



*"That's an excellent suggestion, Miss Triggs. Perhaps one of the men here would like to make it."*

# The Language of Female Leadership



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# Awareness exercises

1. What do you feel is the greatest strength in women's communication?
2. What do you feel is the greatest strength in men's communication?
3. What do you feel is the biggest weakness in women's communication?
4. What do you feel is the biggest weakness in men's communication?

Source: Nelson & Brown, 2012, p.21

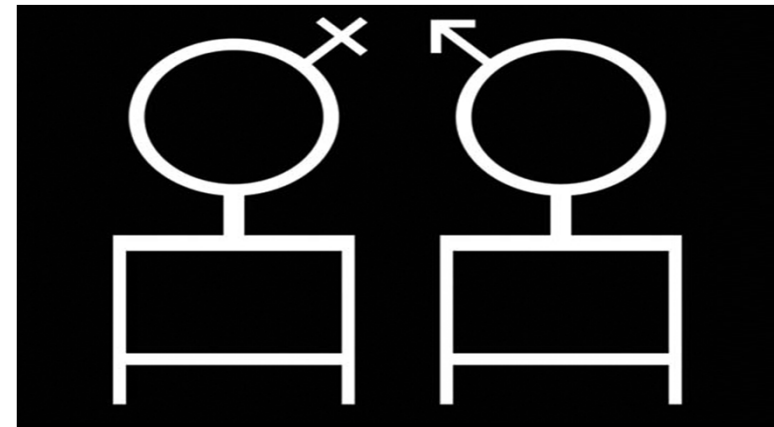
Male  
Dominated  
Corporations



Gender-Divided  
Corporations



Gender-  
multiple  
Corporations



Source: Judith Baxter (2010) *The language of female leadership*,  
Palgrave, Macmillan

# M/F language in business situations

1. Display talk
2. Interrupting
3. Verbal harassment
4. Accusations
5. Insults
6. Agreement
7. Questions
8. Careful listening

9. Put-downs
10. Minimal responses
11. Tag questions
12. Supportive
13. Extended jokes
14. Not listening
15. Boasting


(see also Handout p. 2 : Talk the Talk:  
Source- Nelson & Brown 2012, p. 39)

# Research shows: Linguistic Features of Male-Dominated Corporations

- Display talk
- Interrupting
- Extended jokes
- Not listening
- Boasting
- Verbal harassment
- Accusations
- Insults
- Put-downs

- Careful listening
- Agreement
- Minimal responses
- Questions
- Tag questions
- Supportive

# The Context: (past?) Male-Dominated Corporations

- 
- Societies are gender-divided
  - Men are superior in strength, intellect, other survival and social skills
  - Males > public
  - Females > private spheres

# „Reconstructed‘ Male-Dominated Corporations (present)

Gender-neutrality

Meritocracy /not discrimination

Diversity > Tokenism =one woman or ethnic minority on main board & very few female senior managers

