriage
Open relationship with high levels of communication
Open/openness (8)
Communicate openly and freely (2)
Communication lines must be open
Act open, even if you're not
Keep open mind
Open minded - you're opinion isn't always right comfortable expressing self to partner
Must have trust and openness to be intimate

15. Criticism

Be open to constructive criticism
Don't accuse partner of wrongdoing
Don't attack personality of partner
Criticize each other constructively
Criticize tactfully
Don't criticize/insult
Don't hurt each other (via insults)
Make fun of each other
Make each other feel inadequate after sex - Example: tell spouse you've had better
Insult partner
Make personal attacks
Bad mouthing partner
Insult each other - Example: tell spouse he or she is overweight
Notice the bad, rather than good of partner over time
Insult and say regrettable things

16. Love

Love each other
Fully love partner
Tell partner you love him/her (2)
Loving
Obvious to others couple is in love
Act playful in love (like teens)
In love (2)
Express love
Love
Fell out of love
Didn't truly love each other

17. Compromise

Compromise (6)
- prevents conflicts
- or give in to partner’s wants
No compromising
Never compromise
18. Equality

Equality between each other - no one person dominates (5)
Don't take control
Equal speaking and listening time
Communicate equally - both listen and be open to each other
Unequal relationship - Example: one partner talks down to other
Mismatched type of partners - Example dominant/submissive, submissive/submissive

19. Listen

Listen (16)
Listening is most important (2)
Listen without criticism
Listen instead of defending oneself
Listen - act on various responses
One partner doesn't listen
Poor listening skills
Don't listen to each other
Don't listen - Example: interrupt often, reply vaguely, change subject, etc

20. Friends

Be best friends
Become friends before intimacy
Be friends
Are best friends
Friendship

21. Confrontation

No yelling/sarcasm
Don't scream at each other
Never raise voices
No hostility
Never use abusive language
Never argue/fight
Hide anger - don't be upset
Work out problems without showing emotions
Hide feelings
Yell at each other
Excessive anger breaks down communication
23. Respect

Respect (6)
Respectful communication is key factor in marriage
Communicate with respect (2)
Respect partner’s opinions, ideas, thoughts, secrets (5)
Respect differences
Respect partner’s method of cooling off during argument
Mutual disrespect

23. Doing Things for Spouse

Keep romance alive - do things for spouse
Remember/do the little things that show feelings/you care (4)
Give gifts
Once lust and sex in early relationship fades, the real relationship grows
Stopped doing little things for partner

24. Individuality

Recognize individuality ((5)
Examples: take time off to be alone by taking walks alone, etc
develop your own interests
allow each other time for privacy, like private bathrooms
personal space for both
each have own friends, goals, and interests
Duality - live as individuals and be each other's halves
Example: consult each other for couples issues, but make individual decisions
Encourage each other- Example: careers and hobbies

25. Separation

Put personal goals ahead of relationship goals
Couples with problems communicating result from separate interests
Don't spend much time together - Example: she and he are both out with their own friends
People grow apart - Example: people live with each other, but not together
Communication disintegrated and went their own ways- both spent too much time away from home.
Partners became unaware of each other's needs and placed their own before P's
Both had different goals
Goals and views changed
Different careers
Grew in separate directions - Example: one became lawyer, other had low-level job
Both P's work - wife0 likes to spend time w/ man, but he changes plans and also cuts evenings short
26. Talk About Anything with Spouse/Keep Communication Lines Open

Talk about anything with partner (5)
Constantly talk with partner
Share everything that happens
Communicate often and effectively
Share innermost feelings with partner
Open and free lines of communication
Keep communication lines open (5)
Communication patterns are natural- don't have to think about what to say or whether it will offend

27. Mindreading

Anticipate partner's emotions
Anticipate partner's behavior because they know each other so well; helps reduce conflicts
Partner should know how he/she feels about you; why be redundant by repeating it?
Don't assume how partner will act
Can't tell what partner is thinking
Don't mindread (2)
Mindreading occurs when couples have slacked off w/ communication

