

# Gendered Communication and Career Outcomes: A Construct Validation and Prediction of Hierarchical Advancement and Non-Hierarchical Rewards

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## Abstract

This research introduces and tests a measure that captures *gendered communication style*, a multi-dimensional construct with masculine and feminine facets. In Study 1, we follow a well-regarded content adequacy procedure to develop and test items to represent each of these facets and further validate the new measurement instrument across two samples of working adults. Study 2 replicates the instrument’s factor structure and tests the relationships between perceived masculine and feminine communication styles and multiple indicators of career success. Results generally support our hypotheses that masculine communication style is related to hierarchical advancement (e.g., number of promotions, advancement to higher managerial levels), whereas feminine communication style is related to non-hierarchical rewards (e.g., higher compensation, increased span of control). Unexpectedly, feminine communication style also positively predicts two indicators of hierarchical career success. Furthermore, an interaction effect suggests that gendered communication style has more of an impact on women’s compensation than on men’s.

## Keywords

gender, gendered communication, careers, hierarchical advancement, non-hierarchical success

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In John Goldstone's popular film, *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life* (Goldstone & Jones, 1983), a doctor responds to a new mother's desire to know whether her baby is a boy or girl by replying "Now, I think it's a little early to start imposing roles on it, don't you?" This parody involves the widely overlooked distinction between sex (a biological trait) and gender (a socially constructed phenomenon), a discrepancy that remains neglected in all but a small set of management and communication studies. Unlike sex, which is classified based on genetic and biological factors, gender is learned and performed (J. T. Wood, 2013). Gender schema theory (S. L. Bem, 1974) provides a framework within which to examine links between socially constructed stereotypical gender construction and the enactment of gendered communication styles. While extant research has considered gender as a socially constructed, learned concept, it has largely ignored the performative nature of the gender construct, resulting in a rather narrow understanding of the relationship between gender and organizational phenomena (Mumby, 2006).

Studies of gender differences in the workplace have drawn on differing, and often contrasting, theoretical perspectives that suggest different ways in which gender affects career outcomes. On one hand, career advancement theory suggests that masculinity tends to predict career success (Fagenson, 1990; Tharenou, 1997b). On the other hand, gender role theory (Eagly, 1987) and role congruity theory (e.g., Eagly & Karau, 2002) posit that women (men) are expected to behave in a stereotypically feminine (masculine) manner and to pursue organizational roles that are predominantly feminine (masculine), and that failure to do so may result in prejudiced negative attributions from organizational decision makers. These differing theoretical perspectives reflect contrasting alternatives through which to predict career outcomes. Evidence suggests that neither approach may be universally appropriate. For instance, Kirchmeyer (2002) finds masculinity to be positively related to promotion rate but not to income. Furthermore, leadership literature suggests that femininity has become more universally desirable (Elsesser & Lever, 2011) and that androgynous individuals (those who possess both high masculine *and* high feminine characteristics) tend to emerge as organizational leaders (Kent & Moss, 1994).

These disparate findings may be indicative of a limitation in gendered organizational research that arises from the historical tradition of conceptualizing gender as an *internalized* trait or a *gendered self-concept* (Hoplamagian, 2012). What is left largely unexplored is the *externalized performance* of gender (Butler, 2004) in organizations. Communication enables the social construction of workplace relationships (Sias, Gallagher, Kopaneva, & Pedersen, 2012), and through communication, people reveal deeper level attributes, which may be more important indicators of organizational outcomes than surface-level traits (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998). In line with this reasoning, it may be time to move beyond the study of sex trait differences and focus on developing theory of communication tendencies (Weinberg & Lankau, 2011).

Despite the commonly held belief that women and men differ psychologically, a recent review of the major meta-analyses on differences between men and women reveals that "[sex] differences in most aspects of communication are small" (Hyde, 2005, p. 586). A rich stream of research on gendered (not biological) differences in communication has emerged as a well-developed conceptual topic. An examination of

*gendered communication style* as a taxonomy follows the feminist tradition of interpreting gender as performed and socially constructed, and distinguishes enacted gendered behavior from both biological sex and gendered self-identification (e.g., Mumby, 2006; J. T. Wood, 2013). However, the application of gendered communication to workplace outcomes has yet to be tested empirically. Given Locke and Williams's (2000) expectation that communication style is likely to have a more influential impact on one's career success than the individual's sex, it is not surprising that management texts agree that "across all industries, . . . communication skills rank as the single most important reason that people [advance or] do not advance in their careers" (Williams, 2011, p. 574). With that said, career advancement does not necessarily refer to vertical movement along the chain of command (i.e., hierarchical advancement, promotion) but also includes rewards that are not necessarily tied to one's position in the hierarchy (non-hierarchical rewards, that is, salary, span of control). As discussed later, hierarchical advancement is not always available or desired.

Krolokke and Sorensen (2006) demonstrate that research on the relationship between gender and performance is in a nascent stage, and they call for work that (1) validates the contention of gendered differences in communication and (2) outlines a framework in which voiced gender may be communicated to consummate an action. Concomitantly, Ely and Padavic (2007) call for quantitative approaches as a part of the full repertoire of research on gender differences and explicitly appeal for criteria that elicit thoughts, feelings, and consideration of expressed gender in a manner that has organizationally specific meaning. These theorists propose a research agenda that emphasizes the importance of developing richer theoretical constructs of gender that "assess how organizationally specific gender meanings influence the sense people make of who they are at work," and they suggest that one way in which research could operationalize this construct would be to capture the degree to which respondents' expression "align[s] with broader cultural meanings of gender" (Ely & Padavic, 2007, p. 1138). Doing so would alleviate Martin's (2003) concern that outside observers may misperceive individuals "as practicing gender even though the actors/practitioners have no such intention in mind" (p. 362).

We respond to these calls by conducting a content analysis that systematically and reliably applies quantitative measurements to the coding of gendered communication variables and enables us to "detect patterns across and relationships between these variables, and generalize these findings to the larger population of communication" (Meeks, 2013, p. 52). Although quantitative analyses of the communication of gender ideology are somewhat uncommon, such investigations have a long history of complementing qualitative research by broadening the focus of communication and gender literature to specific contexts (e.g., the workplace; Dow & Condit, 2005). In a series of two studies comprising four unique samples, we broaden communication literature by (1) developing a testable measure of perceived gendered communication styles consistent with S. L. Bem's (1974) gender typology and conceptually grounded in gendered communication theory and (2) separately theorizing the effects of masculine and feminine communication on different forms of career success.

## Study I

Gender is interpersonal and socially constructed, and is thus a “product of language, and is made in discourse” (Ashcraft, 2013, p. 141). Borrowing from Ashcraft and Mumby’s (2004) discussion of how gender organizes discourse, we define gendered communication style as a propensity toward gendered ways of “talking, using language, and orienting to human relationships” that “shapes interactional tendencies” in a specific context (p. 3). Despite the growing interest in gendered communication in the workplace (Mumby, 2006), the field lacks a measurement instrument designed to capture perceptions of enacted gendered communication styles. Like gender, self-perception is considered a product of social interaction (D. J. Bem, 1967). Self-perception remains a critical component in the study of communication and communication outcomes due to its relationships with behavior and one’s interactions with others (Yee, Bailenson, & Ducheneaut, 2009). Given that one’s perceptions of social norms regulate behavioral performance (Neuwirth & Frederick, 2004), the study of self-perceived communication tendencies enables us to understand communicators’ attitudes and intentions and, thus, ascertain organizational members’ propensity toward gendered ways of communicating.

### *Masculine and Feminine Communication Styles*

Post-structuralist theories of gender submit that norms of masculinity and masculine imagery within organizational contexts and the tendency of organizations to provide masculine prototypes as models for emulation serve to render gender salient in organizations (L. N. Robertson, Brummel, & Salvaggio, 2011). Thus, the organization provides a context in which gender schemas—the processing of information in terms of cultural definitions of gender (Kalbfleisch, 2010)—and related gendered information are relevant. While we agree with post-structural revalorist theorists that there is an important distinction between masculinity and femininity, and that each has its own value, we take a cultural and performative approach to gender that extends this notion to recognize that the important distinction is not one of male and female, per se, so much as their respective performances of gendered language. The revalorist stream of research attempts to better define the prototype of successful individuals in contemporary organizations by recognizing that both gender dimensions simultaneously, albeit independently and autonomously, define the prototype (Palomares, 2012). By joining this perspective, we add to the stream of post-structuralist communication theory that examines “the discursive formations of gendered organizational subjectivities and subject positions” (Calas & Smircich, 2006, p. 315).

*Masculine communication.* Masculine communication refers to a communication style that is stereotypically associated with men. As summarized by Eagly and Carli (2007), “men are associated with agentic qualities, which convey assertion and control. They include being especially aggressive, ambitious, dominant, self-confident, and forceful, as well as self-reliant and individualistic” (p. 66). Masculine communication also tends to be

abstract and removed from concrete experiences (J. T. Wood, 2013). This authoritative style of communication is associated with self-promotion and is usually seen as a prerequisite of the leadership prototype (W. Wood, Christensen, Hebl, & Rothgerber, 1997).

*Feminine communication.* Feminine communication refers to a communication style that is stereotypically associated with women. As summarized by Eagly and Carli (2007), “women are associated with communal qualities, which convey a concern for the compassionate treatment of others. They include being especially affectionate, helpful, friendly, kind, and sympathetic, as well as interpersonally sensitive, gentle, and soft-spoken” (p. 66). Feminine communication style is achieved, in part, by the use of concrete language through which the individual provides details and discloses personal information (J. T. Wood, 2013). It tends to be nurturing or encouraging and reflects a participative and collaborative approach. This style is generally associated with the ability to project authority without relying on autocratic behaviors (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Table 1 elaborates on the masculine and feminine facets of communication, answering Hoplamazian’s (2012) call for research to investigate the multifaceted nature of gender-typed representations and providing a more nuanced examination of gendered communication than the standard assertiveness and affiliative dimensions typically discussed in intergroup communications literature (e.g., Leaper & Ayres, 2007).