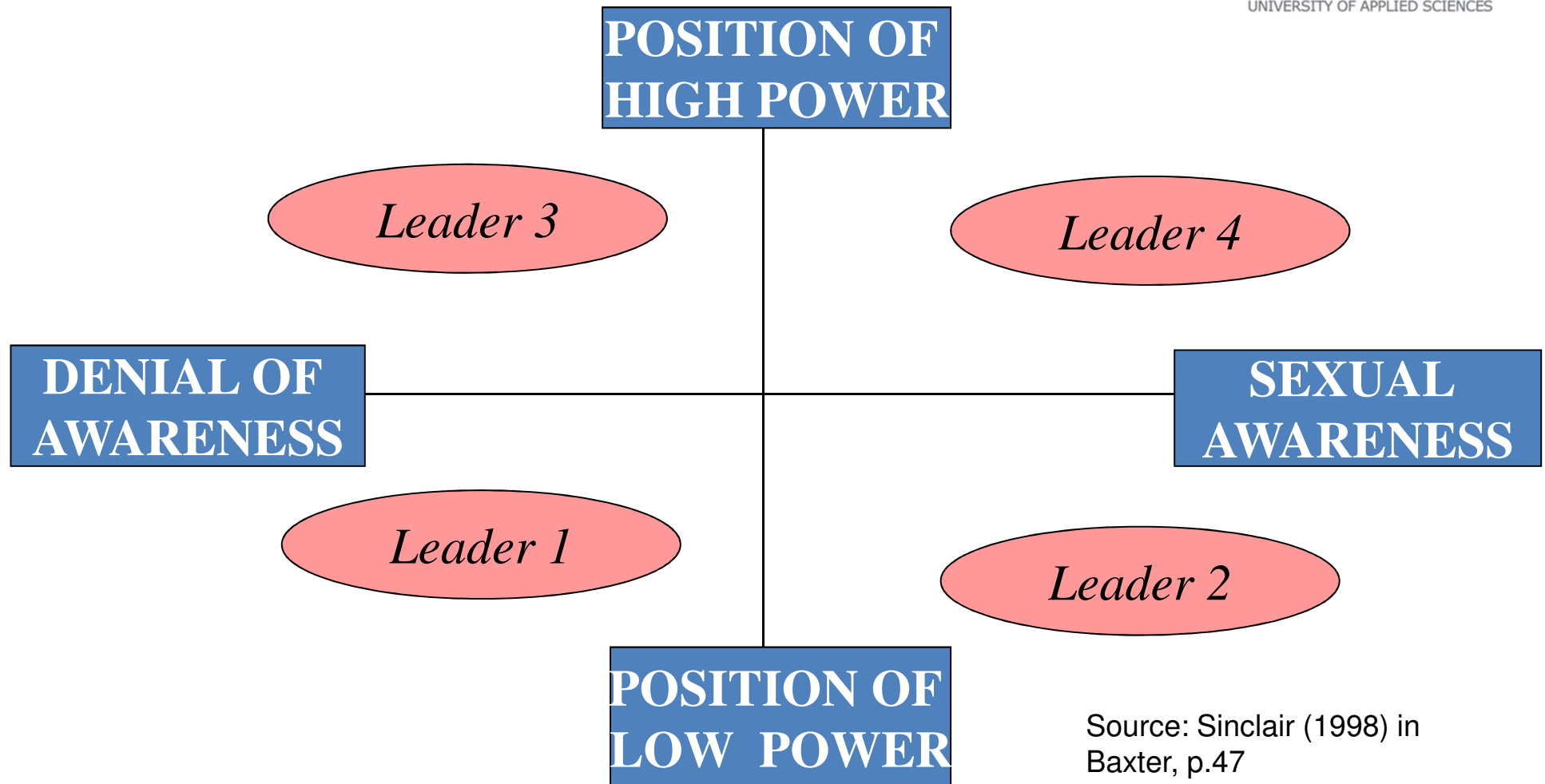


# Sex-role Stereotyping in Male-Dominated Corporations



Source: Kanter,  
1977 in Baxter

# Power and Femininity



Source: Sinclair (1998) in  
Baxter, p.47

# Linguistic features of MDCs

Negative or sexist language is often prevalent in these companies.

'He' is used (not s/he), chairman, derogatory terms used for women.

Women are: 'scary', 'bossy', 'hard', 'a man in women's clothes'.

## **The gender-neutral 'guise'**

Is often covert instrument for male-dominated cultures.  
The 'glass ceiling' doesn't exist.

