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A Self-Categorization Perspective: on Gender and Communication: Reconciling the Gender-as-Culture and Dominance Explanations

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Since the 1970s there has been sustained empirical and theoretical debate on the form, substance, and implications of gender differences in communication. Taken as a whole, research has established that there are indeed gender differences in communication, albeit differences that occur for specific linguistic forms in specific social circumstances (see, for reviews, Aries, 1996; Weatherall, 2002). For example, there is evidence that men are more likely than women to interrupt and dominate the floor when the conversational topic is masculine or gender neutral, whereas the reverse is true when the topic is feminine (e.g., Dovidio, Brown, Heltman, Ellyson, & Keating, 1988). Further, there is evidence that women engage in more communicative support and topic building than men (e.g., Fishman, 1978; Maltz & Borker, 1982; Makri-Tsilipakou, 1994).

Theoretical approaches that address these gender differences posit different explanatory mechanisms. On the one hand, the dominance approach explains how male socio-structural advantages over women manifest communicatively in mixed sex interactions