### *Androgyny: Gendered Communication as a Two-Dimensional Paradigm*

Gender literature conceptualizes a construct that moves beyond a single dimension, where masculinity and femininity are the opposite ends of one spectrum, into a two-dimensional paradigm (e.g., S. L. Bem, 1974; J. T. Wood, 2013). This theory posits that, in developed societies, the only distinguishable role between men and women is the act of childbearing (Schwartz, 1989), and that as the dimensions are considered “orthogonal, but not mutually exclusive,” “any given utterance varies along the dimensions in ways independent from each other” (Palomares, 2012, p. 198). All individuals behave in naturally androgynous ways to some degree, and “both men and women are capable of the full range of behavior” (Schwartz, 1989, p. 67). Thus, their communication styles may range concurrently from low masculine to high masculine and from low feminine to high feminine. It is important that an instrument designed to measure enacted gendered communication style capture masculine and feminine communication facets separately.

### *Item Generation*

The first step in developing a scale is to generate scale items (Hinkin, 1998). Regarding gendered communication, a deductive approach is appropriate because the concept is conceptually well developed. A literature review unveiled characteristics that previous research has associated with masculine and feminine communication styles (see Table 1). Because gendered performance is specific to context (Deaux & Major, 1987) and our focus is on workplace communication, each item was generated such that the workplace context was specifically referenced. As gendered communication

**Table 1.** Key Facets of the Gendered Communication Construct.

Facet 1: Masculine communication	<p>Assertive</p> <p>Communicate in a direct and assertive manner; communicating in a dominant, forceful, or aggressive way</p>	<p>Give orders in an attempt to control others (Weiss &amp; Sachs, 1991); exhibit superiority, control by giving advice (J. T. Wood, 2013); aggressive and direct (Pearson, 1981); communicate in a way that is more forceful and authoritative (Mulac, 2006; W. Wood, Christensen, Hebl, &amp; Rothgerber, 1997); assertive form of communication (Leaper &amp; Ayres, 2007; Palomares, 2012)</p>
Egocentric	<p>Dominate the conversation; interrupt others to gain command of the conversation</p> <p>Emphasize and defend one's own thoughts and beliefs</p> <p>Use communication to draw attention to oneself and to one's own ideas</p> <p>Use communication to establish and enhance one's own status</p> <p>Use communication to assert one's authority</p> <p>Avoid disclosing personal information that might suggest weakness or vulnerability</p> <p>Use an abstract communication style, speaking in terms that are removed from concrete experiences</p>	<p>Communicate to assert control over others (Messner, 1997); compete for the <i>talk stage</i> or for conversational command; reroute conversations; challenge other speakers (J. T. Wood, 2013); talk often and at greater length than others (Mulac, 2006); dominating discussions (Borisoff &amp; Merrill, 1985); usurp conversation (Tannen, 1990)</p> <p>Use communication to emphasize your ideas, opinions, and identity; preserve one's independence (J. T. Wood, 2013)</p> <p>Communicate to get attention and to stand out (Messner, 1997); use communication to attract and maintain others' attention and stand out (J. T. Wood, 2013); self-promotion (Tannen, 1994b)</p> <p>Communicate to compete for and maintain status (Messner, 1997); competitive (Leaper &amp; Ayres, 2007); issue commands and compete for status (Goodwin, 1990); conversation as an arena for proving oneself and negotiating prestige (J. T. Wood, 2013)</p> <p>Communicate in a manner that is strong and ambitious (Kimmel, 2005); influences others (Palomares, 2012)</p> <p>Tendency to protect oneself from potential vulnerabilities by withholding or concealing personal information that may be construed as weakness (Saurer &amp; Eisler, 1990)</p>
Abstract	<p>Use an abstract communication style, speaking in terms that are removed from concrete experiences</p>	<p>Impersonal (Newman, Groom, Handelman, &amp; Pennebaker, 2008; Pearson, 1981); speak in abstract, general terms that are distanced from personal feelings and experiences (J. T. Wood, 2013)</p>
Instrumental	<p>Communicate in an instrumental way (as a means to accomplish goals)</p>	<p>Instrumental (Deaux &amp; Major, 1987; Leaper &amp; Ayres, 2007); communicate to accomplish goals (Messner, 1997); use talk to accomplish or achieve objectives (J. T. Wood, 2013)</p>

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Facet 2: Feminine communication	Egalitarian	Employ a collaborative communication style	Foster cooperative and open-ended discussion (Campbell, 1993); cooperate with others (K. Robertson & Murachver, 2003; Weiss & Sachs, 1991) Use communication to establish egalitarian relations with others; establish equality and achieve symmetry (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; J. T. Wood, 2013)
		Communicate in a way that strives to establish equality among all participants	Demonstrate support to show understanding of others' situations or feelings (J. T. Wood, 2013)
		Communicate one's support for others	Smile more frequently (LaFrance, Hecht, & Paluck, 2003); respond to others' ideas; nod or say "tell me more," or "that's interesting" (J. T. Wood, 2013); this type of responsiveness reflects a tendency to care about others such that they feel valued and included (Chatham-Carpenter & DeFrancisco, 1998), affirming the other person's position while also encouraging the other person to elaborate (J. T. Wood, 2013)
		Invite others to participate and encourage them to elaborate on their thoughts	Receptive (Pearson, 1981); include others and bring them into the conversation (J. T. Wood, 2013); use inclusive, nondirective language (Goodwin, 1990); engage in conversation to learn about others (F. Johnson, 1996); engage in participatory interaction in which participants respond to one another and build on each others' ideas (Hall & Langelier, 1988); conversational <i>maintenance work</i> —attempt to sustain conversation by inviting others to speak and by prompting them to elaborate their ideas (Taylor, 2002; J. T. Wood, 2013)
		Regard communication as a way to build rapport (harmonious connections) with others	Mindful of the <i>relationship level of talk</i> , with a focus on the relationship between communicators (MacGeorge, Gillhan, Samter, & Clark, 2003; J. T. Wood, 2013), conciliatory (Pearson, 1981); affiliative communication, promotes closeness (Leaper & Ayres, 2007; Palomares, 2012)

(continued)

**Table 1. (continued)**

Compassionate	<p>Communicate in a way that expresses empathy or sympathy toward others; understanding of others' perspectives</p> <p>Communicate in a compassionate way; a way that is sensitive to the needs of others</p>	<p>Concern with people and relationships (Spence &amp; Buckner, 2000); communicate in a way that regards others' feelings and shows sensitivity to others (J. T. Wood, 2013)</p> <p>Compassionately provide emotional support (Lilius et al., 2008; Miller, 2013); femininity is deferential (Spence &amp; Buckner, 2000); employ tentative, provisional communication that allows others the opportunity to respond and express their opinions (J. T. Wood, 2013); use of tentative communication reflects the desire to maintain an open communication (Mills, 1999); polite (Pearson, 1981); consider others' points of view (Tannen, 1994a)</p>
Concrete	<p>Use a more concrete communication style, providing details, disclosing personal information, and using concrete reasoning</p>	<p>Utilize a personal, concrete style which includes details, personal disclosures, and concrete reasoning to cultivate a close, personal connection (Ashcraft &amp; Mumby, 2004; Hall &amp; Langellier, 1988; J. T. Wood, 2013). Share themselves via conversation (F. Johnson, 1996; Weinberg &amp; Locander, 2013)</p>
Relational	<p>Communicate as a primary way to establish and maintain relationships</p>	<p>Communicate to create and maintain relationships; recognize that the communication process, more so than its content, is the heart of relationships; talk is the essence of relationships (J. T. Wood, 2013); promote closeness (Palomares, 2012); use words related to social processes (Newman et al., 2008)</p>

represents an enacted tendency, we were careful to apply language that would only assess behavioral intention, as opposed to affective responses (Harrison & McLaughlin, 1993). Following this process, several experts in gendered communication and organizational behavior not associated with the original item generation examined the list of items. Based on their feedback, items were revised for clarity and content, and a survey of 31 items was developed.

### *Research Participants and Procedure*

To develop this new measurement instrument, we followed the content adequacy procedure outlined by Schriesheim, Powers, Scandura, Gardiner, and Lankau (1993). Because constructs are abstract, unobservable concepts, it is important to test the theoretical correspondence between a new measure's items and the abstract constructs of interest (Schriesheim et al., 1993). Schriesheim et al.'s quantitative method involves judges rating items for specific content categories and then factor-analyzing the judgments to determine the items' dimensionality and the distinctiveness of the content categories. Drawing on the identified characteristics of gendered communication style identified in Table 1, 23 items were developed to capture masculine and feminine communication styles (11 items for masculine and 12 items for feminine). These items were run concurrently with 4 items designed to capture biological sex (e.g., "I am a man," "On my driver's license, under the category 'sex,' there is the letter 'F'") and 4 items designed to capture communication styles that represent neither masculine nor feminine characteristics (e.g., "I tend to communicate in a truthful way at work").

One hundred fifty-three undergraduate business students from a private southern university participated in the content adequacy testing phase. Schriesheim et al. (1993) make the case that college students are preferable to a sample of working adult judges for this type of analysis, owing to the learned perceptual biases of experienced workers. Masculine communication, masked as "Communication Style X," was defined as "communicating in an instrumental way that is assertive, egocentric, and abstract." Feminine communication, masked as "Communication Style Y," was defined as "communicating in a relational way that is compassionate, egalitarian, and concrete." These definitions were followed by separate definitions of male and female (e.g., "indicates that an individual's biological sex is that of a man or a boy"). The pseudonyms "Communication Style X and Y" were employed, respectively, to conceal the gendered nature of each style, thereby reducing the likelihood of creating a demanding situation in which judges are informed that being male and female is different from communicating masculinely and femininely. The final definition was for the term *other*: "You may feel that some items might not be representative of any of the aforementioned four definitions." Participants were then asked to make theoretical judgments about each item's content as they perceive its relationship to each of the defined constructs by separately rating the degree to which they believed each statement to represent each of these possible definitions (on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *not at all characteristic* to 5 = *very characteristic*).

Following Schriesheim et al.'s (1993) method, we developed an item-by-item Q-correlation matrix and subjected it to exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to determine

the similarity among factors. This process involves conducting unconstrained factor analysis procedures using orthogonal (varimax) rotation, listwise deletion, and principal-axis factoring extraction. The factor solution was determined using the criteria of eigenvalues  $> 1.0$ , the scree test, and the interpretability of factors (Gorsuch, 1983). We followed Ford, MacCallum, and Tait's (1986) suggestion to consider factor loadings of .40 or higher to be significant. Results of the rotated factor matrix can be found in Table 2.