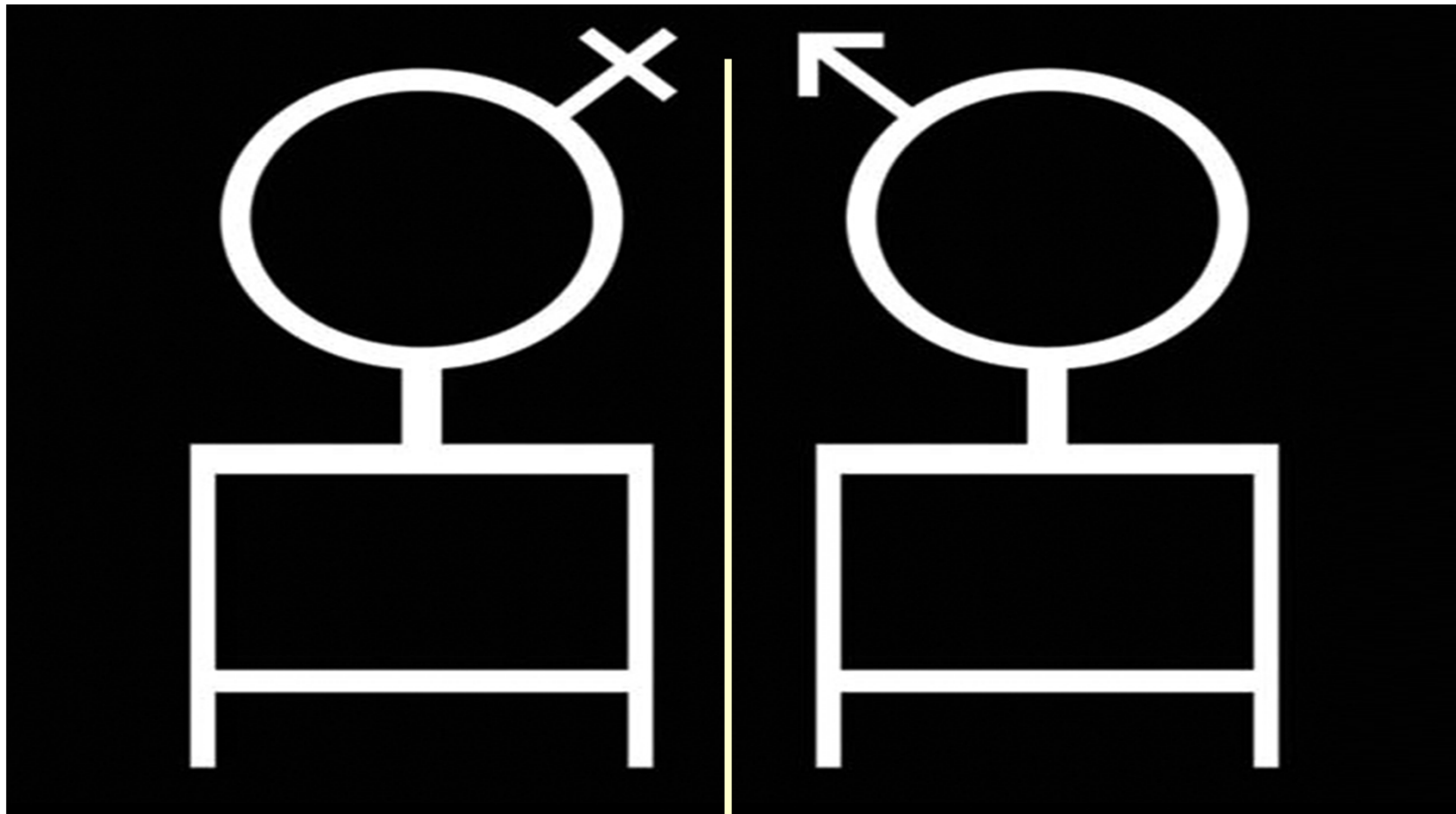
## **The 'double-bind'**

In such situations, women have to:

'think like a man, act like a lady and work like a dog'  
(Newton, 1979)

Therefore, gender-neutrality is one of the 'gendered discourses' that some women adopt in Male-Dominated corporate cultures.

# Gender-Divided Corporations



Idstein | Köln | Hamburg | Düsseldorf | München | Frankfurt am Main | Berlin | Zwickau | New York

# Gender-Divided Corporations

Equal.....