28. Honeymoon to Hatred...

Newness of relationship wore off – partner's no longer concentrated on each other
Once newness of relationship fades, communication changes
   Example: in beginning of relationship, took the time to talk and compromise; now, don't take time to talk, hold hands; instead, write impersonal note on kitchen table
Easiest in beginning of relationship, b/c partners discover things about each other; gets difficult after several years when it gets comfortable
In beginning of relationship, did/said anything to get partner to like you
During glamorous and glitzy time early in relationship, partners overlooked communication skills - didn't see real personalities of each other
During honeymoon period, partner's actions are cute, but become annoying after newness wears off
Honeymoon phase eventually turns into boredom and unhappiness
   Example: at first, relationship was dreamy: good sex, conversation, etc, then began to get feelings of lost freedom, restrictions, etc.
Honeymoon phase wore off- began to take each other for granted
Honeymoon phase ends
   Example: at first, all is fake and lovely, then after 1st year, real personalities emerge and conflicts occur.
29. Humor

Have sense of humor (5)
Have fun
Positive attitude
Positive life outlook
Energetic and happy about each other
Share similar values, beliefs, experiences
Keep relationship alive & communication channels open

Example: experiment, be adventurous

30. Spousal Priority

Would die for each other
One partner's life is the other's
Make other happy is #1 priority
Spouse must be #1 priority
Seek to make each other happy
Be each other's half
Balanced personalities compliment each other

Example: one partner is spontaneous, other plans logically
Ultimate and successful communication is to make partner feel like your own

31. Spousal Support

Be considerate
Show appreciation (2)
Be supportive (2)
Accept each other (3)
Reassure partner's feelings
Compliment each other often
Compassion
Can't change partner
Enjoys partner

Example: happy to see partner, sad when partner leaves
Emotionally connected to partner
Show affection
No jealousy
Encourage partner
Have different opinions, but open minded enough to listen to them
Be faithful to self and partner
Be kind
Don't be selfish
Be able to forgive - let the past go
32. Be Yourself

Genuineness
Be themselves
Be yourself
Be your real self - eliminate hidden self

33. General Communication

Avoid generalizations about partner
   Example: "you never" or "you always"
Be sensitive in message content and delivery
Discuss child-rearing practices in advance
Write notes to each other
Be aware that men and women communicate in different ways
Take gender differences into consideration
Study partner's communication habits
Tailor communication to suit partner's dispositions
Admit wrongs/take blame
Obstacles can be overcome w/ communication
   Example: lying, cheating problems can be talked out
Ok not to know all about P before marriage; then will have more to talk about after marriage
Communication is never 100% predictable
Don't send mixed messages
One wrong signal can misrepresent your meaning to receiver
Feedback
Bedroom is most important place to communication
Couple talks at, not with each other
Interruption
Language characterized by short, assertive statements, rather than pleasantries or nicknames
Miscommunication - partners expect each other to act as their own genders
Recognizing importance of communication early in relationship can spare trouble later
Communication is not a cure-all
Communicating well doesn't guarantee you'll love each other forever
Views differed
Communication climate established in 1st few years of relationship

34. Reasons for Breakup

Lack of interest in partner (4)
Bored with each other (3)
Grew distant/apart (4)
Routine (2)
   Example: go about daily lives without thinking anymore
Unfulfilled expectations - both expected each other to do something about the relationship, but didn't clearly communicate
Both had affairs
Discomfort with each other
Afraid of what partner thinks
Silence
Unwilling to die for partner
Ignore each other
  Example: spouse comes home, ignores wife and goes to bed with beer and TV
Unhappiness
Uncomfortable sharing ideas
Only physically attracted to each other
Avoided intimate contact
Took each other for granted
Think you can change partner

35. Conditions

No affairs
Both are physically attractive
Financially secure - has impact on communication
Know responsibilities of marriage before getting married

Miscellaneous

Association with God - becoming closer to god means couple will become closer
Religious laws create a communication base which helps resolve conflicts
Kiss up to spouse in certain situations
Man is leader of family
REFERENCES


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