## Results

Results show that 16 items initially loaded onto the first factor. All of the items designed to capture feminine communication style loaded exclusively on this factor, and the remaining 3 items were representative of the non-gender specific items, 2 of which cross-loaded onto other factors. Thirteen items initially loaded onto the second factor. All of the items designed to capture masculine communication loaded on this second factor. However, 3 of the items that were designed to capture the "egocentric" dimension of masculine communication had lower-than-expected loadings and cross-loaded onto a fifth (unknown) factor. Analysis of these 3 items suggested that they were worded in a manner that may have been ambiguous. Thus, those items were reworded slightly for use and validation in subsequent studies in a manner similar to that applied by Kohring and Matthes (2007) such that, for each phrase, "the basic aspect of the item was expressed differently" (p. 242). Specifically, the item regarding defending one's own beliefs was changed to read "assert and defend my own thoughts and beliefs"; the item related to articulating one's independent thoughts was converted to read "use communication as a way to draw attention to myself and my ideas"; and the item related to using communication to establish one's own personal identity was changed to reflect attempts to establish and enhance one's status at work. The concepts of drawing attention to oneself and attempting to improve one's status, or "the respect one has in the eyes of others" (Magee & Galinsky, 2008, p. 351), more directly and adequately assess an egocentric form of communication. The 4 items designed to capture biological sex loaded exclusively onto their two relevant respective factors (3 and 4), as expected. The EFA revealed a series of appropriate items to represent and distinguish masculine and feminine communication styles.

Results indicate that judges expect only 25% of the variance in gendered communication style to be explained by an individual's biological sex, providing initial evidence of discriminant validity for the construct. In sum, these results confirm predictions that masculine and feminine communication styles are two separate constructs and that these constructs are related to, but distinct from, those associated with biological sex (J. T. Wood, 2013), a concept that, to date, had not been tested. Moreover, results verify that our measurement items adequately represent their respective constructs. Appendices A and B describe further analyses that we conducted across two unique samples of working adults that enabled us to further investigate and refine the construct and examine its *nomological network*, namely, "the relationship between existing measures and the newly developed scale" (Hinkin, 1998, p. 110).

**Table 2.** Gendered Communication Measure Items in Study 1.

Item (N = 153)	Factor 1 (feminine communication)	Factor 2 (masculine communication)	Factor 3 (female)	Factor 4 (male)	Factor 5
Direct and assertive		.86			
Interrupt others to gain command		.73			
Assert my authority		.81			
Dominant		.85			
Avoid disclosing personal information <sup>a</sup>		.68			
Forceful		.81			
Abstract style		.50			
Instrumental		.81			
Defend beliefs <sup>b</sup>		.48			.66
Articulate independent thoughts <sup>b</sup>		.45			.65
Establish personal identity <sup>b</sup>		.41			.43
Express empathy or sympathy	.82				
Collaborative	.83				
Sensitive to others' needs	.83				
Establish equality	.86				
Understanding of others' perspectives	.89				
Compassionate	.86				
Support for others	.86				
Responsive	.68				
Encourage participation	.86				
Establish and maintain relationships <sup>a</sup>	.71				
Concrete style	.54				
Build rapport	.79				
Am a man				.81	
"M" on license				.82	
Am a woman			.85		
"F" on license			.84		
Reliable	.50				
Truthful	.64				
Tactful	.44	.52			
Articulate well	.47	.53			

<sup>a</sup>Covaried with other items and was removed from subsequent analysis for reasons of parsimony.

<sup>b</sup>Reworded for clarity in Appendix A, Appendix B, and Study 2, respectively, to "I assert and defend my own thoughts and beliefs," "I use communication as a way to draw attention to myself and my ideas," and "I often use communication as a way to establish and enhance my own status at work."

## Study 2

In Study 2, we seek to make a more substantive contribution to communication literature by (1) outlining a framework through which gendered communication may be considered an embodiment of gender that is socialized and performed and (2) assessing the relationship between perceived gendered communication style, as measured by our newly developed instrument, and career outcomes.

### *Gender and Organizational Communication*

Our conception of gendered communication in the workplace is largely “influenced by intersections of insights” from socialist and post-structuralist feminism, the masculinities literature, and other work that emphasizes “connections and disruptions between sex and gender in the context of normative social formations” (Calas & Smircich, 2006, p. 327). We move beyond essentialist explanations that gendered communication is biologically determined and, instead, build on the post-structuralist notion that gender is a product of socialization and experience, is situated and embodied, and is communicatively expressed (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004). Because performative theory (e.g., Butler, 2004) subscribes to the post-structuralist orientation that gender exists only as a social construction (i.e., gender is performed and is specific to context; Deaux & Major, 1987; Palomares, 2012), the performative theory of gender may be considered an extension of the critical interpretive perspective regarding the performativity of culture (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004). In this sense, gender may be considered a verb, something that is *done* or expressed, and gender “is real only to the extent that it is performed” (Butler, 1988, p. 527). The performative model of gender “theorizes form as an ongoing accomplishment made real in its enactment” (Ashcraft, 2013, p. 139) and suggests that our gendered identities result from the performance of gender (J. T. Wood, 2013). In other words, without performance, there is no gender. Thus, performative theory is in line with the intergroup/interpersonal communication perspective that gender performance is always expressed in a context of social meaning, such that communication choices “assume and respond to other people who are either physically or mentally present” (J. T. Wood, 2013, p. 63).

The performance model offers a critical approach to the study of organizations, as it argues that the ongoing enactment of gender is what constitutes organizational structure, and, as such, enacted or communicated gender provides a critical lens through which to explore productive empirical dilemmas in the workplace (Ashcraft, 2013; Gherardi, 1994). Thus, given that “language is a system we use to objectify subjective meaning and to internalize socially constructed meanings” (Allen, 2005, p. 38), and that communication creates, rather than arises from, organizational realities (Mumby, 2013), gendered communication style has the potential to add explanatory power to our understanding of organizational phenomena. Consistent with post-structuralist theorizing in organizational analysis, we rethink the gendered assumptions underlying the relationship between communication and career success. Specifically, we reframe the question from the typical inquiry of whether masculinity or femininity is preferred

in the workplace to a more nuanced question of “to what ends are masculine and feminine communication differentially useful when applied in an organizational setting?”

A limitation in our ability to understand the relationship between gender, communication, and career success may reflect changes in social norms and expectations in the workplace that have only recently been determined to have an effect on the way in which companies organize and on the manner in which employees interact (e.g., Pas, Peters, Doorewaard, Eisinga, & Lagro-Janssen, 2014; Wegge, Roth, Neubach, Schmidt, & Kanfer, 2008). For instance, contemporary organizational forms often “have little regard for traditional hierarchy,” focusing instead on flatter and more team-oriented structures (Ahuja & Carley, 1998, p. 742). As a result, non-hierarchical rewards that are not directly associated with vertical movement (i.e., higher compensation, increased span of control) may now be as important, feasible, and sought after as hierarchical advancement (i.e., number of promotions, progression to higher managerial levels; Senge & Forrester, 1987), and organizations have begun to offer non-hierarchical incentives to augment or, in some cases, replace hierarchical advancement (Ahuja & Carley, 1998). Thus, separately categorizing career success into hierarchical and non-hierarchical outcomes offers an advantage over traditional research on gender and career success that has not accounted for this distinction (e.g., Kirchmeyer, 1998, 2002; Tharenou, 1997a, 1997b). What remains unanswered is whether hierarchical advancement and non-hierarchical rewards may be differentially predicted.

### *Hierarchical Advancement and Non-Hierarchical Rewards*

Hierarchy refers to a progression of vertical steps arranged in order of rank, thus requiring successive levels or layers. Hierarchical advancement may be viewed as movement “between job levels in [a] ladder, so ladders need to be long and lead to higher level jobs for advancement to occur, and vacancies need to arise” (Tharenou, 1997a, p. 8). However, changes in the organization of work and employment (i.e., delayering, downsizing, and outsourcing) have resulted in reduced scope and desirability of hierarchical progression in many organizations (Castilla, 2012). Non-hierarchical reward systems have proven to be highly effective and instituting them “may relieve the pressure for excessive promotion rates while promoting continued vitality” (Senge & Forrester, 1987, p. 14). Non-hierarchical incentive systems “underscore the importance of individual competence and contribution over position” and strive for “an atmosphere of merit rather than privilege” (Senge & Forrester, 1987, p. 13). Although compensation is often related to managerial level, the two constructs are far from identical, and job or organizational constraints often lead to one form of reward being less available than the other (G. P. Baker, Jensen, & Murphy, 1988). Many firms may not have the capacity to offer hierarchical incentives and, thus, would benefit from offering bonus- or compensation-based incentive schemes as alternatives (G. P. Baker et al., 1988).

To date, research on gender and careers has examined either hierarchically related outcomes exclusively (e.g., promotions, Kirchmeyer, 2002; Tharenou, 1997b), advancement to higher managerial levels (Fagenson, 1990), or composite measures of

success as a proxy for advancement (e.g., Metz & Tharenou, 2001). Despite the increasing importance of non-hierarchical rewards, research on gender and careers has yet to theorize hierarchical and non-hierarchical career outcomes separately. Sex-typed preferences for hierarchical and non-hierarchical incentives have recently been highlighted in the media. In an interview on CNN's *Anderson Cooper 360*, *Fortune* Magazine's Pattie Sellers (2013) elaborates on these differences by explaining stereotypical tendencies associated with men and women:

Men tend to view their careers as ladders. Straight up, they look at the next rung. They view power vertically . . . Women tend to view power horizontally . . . It's all about having an influence, not necessarily just about getting the next job, but being effective broadly.

Our research extends this line of reasoning to account for one's gendered communication tendencies as an important indicator of career outcomes, over and above any sex-based differences.