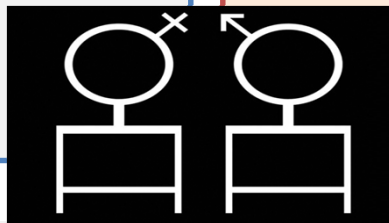
Men are:

- Competitive
- Dominate at senior mgt levels
- 'transactional' styles preferred

.....But different

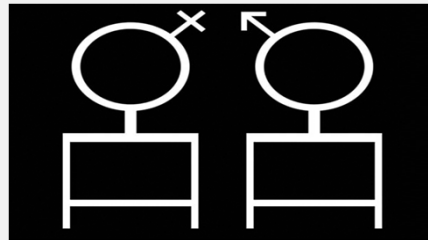
Women are:

- Co-operative
- In administrative and clerical positions
- 'relational' styles of leadership



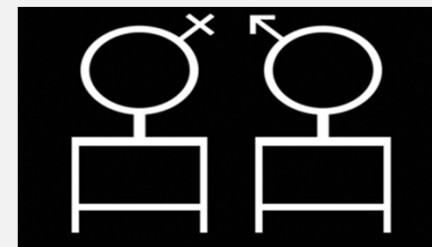
# Language in the gender-divided corporation

- Men & women are equal, but different. Men & women have different speech, behaviour, and leadership effectiveness.
- Females = verbal
- Males = visual-spatial & mathematical



# Implications of this for women

- Women should use 'feminine' language, but assertiveness can be viewed negatively. (ref: Sandberg Ted-talk/'Lean In' book)
- Gender-difference theory assumes female leaders and male leaders have different leadership language.
- Females = relational
- Males = transactional





# Relational Leadership

Rossner (1990): Model of 'interactive' leadership

- Encourage participation
- Share power and information
- Enhance the self-worth of others
- Energise others

*Also called 'relational' approach –*

*A positive, feminine leadership style*

# Gender-Multiple Corporations



## Social Constructionist perspective

We don't 'have' a gender, we 'do' a gender, by behaving in particular physical and linguistic ways.

There are many different ways of being a 'man' or a 'woman'- age, social group, family background, education can be more important.



# Gender-Multiple Corporations

Gender is important, but not all-defining.

Identities are mixed: gender, age, education, professional status, ethnicity, language, class, personality

Relatively equal numbers of men & women across all business functions and levels.

Both men and women use ‘transactional’ and ‘relational’ leadership styles and are aware of ‘gendered discourses’

# Relational leadership

Building rapport, rather than 'command & control.

Baxter's research showed male leaders in theory, showing sympathy for relational leadership styles.

However, in practice, they often speak 'like men' (using 'I', name-dropping, using sporting or military metaphors).

# How do female leaders use language?

Double-voiced discourse

(other directed) or

'code switching' (see Handout p. 3-6)

Vs

Single-voiced discourse

(self directed)

Source: Judith Baxter (2010) The language of female leadership, Palgrave, Macmillan

# Observed in Meetings

Holmes Study 1992

100 meetings - equal nos. of men & women

Men asked 62% (except in 7/100)

3 Types of questions:

1) Supportive

2) Critical

3) Antagonistic (2 x men)

# Code-Switching

- 1) Gender Conversations Technicalities: Interruptions, overlapping, turn-taking dilemmas
- 2) Women, Men & Unspoken Messages (Power)
- 3) How He & She listen
- 4) Men, Women & Conflict