### *Masculine and Feminine Communication: Two Means to Separate Ends*

Following Tannen's (1994b) suggestions, it has been argued that masculine norms, including strong speech and self-promotion, govern professional workplace communication (e.g., Casey, 2004). However, scholars have begun to take the alternative stance, namely, that femininity offers equal, if not greater, value in organizational settings (e.g., Elsesser & Lever, 2011), and may have as yet unrealized or underutilized potential (e.g., Helgesen, 1990). The potential for masculine or feminine communication styles to generate positive outcomes may lie in recognizing that presentation of one's self is a political act and that everyday performances act as political tools to achieve desired outcomes (J. T. Wood, 2013). This view is consistent with the perspective that gendering is a process embedded in power relations (Calas & Smircich, 2006) and that tendency to use gendered communication may be considered a communicative tactic or strategy (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004). Consistent with the prevailing Foucauldian model of power in post-modern organization studies, power dynamics such as these are considered an "endemic, defining feature of everyday life" (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004, p. 70). As a discourse community, an organization may be viewed as a "situated web of dilemmas . . . navigated discursively and materially toward various ends" (Ashcraft, 2000, p. 352). Ashcraft elaborates that gendered discourses in organizations are not predetermined but rather "emerge as members engage practical tensions and improvise tactics that enable both empowerment and productivity" (p. 352). Gendered differences in perceived communication style, then, may be considered an extension of everyday gender power dynamics which govern the ways in which people approach communication to achieve desired ends (Sussman & Tyson, 2000). In the following sections, we hypothesize separate relationships between gendered communication and hierarchical and non-hierarchical performative outcomes. By doing so, we embrace the perspective that organizations tacitly inscribe and reward expressed gender style

differentially by suggesting that gendered communication translates into tangible outcomes for organizational actors (Acker, 1990).

### *Masculine Communication Style and Hierarchical Career Success*

*Masculine communication style and advancement.* Advancement represents movement from a lower level hierarchical position to a more senior-level position. Researchers have found that masculine traits have been consistently related to vertical positioning in an organization (e.g., Kirchmeyer, 1998). In addition, non-interactive, impersonal characteristics related to masculinity are associated with formal hierarchy (Ahuja & Carley, 1998) and suitability for management (Kirchmeyer, 2002). What remains unanswered is whether masculine communication style will lead similarly to upward mobility. As masculinity has been linked to a prototypical managerial stereotype (Powell & Butterfield, 1994; Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002), and the managerial role is commonly described as masculine (Tharenou, 1997a), masculine-typed expression is likely to elicit favorable evaluation of managerial capabilities.

This argument is consistent with the gendered theory of organizations in which organizations are seen as inherently, not accidentally, gendered (Acker, 1990). Research has documented the embeddedness of masculinities in organizational settings (Connell, 2008), and it has shown that organizational masculinities have been constructed and defended by processes such as the exclusion of women (Collinson, Knights, & Collinson, 1990). We extend this line of reasoning to the advantages that masculine communication may have over feminine communication. Because gender hegemony in organizational settings tends to operate through the subordination of femininity to hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995), we posit that the social importance of gender as a primary frame of reference will lead to a masculine hegemony that favors masculine communication over feminine communication for those who seek advancement. This position is consistent with Kanter's (1977) seminal research in which she argued that gender differences in organizational behavior are due to structure rather than to innate characteristics of women and men. She suggested, "While organizations were being defined as sex-neutral machines, masculine principles were dominating the authority structures" (Kanter, 1977, p. 46). We believe that these findings are still relevant insofar as masculinities are likely to dominate advancement circles in organizational settings.

We extend this reasoning to organizational power dynamics. Current organizational communication theory argues that the accumulation of power is intimately tied to communication and that "communication creates the very possibility for power to be exercised [and] . . . constructed" (Mumby, 2013, p. 104). With its abstract form and instrumental focus, masculine communication entails a depersonalized exercise of power, which is associated with legitimate supervisory influence linked to the organization's chain of command (Ashcraft, 2000; Weber, 1969). For instance, direct and abstract communication tendencies may enhance efficiency and decision-making capacity, characteristics attributed positively to management (Walther, 1996). According to the principles of person-job fit, expressed masculinity may allow an

individual to be perceived as well equipped to handle the demands of managerial roles (Tharenou, 1997b). This expectation is consistent with experimental research which suggests that individuals who dominate a conversation and interrupt others (two masculine forms of communication) tend to gain more status and are perceived as more influential than those who do not employ this style of communication (Farley, 2008).

The importance of linking communication style to vertical advancement may be exacerbated in contemporary workplace settings, inasmuch as today's decreased emphasis on formal hierarchy and the concomitant attenuation of higher level positions (Castilla, 2012) will drive greater competition for fewer advancement opportunities. Those individuals who employ a masculine communication style gain an element of control by giving advice (J. T. Wood, 2013), and the communication of advice may be conceptualized as an influential persuasion process (Feng & Feng, 2012). In addition, masculine communication entails discursive exchanges that are related to structure and hierarchical control (Rosener, 1990). Considered from this perspective, masculine communication "views leadership as a series of exchanges that hinge on formal, structural authority and hierarchical control" (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004, p. 5). It follows that those individuals who tend to communicate in an assertive manner and attempt to draw attention to their own ideas (i.e., masculine communicators) are likely to strive for and excel in positions of responsibility that elicit compliance (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1989). As such, whereas previous meta-analytic evidence suggests that assertive communication has a small, positive, effect on extrinsic career success (Higgins, Judge, & Ferris, 2003), we posit that in the current competitive environment, masculine communication style may play an important role in advancement.

**Hypothesis 1a:** Perceptions that masculine communication practices are characteristic of one's communication style are associated with advancement, even after controlling for biological sex and other known determinants of success.

Despite the widely acknowledged association between masculinity and management, Powell et al. (2002) find that, although a good manager is still described as predominantly masculine, this preference has attenuated. In today's society, where both younger generation male and female managers are frequently socialized in both masculine and feminine speech communities (J. T. Wood, 2012), this effect may be even more pronounced, as it could reflect a more intricate system of power relations within the organization. A shift from a strict masculine-only environment is in line with S. K. Johnson, Murphy, Zewdie, and Reichard's (2008) conception of the "strong, sensitive type" of leader. Because "work at higher [managerial] levels is more uncertain, ambiguous, and interdependent than at lower levels" (Tharenou, 1999, p. 122), this may require a more complex managerial skill set than that of either masculine or feminine communication styles alone. As J. T. Wood (2012) notes, "Because what is effective varies, we need to have a broad repertoire of communication behaviors" (p. 32). Therefore, androgynous communication could enable one to have the communication competence necessary to communicate appropriately given one's judgment about a situation (Rubin & Martin, 1994). The ability to wield both sets of tools may be useful toward making decisions

at higher organizational levels. Therefore, we expect a “strong, sensitive manager” who uses both masculine and feminine communication to achieve the highest managerial levels.

**Hypothesis 1b:** Individuals who perceive that they employ an androgynous (high masculine and high feminine) communication style achieve the greatest advancement.

*Masculine communication style and promotions.* Unlike managerial advancement, promotions do not necessarily imply a change in managerial level but rather include any increases in job responsibilities or job scope. Promotions reflect the ability to establish and command organizational status and may be associated with a drive toward increased personal responsibility, assertion of control, and accomplishment of goals (Senge & Forrester, 1987). Because these assertive, egocentric, and self-promoting aspirations are closely related to masculinity (Eagly & Carli, 2007), and the daily performance of gender may be used as a political tool to achieve desired outcomes (J. T. Wood, 2013), we theorize that employees who exhibit masculine communication styles will be more likely to seek out and achieve promotions. Although many studies have established a link between masculinity and career progression (e.g., Tharenou, 2001; Wong, Kettlewell, & Sproule, 1985), these studies theorized sex-typed hypotheses regarding the degree to which individuals internalize and identify with masculinity or femininity. Specifically, they investigate “the influence of sex-role identity on career achievement,” rather than the relationship between embodied gendered tendencies and career outcomes (Wong et al., 1985, p. 758).

Promotion is a political process, and influence strategies may explain variance in promotions more so than competency (Tharenou, 1997a). Upward influence tactics are one form of behavior that is used to generate positive career outcomes (e.g., Ferris & Judge, 1991; Wayne, Liden, Graf, & Ferris, 1997), and gendered language may be politically motivated to achieve desired outcomes (Calas & Smircich, 2006). From an intergroup perspective, gendered language is dynamic, with women and men at times using the language pattern stereotypically associated with the opposite sex to achieve various goals (Mulac, Seibold, & Farris, 2000). Literature suggests that employees play an active role in influencing managerial decisions, such as those related to promotion, by emulating prototypical masculine stereotypes (Roskos, 2004) and prescribing solutions via masculine-typed mannerisms (L. N. Robertson et al., 2011). For instance, assertiveness, a tendency associated with masculine communication, is one commonly used upward influence tactic that is positively associated with managers’ assessment of employees’ skills and promotability (Wayne et al., 1997). Furthermore, assertive communication is associated with expertise (McHugh & Hambaugh, 2010; Palomares, 2012). In line with this reasoning, we posit that masculine, assertive communication styles will be associated with decision makers’ conclusions that an employee who exhibits these tendencies has desirable, promotable qualities. This relationship, coupled with the belief that managers are likely to associate masculinity with suitability for success (Kirchmeyer, 2002) and direct, forthright communication with knowledge

and competence (Carli, 1990), leads us to anticipate a positive relationship between masculine communication style and promotion.

**Hypothesis 2:** Perceptions that masculine communication practices are characteristic of one's communication style are associated with the total number of promotions received, even after controlling for biological sex and other known determinants of success.

Internal advancement (promotion) may be more likely for employees who exhibit high masculine communication styles, as direct, instrumental communication facilitates engagement in mentoring and other bonding activities that enhance opportunities for advancement (McTiernan & Flynn, 2011). This concept is consistent with Ferris and Judge's (1991) conception that employees are active participants who play an influential role in promotion decisions and with performative gender literature that gendered communication may be used as a tactic or strategy to achieve desired outcomes (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; J. T. Wood, 2013). In addition, the literature on upward influence has found that influence tactics influence decision-maker perceptions, in turn leading to career success outcomes (Feldman & Klich, 1991). Wayne et al. (1997) find that subordinates who used assertive tactics were considered by their managers to have higher interpersonal skills, and interpersonal skills are considered to be an important factor when considering an individual for career advancement (Beeson, 2009).

Masculine traits tend to be exhibited by managers who are in a position to promote subordinates (Kent & Moss, 1994; Kirchmeyer, 2002; Powell et al., 2002). According to Byrne's (1971) similarity-attraction model, people prefer to work with others whom they perceive to be similar to themselves. According to principles of homophily (e.g., McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001), gatekeepers are likely to look favorably upon employees who conform to this masculine standard, and similarity to the dominant group has been proposed to "influence advancement within managerial ranks" (Ibarra, 1993; Tharenou, 1997a, p. 19). In line with this reasoning, we believe that masculine-typed gatekeepers are likely to favor others who exhibit masculine communication, resulting in homosocial reproduction in advancement circles such that that promotions will be related to what Connell (2008) terms *mobilization of masculinities*. Thus, we posit that masculine communication style will be associated with internal promotions.

**Hypothesis 3:** Perceptions that masculine communication practices are characteristic of one's communication style are associated with promotion to one's current position from a lower ranking position in the same organization, even after controlling for biological sex and other known determinants of success.

### *Feminine Communication Style and Non-Hierarchical Career Success*

*Feminine communication style and span of control.* A tendency associated with feminine characteristics is to seek intrinsically significant rewards and social importance

(Schwartz, 1989). In support of these goals, the personal, peer-oriented, and interactive characteristics of feminine communication are associated with informal social strength, which has little regard for traditional hierarchy (Ahuja & Carley, 1998). Indeed, high achievers may tend to strive for increased responsibility despite disinterest in formal command (Senge & Forrester, 1987). While advancing is one way to attain higher responsibility, span of control allows for additional responsibility and influence without necessitating vertical movement.

The affiliative, relationship-building tendencies associated with feminine communication have been related to a manager's availability to subordinates (M. A. Baker, 1991; Josefowitz, 1980). Moreover, feminine communication is associated with participative and egalitarian tendencies, and egalitarian participation has been shown to greatly enrich the overall results of work groups (Bettenhausen, 1991). However, as established in Appendix B, a feminine communication style goes beyond being participative. Feminine communication is collegial, and collegial communication has been linked to "the construction and maintenance of good relations with fellow workers" (Holmes, 2006, p. 26). In many ways, feminine communication shares characteristics with Rosener's (1990) concept of *interactive leadership*, which she describes as "actively work[ing] to make . . . interactions with subordinates positive for everyone involved . . . encourag[ing] participation, shar[ing] power and information, [and] enhance[ing] other people's self-worth" (p. 4). In addition, feminine communicators encourage others to share their ideas, they express empathy that helps others feel safe, and they use concrete reasoning to cultivate personal connections (J. T. Wood, 2013). Collectively, these tendencies represent high quality *interpersonal facilitation* (Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996), which we posit will be associated with one's capacity to manage large groups of people. This consideration embraces an agenda that couches "feminist organizing as an important investment for all" that is characterized by empowering promise (Ashcraft, 2013). Accordingly, feminine communication embraces the critical organizational communication perspective that discourse among members of a relevant unit constitutes and is central to the organizing process and the construction of organizational identities (Mumby, 2013). For these reasons, and because a leader's expressed support and encouragement are likely to energize subordinates and enhance their self-worth (Rosener, 1990), we believe that those with a tendency to communicate in a highly feminine manner will be entrusted with a greater span of control.

**Hypothesis 4:** Perceptions that feminine communication practices are characteristic of one's communication style are associated with an increased span of control over one's career, even after accounting for biological sex and known predictors of career success.

*Feminine communication style and compensation.* Little has been accomplished to answer Fossum and Fitch's (1985) call for research to identify individual-difference variables other than biological sex or performance to explain variance in compensation. We respond by conceptualizing compensation as a non-hierarchical reward related to gendered workplace communication. From a power dynamics perspective, feminine

communication involves setting aside one's personal desires in order to achieve shared organizational goals (Cole, 2004). Toward this end, the egalitarian tendencies associated with feminine communication often entail relinquishing control and empowering others for the benefit of the whole. Such empowerment enables discursive navigation of dilemmas that encourages productivity (Ashcraft, 2000; Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004). Feminine communication is also concerned with establishing relationships, connecting with others, and working to create and maintain these connections (J. T. Wood, 2013). Tentative, feminine communication aids in persuasiveness and in the provision of social cues (Palomares, 2009; Reid, Keerie, & Palomares, 2003). Feminine communicators build strong networks (Tomlinson, Brockbank, & Traves, 1997), and employees who are considered to be a vital component of their organization's internal or external networks are likely to be viewed by managers as valuable contributors to a cohesive organization. Feminine communication also entails being open to personal development that often leads to new skill acquisition (Tomlinson et al., 1997); the willingness and ability to develop new skills are commonly seen during the evaluation process as something that leads to a salary increase, due to the utility and marketability of the employee (Lawler, 1995).

Managers have considerably more discretion over non-hierarchical rewards, such as financial remuneration, than they have over decisions regarding hierarchical advancement, as organizations often specify criteria for promotion decisions (Rhoades & Maitland, 2002). Even organizations that implement strict merit-based compensation systems often allow for managerial discretion in determining the magnitude of salary increases, providing managers with discretionary oversight of the process that determines an individual's financial value to the firm (Fossum & Fitch, 1985). Because of the ongoing opportunities that supervisors have to observe, evaluate, and communicate with direct reports, coupled with the valuable communal tendencies that feminine communicators display, we believe that supervisors will use the discretion that they have over salary augmentation to reward feminine-typed communicators. This is because of the positive impact that feminine communicators are likely to have on the ability of the organization to unite in the pursuit of divisional or organizational goals (Cole, 2004).

**Hypothesis 5a:** Perceptions that feminine communication practices are characteristic of one's communication style are associated with higher compensation, even after controlling for biological sex and other known predictors of success.

Although feminine communication may be valued for its ability to help an organization achieve its goals, by allowing others' positions to weigh equally to one's own, feminine communication style alone may not necessarily promote one's self-serving needs. Individuals who exhibit both high masculine and high feminine communication styles, on the other hand, may be in a more favorable position when faced with complex and varied organizational demands. The ability to draw on a varied set of skills and to select the appropriate one for a given circumstance may be congruent with one's ability to process emotional information in a way that influences thinking and behavior (Lopes, Grewal, Kadis, Gall, & Salovey, 2006). This skill set has been argued to

reflect salary and salary increase “by enabling people to nurture positive relationships at work, work effectively in teams, . . . build social capital . . . perform well under pressure, and adjust to organizational change” (Lopes et al., 2006, p. 132). Keys (1985) notes that androgynous communicators may have certain advantages due to their ability to draw on a broader range of potential behaviors. They can be both authoritative and empathetic to the needs of other organizational members. We anticipate that, as this dual skill set is expected to be of value to the organization, those individuals who tend to exhibit androgynous communication styles (high masculine and high feminine) will receive the highest compensation.

**Hypothesis 5b:** Individuals who perceive that they employ an androgynous (high masculine and high feminine) communication style receive the highest compensation.

Kirchmeyer (2002) emphasizes the need for women to demonstrate masculinity but explains that for men variance in demonstrated masculine traits may have a relatively unimportant effect. This is because men, by virtue of their biological sex, are generally attributed with masculinity, whereas women are expected to communicate assertively in order to be perceived as competent (Josefowitz, 1982; J. T. Wood, 2013). Thus, as sociolinguistic literature suggests that masculine communication is viewed as normative in organizations, and that adherence to this norm may be interpreted as a favorable alternative (Tannen, 1990), women who tend to adapt a masculine form of communication may benefit. Kirchmeyer (1998), who claims that it may be necessary for women to demonstrate masculinity in order to enforce perceptions of competence and a good fit with their job, upholds this view. Accordingly, we anticipate that women’s compensation will be greatest when they exhibit a masculine communication style.

**Hypothesis 5c:** Perceptions that masculine communication practices are characteristic of one’s communication style are associated with women’s compensation, but not men’s.

It is possible that the effect detailed by Josefowitz (1982), whereby men are attributed with masculinity and therefore may not benefit from exhibiting masculinity, may have a similar effect on women. Specifically, women may be automatically attributed with femininity and may not benefit from exhibiting femininity to the same degree as men. This alternative perspective is consistent with one study which found that engaging in altruistic helping behaviors is positively related to men’s evaluations and recommendations, but not women’s (Heilman & Chen, 2005). Given that helping behaviors involve relational social processes associated with concern with people and relationships (i.e., feminine communication), it is possible that men, who would not automatically be perceived as associated with these forms of communication, may receive more favorable evaluations as a result of tending to exhibit these tendencies and, in turn, higher pay.

**Hypothesis 5d:** Perceptions that feminine communication practices are characteristic of one's communication style are positively associated with men's compensation, but not women's.

### *Overall Career Success*

Although the measures of career success analyzed in the present study are conceptually distinct constructs (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005), previous research has captured overall career success as a composite variable (e.g., Metz & Tharenou, 2001; Tharenou, 1999). As proposed in Hypothesis 1, some individuals tend to communicate in a masculine way that is likely to be associated with higher organizational levels. However, it is unlikely that individuals who exhibit primarily masculine communication styles will best represent the interests of all organizational stakeholders, as required by managers in upper echelons. A strongly communal, feminine communication style may be more useful under these circumstances. Eagly and Carli (2007) acknowledge that most managers lead in *both* an assertive, transactional manner and in an individually considerate, charismatic (transformational) fashion. This is consistent with the perspective that gendered language may be selected based on context and used in response to the people involved in the situation (J. T. Wood, 2013). Current theory on careers suggests that individuals are valued, in part, for their ability to adapt to changing work conditions (Metz & Tharenou, 2001). The ability to adapt one's communication appropriately and effectively to meet the needs of a situation is referred to as *interpersonal communication competence*, which requires a broad range of potential communicative styles (J. T. Wood, 2012). Thus, consistent with S. L. Bem's (1974) conceptualization of androgyny, it may be argued that the most *highly functioning* communicators, those chameleon types who can transform their communication styles when necessary, should be the most successful. For example, androgynous tendencies may be associated with those who integrate task- and relationship-orientated behaviors effectively (Bass, Avolio, & Atwater, 1996). Specifically, androgynous communicators are likely to "display social-emotional leadership with masculine partners and task-oriented leadership with feminine partners regardless of the partners' gender" (Korabik, 1990, p. 287). For these reasons, we expect those who use both high masculine and high feminine communication styles to have the highest overall career success.