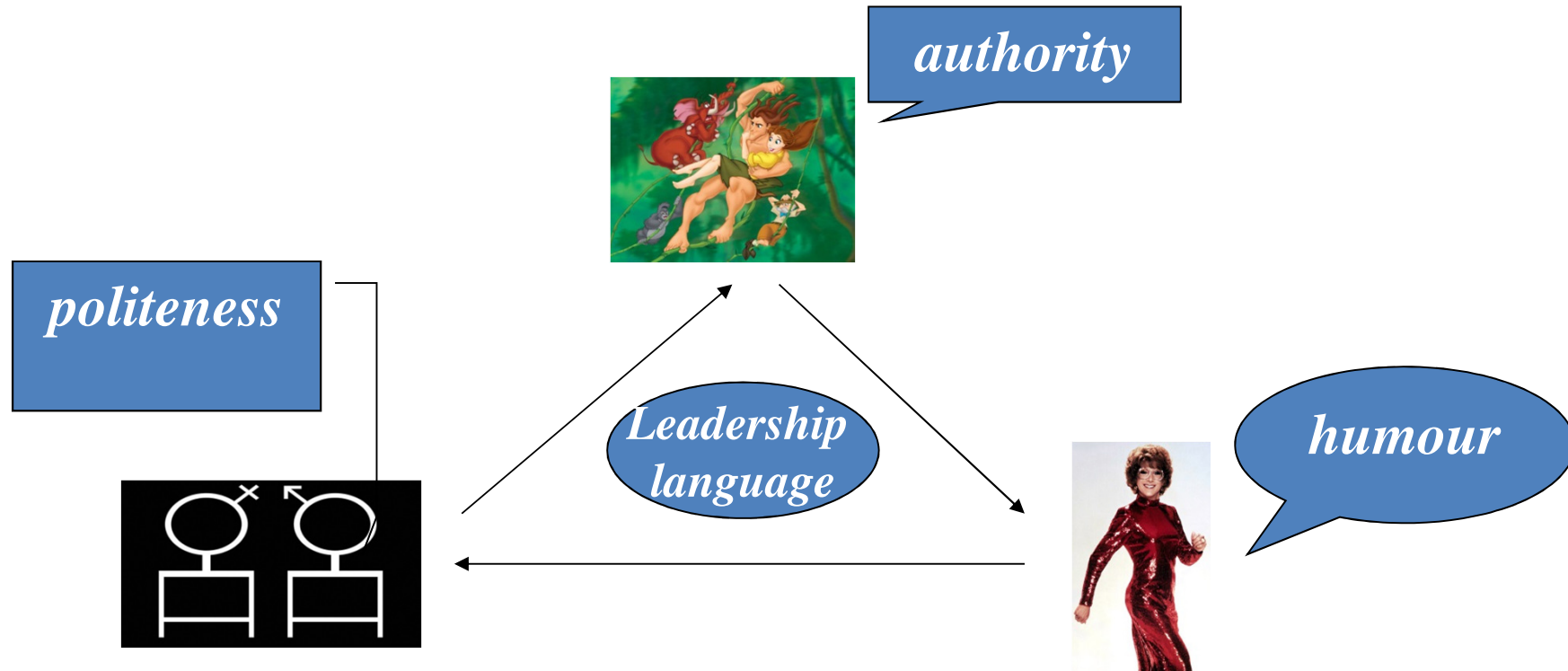
Audrey Nelson & Claire Damken Brown (2012) The Gender Communication Handbook, Pfeiffer/Wiley Handout (p. 3-6)



# What is a corporate linguistic strategy?

- 1) Fight sexist language
- 2) Contest terms used to describe women
- 3) Contest masculinised used of metaphors
- 4) Contest use of generalisations
- 5) Contest gossip and 'mean' talk

# How to become 'linguistic role models'



## References etc.

- Judith Baxter (2010) The language of female leadership, Palgrave, Macmillan
- Audrey Nelson & Claire Damken Brown (2012) The Gender Communication Handbook, Pfeiffer/Wiley
- **Additional reading /Ted talk video:**
- Sheryl Sandberg (2013) Lean In, Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18uDutyIDa4>
- Avivah Wittenberg-Cox(2010) How Women Mean Business, Wiley
- Helen Bicknell (forthcoming) – BESIG article!

# Myths about Sex Differences in Speech Communication (Answers to handout)

- (Handout: Talk the Talk: Source- Nelson & Brown 2012, p. 39)

1 False - Men interrupt more/overlap	6. True – safe topics – no personal stuff
2. False - Men usually take the lead	7. False – very indirect requests – I wondered if you wouldn't mind...
3.False - Women use more adjectives & adverbs	8. False
4. True – Pitch goes down – v.convincing	9. True: I have a question (m) Could I ask a question (f)
5. True – Relationships are important ,troubles-talk'	10. False. „Could I ask you a question?“