**Hypothesis 6:** Perceptions that androgynous (both masculine and feminine) communication practices are characteristic of one's communication style are associated with the greatest overall success.

### *Research Participants and Procedure*

We enlisted the services of Qualtrics Panels, an organization specializing in online survey administration, to identify and target full-time working adults from the United States to participate in our study. A total of 4,652 individuals nationwide viewed our solicitation, indicating initial interest in one of Qualtrics' "email invitations, SMS and

text messages, telephone alerts, [or] banners and messaging on websites and online communities” to either “give your opinion, win a prize, earn cash or prizes or let your voice be heard”; furthermore, all final respondents received a small (50 cent) monetary incentive (B. Aldous, personal communication, March 21, 2014, and January 15, 2015). As the present study analyzes multiple indicators of career success, selection criteria for inclusion comprised individuals who are currently employed (not self-employed) and have a minimum of 15 years of full-time work experience. Due to the sensitive nature of career-related data, anonymity was ensured. Given the specified selection parameters, 1,589 individuals received our survey electronically, of which 705 opened and viewed the survey.

The survey was designed with a number of quality checks that allowed for identification of inadequate responses. Removal of respondents who did not fit our criteria of 15 years full-time employment (24 respondents), those who did not follow directions on these respondent awareness questions (12 respondents), and listwise deletion of respondents with incomplete data (32 respondents) resulted in a final sample of 637 individuals from a broad cross-section of U.S. industries, comprising a usable data response rate of 40.1%. This sample offers a number of advantages. First, recording individuals’ progress, particularly that of women, in the mid- to late stage of their career is a rarity, yet it is the stage where achievement gains and rates of promotion are greatest (Kirchmeyer, 2002). Second, the use of this larger sample in Study 2 helps to ensure that the factor loadings accurately reflect population values (Hinkin, 1998), and it allows us to meet the criteria for asymptotic confirmatory analysis established by Hoelter (1983).

The most common industries represented were service (22.4%), manufacturing (14.4%), education (11.3%), government/public administration (10.7%), and retail (9.9%). Moreover, respondents represented a broad range of hierarchical levels, as 51.6% held non-supervisory/non-managerial positions, 10.5% held junior-level management positions, 17.4% were middle-level managers, 8.2% were senior-level managers, and 12.2% were executives. Furthermore, 49.3% of respondents were men, 50.7% were women, and 85.6% identified as White/Caucasian. Respondents averaged 33.2 years of work experience (29.3 of which were full-time), their average age was 51.7 years, and their average tenure in their current organization was 12.0 years. It is widely known that men, on average, earn higher salaries than women (Kirchmeyer, 2002), and the present study’s sample reflects this general tendency, as men in our sample earn, on average, 32.2% more than female participants ( $t = 6.30, p < .001$ ).

## Measures

**Controls.** Age, education level, work experience, organizational tenure, and discontinuous employment have all been shown to predict career success across numerous studies (e.g., Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Kirchmeyer, 2002) and were controlled.

**Biological sex.** Biological sex has been shown to affect employment opportunities both within and across organizations (O’Reilly & Chatman, 1994; Pfeffer & Langton, 1988). Sex was coded as a dummy variable, where 0 = male and 1 = female.

*Gendered communication style.* Perceptions of masculine and feminine communication styles were captured using the instrument developed in Study 1. Internal reliability for each facet was obtained with alphas of .79 and .85, respectively.

*Managerial advancement.* This item was coded as follows: 1, non-supervisory/non-manager (you do not delegate work to any others); 2, junior-level manager; 3, middle-level manager; 4, senior-level manager; and 5, executive. Respondents were asked to consider their last four positions and to indicate their managerial level at each position. Managerial level from their fourth-most-recent position (or earliest job indicated) was controlled in order to analyze managerial advancement. This method of controlling for past career attainment is consistent with previous research (e.g., Forbes, 1987; Schmeer & Reitman, 1994).

*Promotions.* Consistent with previous research, and in order to accommodate flatter organizational structures and differentiate promotions from managerial advancement, promotions were defined as “any increases in level and/or any significant increases in job responsibilities or job scope” (e.g., Kirchmeyer, 2002; Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001, p. 227). Respondents indicated the total number of promotions that they received over their careers and whether they were promoted to their current position from a lower ranking position in the same organization.

*Span of control.* Respondents were asked to indicate the number of people they directly supervised in each of their last four positions. The number of subordinates they supervised in their fourth-most-recent position (or earliest job indicated) was controlled in analysis.

*Financial compensation.* Respondents were asked to indicate their total annual compensation for each of their last four positions, inclusive of any bonuses, commissions, and stipends. Compensation in their fourth-most-recent position (or earliest job) was controlled. Self-reports of compensation have been shown to correlate highly with company records (Judge et al., 1995; Turban & Dougherty, 1994). We followed Gerhart and Milkovich’s (1989) recommendation and transformed the compensation variable using a natural logarithmic transformation.

*Overall career success.* We calculated overall career success by summing the *Z*-score values of the same four variables as Metz and Tharenou (2001): current managerial level, salary, number of subordinates, and the number of promotions received.

## Results

*Descriptive statistics and correlations.* The sample was nearly perfectly split with regard to biological sex, and it largely resembles the current U.S. racial demographics according to the 2010 U.S. Census issued in March 2011. Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations for all Study 2 variables can be found in Table 3. The five

dependent variables are reasonably independent, with the highest correlation between managerial level and number of subordinates ( $r = .28, p < .01$ ). The data clearly show that managerial position (a hierarchical function) and salary (which is not necessarily tied to hierarchy) are, as expected, related; however, their correlation, at .24, indicates that the two are far from codependent. Bivariate relationships show that respondents who perceive using a masculine communication style were younger, had less work experience, and were often male. Respondents who tended to use feminine communication style were generally more highly educated and were often women. Women tended to have less formal education, to have more discontinuous employment, and to receive lower compensation than men. The positive and significant relationships between gendered communication variables and career advancement provide initial evidence of criterion-related validity for our gendered communication construct.

*Cross-validation of factor structure.* We reproduced the confirmatory factor analysis to provide cross-validation of the gendered communication measure established in Appendix B. The fit of the model was strong, indicating replicability of the measure:  $\chi^2(156, N = 637) = 483.44, p < .001, \chi^2/df = 3.09$ , incremental fit index (IFI) = .92, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = .91, comparative fit index (CFI) = .92, and root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) = .06. Substantiation of this measure confirms that the gendered communication construct appears to match the orthogonal relationship between masculinity and femininity posited by contemporary two-factor theories of gender (Spence & Buckner, 1995).

*Tests of hypotheses.* To examine the effects of perceived masculine and feminine communication styles on career outcomes, we used hierarchical regression analyses. Consistent with our conceptual discussion, we entered the control variable block first (preceded by a control for past experience, when appropriate), followed by biological sex, gendered communication style, and the interaction variables in subsequent hierarchical blocks.

Regarding hierarchical reward, results, as depicted in Table 4, support each of the study's direct relationship hypotheses. Unexpectedly, we also found a direct relationship between feminine communication style and both advancement and number of promotions. Results reveal no distinction between men and women for any of the three hierarchical outcomes. An interaction effect of masculine and feminine communication styles jointly relating to advancement was found but not in the manner predicted: Rather than explaining that individuals who use both types of communication achieve the greatest advancement, the plot (see Figure 1a) reveals that advancement is greatest for individuals who tend to use *either* high feminine and low masculine communication *or* high masculine and low feminine communication.

Regarding non-hierarchical reward, results support Hypotheses 4 and 5a, suggesting that tendency to use feminine communication significantly predicts non-hierarchical rewards, as expected. Furthermore, the data for compensation match what we might see in broad surveys of male and female income differences: Even with controls, there is a negative effect of being female. The interaction effect for masculine

**Table 3.** Means, Standard Deviations, Alphas, and Intercorrelations Between Study 2 Variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Age	51.71	8.56	—												
2. Education	4.20	1.36	-.01	—											
3. Work experience	33.18	8.77	.84**	-.08*	—										
4. Organizational tenure	11.99	9.24	.22*	-.01	.20**	—									
5. Discontinuous employment	0.55	0.50	.07	-.13**	.06	.01	—								
6. Biological sex (male/female)	0.51	0.50	.01	-.09*	-.11**	-.02	.31**	—							
7. Masculine communication	2.90	0.58	-.19**	.06	-.16**	-.07	-.07	-.13**	—						
8. Feminine communication	3.84	0.48	.03	.09*	-.02	-.00	.02	.08*	.09*	(.85)					
9. Managerial level	2.19	1.45	-.02	.14**	-.05	.11**	-.07	-.06	.23**	.18**	—				
10. Number of promotions	3.56	2.88	.07	.01	.10	-.07	-.08	-.05	.24**	.17*	.23**	—			
11. Promoted internally	1.55	0.50	-.10*	.03	-.09*	.21**	-.03	.01	.09*	.05	.14**	.26**	—		
12. Number of subordinates	8.91	35.02	-.02	.04	-.00	-.00	0.05	-.08	.08	.14**	.28**	.17*	.17**	—	
13. Financial compensation	56,448	32,384	.05	.36**	.06	.19**	-.19**	-.22**	.09*	.11**	.24**	.26**	.15**	.17**	—

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. Cronbach's alpha is displayed in parentheses along the diagonal.

**Table 4.** Regression Results Predicting Hierarchical Achievement and Non-Hierarchical Rewards.

Predictors (N = 637)	Hierarchical reward			Non-hierarchical reward			Overall career success <sup>a</sup>
	Managerial advancement	Total number of promotions	Promoted from within	Span of control	Financial compensation		
1. Control for past position <sup>b</sup>	.16***	NA	NA	.14***	.41***	NA	NA
Change in R <sup>2</sup>	.02			.02	.16		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.02			.02	.16		
Change in F ratio	15.62***			11.14***	114.34***		
2. Control variables							
Age	.04	-.01	-.12	-.04	-.15*		-.07
Education	.09*	.01	.02	.02	.27***		.24***
Work experience	-.12	.13	-.04	.03	.13*		.11
Organizational tenure	.15***	-.09	.25***	.02	.27***		.14***
Discontinuous employment	-.05	-.08	-.02	-.04	-.08*		-.08*
Change in R <sup>2</sup>	.04	.02	.07	.00	.16		.09
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.05	.00	.06	.02	.31		.08
Change in F ratio	5.12***	1.04	9.40***	0.36	26.25***		11.38***
3. Biological sex (0 = male)	-.03	-.02	.03	-.05	-.11**		-.12**
Change in R <sup>2</sup>	.00	.00	.00	.00	.01		.01
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.05	-.00	.06	.01	.32		.09
Change in F ratio	0.48	0.06	0.39	1.10	9.18**		8.41**
4. Gendered communication							
Masculine communication	.21***	.24***	.08*	.04	.03		.17***
Feminine communication	.14***	.15*	.04	.13**	.08*		.18***
Change in R <sup>2</sup>	.07	.08	.01	.02	.01		.06
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.12	.07	.07	.03	.33		.15
Change in F ratio	23.23***	9.88***	2.71	5.75**	2.95*		21.98***

(continued)

**Table 4. (continued)**

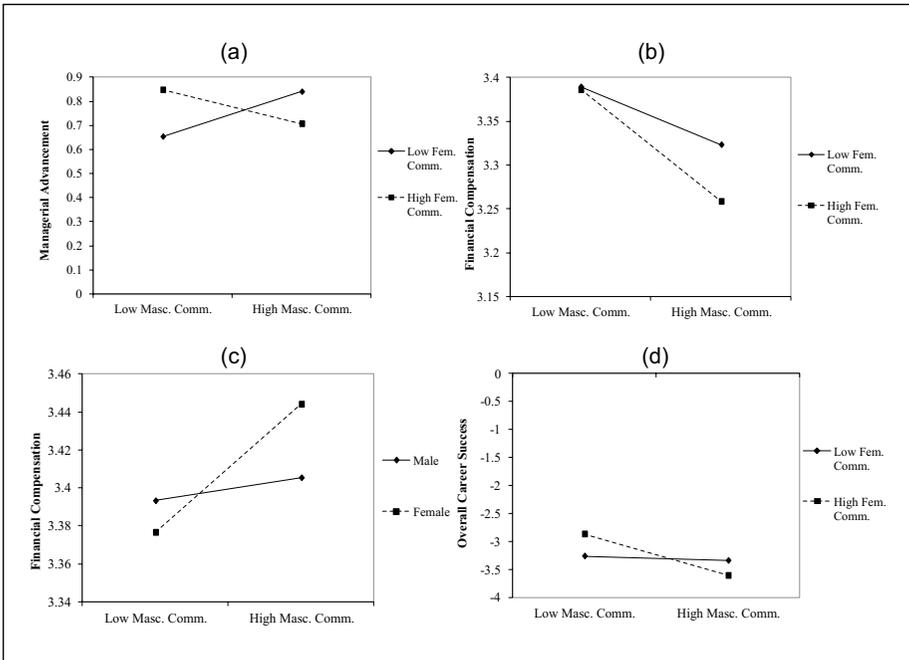
Predictors (N = 637)	Hierarchical reward			Non-hierarchical reward			Overall career success <sup>a</sup>
	Managerial advancement	Total number of promotions	Promoted from within	Span of control	Financial compensation		
5. Interactions							
Sex and masculine communication	.02	NA	NA	NA	<b>.06*</b>		.03
Sex and feminine communication	-.02				.02		.02
Masculine and feminine communication	<b>-.07*</b>				<b>-.08*</b>		<b>-.08*</b>
Change in R <sup>2</sup>	.00				.01		.01
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.12				.33		.16
Change in F ratio	1.03				<b>2.83*</b>		2.00
Full equation F ratio	<b>7.89***</b>	<b>3.18**</b>	<b>6.63***</b>	<b>2.86**</b>	<b>25.20***</b>		<b>11.02***</b>

Note. Entries represent standardized coefficients. Although one-tailed tests are suitable for directional hypotheses (Erickson & Nosanchuk, 1977; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999; Wonnacott & Wonnacott, 1984), we calculated two-tailed tests except in the instance of hypothesized interaction effects. Bold font represents significant relationships related to study hypotheses; shaded sections represent cells that were not applicable in a given model.

<sup>a</sup>Overall career success is a composite variable calculated as the summed value of the Z scores of current managerial level, number of promotions, span of control, and compensation, consistent with prior research (e.g., Metz & Tharenou, 2001).

<sup>b</sup>Respondents were asked to recall the last four jobs that they held. Information from their earliest of these jobs is used as a control.

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.



**Figure 1.** Interaction plots predicting hierarchical advancement and non-hierarchical reward.

and feminine communication predicting compensation in Hypothesis 5b was significant but not as hypothesized. Results indicate that tendency to express low levels of masculine communication will lead to the highest compensation, regardless of whether high or low feminine communication style is employed. However, for those who tend to employ high levels of masculine communication, higher salary tends to be achieved by those who use low, as opposed to high, feminine communication style. Although the interaction effect predicted in Hypothesis 5d was not supported, results support the interaction effect predicted in Hypothesis 5c, providing evidence that masculine communication style has a significant effect on women’s compensation.

Finally, Hypothesis 6 predicts that people who employ an androgynous communication style will achieve the highest overall success. Although results reveal a significant interaction effect, the interaction plot in Figure 1d reveals that for those who tend to employ low levels of feminine communication, it does not appear to matter whether they employ low or high masculine communication; however, those who tend to use high feminine communication achieve higher overall career success if they also use low masculine communication.

We ran a number of post hoc tests to compare masculine and feminine communication styles across industry, sex, and managerial levels. Results reveal that neither masculine nor feminine communication tendency varied significantly by industry. Furthermore,

while there is a small but significant difference between men's and women's masculine communication tendency ( $\mu_{\text{men}} = 2.97$ ,  $\mu_{\text{women}} = 2.83$ ,  $t = 3.11$ ,  $p < .01$ ), there is no difference between men's and women's tendency to use feminine communication, nor does there appear to be any hierarchical *or* non-hierarchical benefit for men or women to communicate in the manner that conforms to normative assumptions of socialized gender. That is, men who tend to communicate masculinely and women who tend to communicate femininely do not reap greater rewards than their counterparts whose communication does not fit the stereotypical norms for their sex. With regard to hierarchical levels, our sample included executives; managers at senior, middle, and junior levels; and non-supervisor/non-managers. Results of post hoc ANOVA tests reveal that non-supervisors differ significantly from managers at all levels other than junior-level managers in their usage of both masculine ( $F = 9.48$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and feminine ( $F = 5.862$ ,  $p < .001$ ) communication styles but that there is no significant difference among different-level managers on their tendency to use either form of communication.

## Discussion

Changes in the organization of work and employment (Castilla, 2012) prompted our investigation into whether masculine attributions generally associated with career success are universally appropriate. Despite suggestions from linguistics literature that the feminine circle of experience and interpretation tends to be "neither visible nor acknowledged" (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006, p. 30), results of the present study confirm an alternative perspective that feminine communication style appears to play a largely beneficial role in the attainment of positive career outcomes. Our results extend career advancement theory in several ways. First, our development and validation of a new testable gendered communication measurement instrument facilitates scholarly research on the relationship between perceived gendered communication style and organizational phenomena. Second, our study highlights the nomological relevance of gendered communication in the workplace. We provide compelling evidence that both styles of gendered communication are distinct from the biological sex classifications to which they are stereotypically attributed, and from similar but distinct organizational concepts. Third, results support the move away from biological gender distinctions in organizations to a focus on diverse gender-typed communicative tendencies (e.g., Mumby, 2006). By controlling for biological sex in Study 2, we measure the additional impact that tendency to communicate in a feminine or masculine manner adds to or detracts from an employee's success.

Results suggest important implications for the manner in which we evaluate the emergence of leaders in organizations. Indeed, Eagly and Karau's (1991) conclusion in their meta-analytic study of gender and leader emergence that "the best way for women to achieve leadership is to emulate male behavior" (p. 705) may no longer be the only prescriptive path to achievement. Despite indications that masculinity continues to be associated with leadership prototypes (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011), our study provides evidence that a focus on masculinity does not provide a complete picture, as feminine-typed communication style appears to play a unique and

equal, if not more important, role in career outcomes. These conclusions are congruent with a recent study, which suggests that society has begun to embrace “a feminizing of the management role” (Elsesser & Lever, 2011, p. 1575).

### *The Value of Feminine Communication*

As masculine communication style tends to hinge on formal, structurally authoritative exchanges associated with hierarchical control (Rosener, 1990), its relevance in contemporary organizations, often characterized by reduced hierarchy and low emphasis on formal authority, may be somewhat attenuated. Thus, although theories of gendered organizing (e.g., Acker, 1990) suggest that most organizations are designed by and for males and, therefore, might predominantly reward masculine communication, our findings are more consistent with the revalorist perspective, suggesting that femininity offers as-yet-unrealized potential in contemporary society (e.g., Helgesen, 1990). Indeed, results indicate that feminine communication style appears to be indicative of success, even greater than that envisioned a priori in our investigation: Consistent with Smith et al.'s (2013) meta-analytic findings that feminine influence tactics are more effective than masculine tactics, our results suggest that feminine communication style tends to have the greatest range of positive effects, influencing both non-hierarchical and hierarchical career outcomes.

A possible explanation for our unexpected findings that feminine communication tends to predict managerial advancement and promotions may be found in Tharenou's (1999) rationalization that work at higher levels tends to be more interdependent than work at lower levels. It is possible that the communal nature of feminine communication helps employees to meet the challenge of succeeding in interdependent work. This idea is synonymous with calls for increased feminine leadership that emphasize the importance of stereotypically feminine managerial behavior (Rosener, 1990) and specify the need for “leadership that is more participatory, collaborative, nonhierarchical and community building than in the past” (McTiernan & Flynn, 2011, p. 328).

The present study provides evidence in favor of the cultural feminist perspective that femininity represents a largely underutilized but valuable form of organizational expertise (Ashcraft, 2013). However, as predicted, masculine communication was also found to be useful toward hierarchical career outcomes. Future research is needed to enable a better understanding of when situations command differentially masculine and feminine communication strategies. For instance, researchers may gain a better understanding of the complex relationship between gendered communication and workplace outcomes by investigating the manner in which demographic composition influences adherence to sex-typed communication styles.

### *Assumption of a Focused Gendered Communication Identity*

Our interaction effects reveal that, after accounting for sex and the direct effects of gendered communication, the likelihood of managerial advancement improves when an individual employs *either* a high masculine/low feminine communication style *or* a

high feminine/low masculine style and that those with a high feminine and low masculine communication style achieve the highest overall career success. These findings are counter to the expectations of communication competence theory and alternatively appear to align with the sociological view that it “might be preferable to assume a simple, focused identity” to avoid “sowing confusion among relevant audiences” (Zuckerman, Kim, Ukanwa, & von Rittmann, 2003, pp. 1019-1020). Thus, the less ambiguous one’s perceived communication style, the greater career success he or she is likely to experience. An exception, however, was found with regard to compensation, in which the strongest predictor entails tendency to use low masculine communication regardless of an individual’s level of feminine communication style. What remains unanswered is *why* low masculine communication style has this positive effect. Some evidence suggests that people tend to persist more strongly in negotiations with competitive counterparts (Bowles & Flynn, 2010), which indicates that superiors might negotiate less intensely with subordinates who communicate in a less competitive manner. Alternatively, although literature commonly suggests that masculine communication use may offer social disadvantages for female workers, could it be that expressed masculinity is becoming less *universally* socially attractive? Each of these considerations may be worth future investigation.

### ***Biased Expectations: Women and Masculine Communication***

Support for Hypothesis 5c suggests that there appears to be lingering biased expectations of women in the workplace consistent with the cultural feminist perspective that, for women in organizations, the universal institutional rules are still, to some degree, systematically biased in favor of masculinity. This finding is inconsistent with Eagly’s (1987) social role theory, which would argue that women might be penalized if they violate the stereotypical feminine communication pattern. Rather, the finding that masculine communication style enables women to receive greater compensation for their work suggests that a violation of the stereotypical feminine role may have positive effects. This is consistent with expectancy violations theory (Burgoon, 1993), which suggests that individuating behavior is especially salient when it exceeds perceptual thresholds established by stereotype-based expectations.

### ***Performativity of Gendered Communication***

Overall, our findings support the notion that organization members’ perceptions of expressed gendered communication differences emerge sociologically rather than biologically and that these distinctions come about in part as a response to ensuing power dynamics within the organization (Calas & Smircich, 2006; Sussman & Tyson, 2000). That is, consistent with the *performance turn* in which gender is considered a goal-oriented communicated presentation (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006), gendered communication may be employed as a situated communicative tactic to achieve desired outcomes (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004). This consideration is compatible with the critical view that gender performance constitutes organizational design (e.g., Gherardi,

1994), and it calls into question the influence that contextual and organizational variables may have on the use of masculine and feminine communication styles. Thus, as emphasized by Butler (2010), within the boundaries of a meaningful social context, “an account of gender as ritualized, public performance must be combined with an analysis of the . . . sanctions and taboos under which that performance may and may not occur” (p. 526). This, coupled with Ely and Padavic’s (2007) discussion of organizations as “situated contextual constraints within which people are capable of exercising choice” (p. 1138), suggests that future research is needed to determine the *performativity* of gendered communication—that is, how and when individuals choose to use their voice to display and respond to situations within the power dynamics institutionalized in organizations and under which organizational conditions each type of communication is beneficial (Langellier, 1999).

### *Limitations and Directions for Future Research*

Despite its strengths, the present study is constrained by a number of limitations. First, the data we captured on respondents’ last four jobs were collected cross-sectionally and may be subject to recency bias; this limits our ability to infer a causal relationship between the variables. Studies that are cross-sectional in design “reflect both early and recent career experiences and both old and current employer practices” (Kirchmeyer, 2002, p. 6). Thus, our study is unable to separate these potential biases from the results. As we are interested primarily in career-related outcomes, it was necessary to collect data from individuals who have had time to build their careers (i.e., a minimum of 15 years full-time work experience). This resulted in a somewhat truncated sample of older, more experienced workers, and limits our ability to uncover the influence that gendered communication styles may have on the careers of young or part-time workers, or those in the early stages of their careers. Furthermore, as the sample was limited to U.S. workers, we are unable to determine whether our results generalize to the global population.

Similarly, from a Foucauldian perspective, this study benefits from having captured respondents’ understanding regarding their own communication styles at work (Mumby, 2013). Although the intent of the present study is to capture gendered communication styles and communication tendencies with a large-scale questionnaire, we recognize that self-reported communication tendencies may vary from the way in which these behaviors are enacted. Future research should investigate the degree to which one’s perceptions predict actual gendered communication behavior as observed by a researcher or by key focal individuals in the organization (e.g., peers or supervisors).

Although this study is grounded predominantly in feminist theories of organization that remain largely site-bound (Ashcraft, 2013), the generalizability of our findings is bolstered by the fact that we collected data from a national U.S. sample of participants across a range of organizations, thereby reducing the influence that organizational culture or norms could impact our results. Thus, another contribution of the study stems from our ability to establish the importance of gendered communication across a broad cross-section of individuals, organizations, and industries in order to support the generalizability of the construct. By viewing gender as performed, we join

the current shift in organizational research that envisions enacted communication as creating a structure that breeds organizational norms (see Butler, 2004; Sloop, 2006). Although our study provides initial evidence that this viewpoint may accurately depict the relationship between communication and workplace outcomes, it is worth noting that the present study does not account for existing organizational structure, culture, or work site arrangement. As such, although it is clear that masculine and feminine communication styles are both valuable, it remains unknown whether boundary conditions constrain the utility of gendered communication with regard to when one should communicate masculinely or femininely. Future examinations of how the relationships hypothesized in this study play out across various organizational (and non-organizational) contexts may be worthwhile.

Despite our findings that androgynous communication does not appear to be related to objective measures of career success, it is clear that the orthogonal notion of bivariate gender remains an important distinguishing feature of organizational communication. Failure to support our hypotheses that androgynous communicators reap the greatest hierarchical successes indicates that there may be situations when either masculine or feminine communication style is appropriate. Results of our post hoc analyses rule out the likelihood of contextual industrial differences and differences among managers at various levels. However, organizational demographics (i.e., the ratio of men to women in the company) may influence the preference for one form of communication over the other. Furthermore, some jobs tend to be gender-typed (Goldberg, Finkelstein, Perry, & Konrad, 2004) and may inherently reward masculine or feminine communication. Thus, future research comparing the effectiveness of gendered communication style across two or more job types or professions could provide important insights. Furthermore, although flattened organizational structures limit hierarchical positions (Senge & Forrester, 1987), research has yet to uncover whether employees are satisfied with non-hierarchical rewards in lieu of hierarchical advancement. Finally, we elected to capture objective measures of career success. However, these extrinsic forms of career success tend only to moderately correlate with individuals' intrinsic and subjective perceptions of success (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999). Future research is needed to further develop our understanding of the relationship between individual goal setting and the objective measures of career success discussed herein.

We conclude this discussion by outlining an agenda for future research that aims to build on extant communication and organization theory to extend the relationship of gendered communication and career outcomes beyond the conceptualizations proposed in this study. The focus of the present study is on outcomes associated with gendered communication styles and the rationale leading to these results. Although it is outside the scope of the present study, future research might examine why individuals choose to and/or are motivated to perform gender differently. Considering that the literature has discussed women communicating masculinely as appearing inauthentic (Ashcraft, 2013), future research may benefit from considering the intersection of one's self-proclaimed communication style at work and its *authenticity*—that is, to investigate the degree to which a match between expressed communication style and inner emotions matters toward various outcomes. This suggestion is consistent with a

finding by Reid et al. (2003) that language use by women and men differs as a result of their respective degrees of gender salience, and future research might ask more nuanced questions regarding how gender salience promotes different forms of gendered communication in specified contexts. Given that organizations (via management and/or one's job role) often advocate *feeling rules* to guide the expression of appropriate emotions in social interactions (Miller, 2013), research may benefit from considering the connection between authentic representations of oneself and the concept of *gender schemata* (e.g., Palomares, 2012), which involves the degree to which gender is salient or meaningful to an individual. This stream of research might consider (1) whether male tendency to use feminine communication is viewed as equally inauthentic (and, if so, by which audiences) and (2) the interaction of self-authenticity and communication style and its impact on workplace outcomes. Results of such investigations may shed light on the manner in which we approach gendered communication training, particularly given that previous research has noted that "training women to emulate masculinity is misguided [in that] it is unlikely to be seen as authentic" (Ashcraft, 2013, p. 130). This highlights the importance of context as an important consideration in gendered communication research (e.g., J. T. Wood, 2013).

Consistent with Lee (2005), it may be worthwhile to consider the salience of a context's social influences to determine whether the relationships found herein vary across different types of communication media. By taking a more fine-grained, contextualized approach, future research may provide insight into *when* individuals should communicate masculinely or femininely. For example, Ahuja and Carley (1998) suggest that non-hierarchical forms of personal, peer-oriented, and interactive communication determine an organization's informal social network structure. As these characteristics closely resemble feminine communication, it is possible that individuals who employ strong feminine communication styles may be the most central to an organization's social network. Thus, as social network structures have "powerful implications for the information [people] receive, the attitudes they form, and the interactions they experience" (McPherson et al., 2001, p. 415), future research into the relationship of gendered communication styles and social network position appears warranted.

Our measure, though developed for use in organizational settings, is grounded in gendered communication theory from multiple domains of communication. We encourage scholars to adapt the measurement instrument for use in other interpersonal or intergroup domains, with the following caveats: (1) Given the contextually bound nature of enacted gender (Deaux & Major, 1987; Palomares, 2012), it remains important that if the organization is removed from the equation, that researchers specify another equally defining context in which the questions are situated; (2) the instrument and ensuing discussion remain focused on the intergroup dynamics of masculine and feminine communication styles without deferring back to language that suggests differences between males and females; and (3) the measure, as developed, continues to represent the individual level of analysis—that is, gendered communication tendencies exhibited by an individual within the context of a given setting. The present study maintains the individual level of analysis by examining results that are experienced by the respondent. However, one's gendered communication style may have implications for more macro-level outcomes, influencing, for example, dyadic relationships such as

leader-follower or mentor-protégé pairs, or may be extended to theorize relationship dynamics at the group or larger levels. In these instances, we caution future researchers to carefully consider whose perspective is important to capture when designing a research agenda and to appropriately theorize the process through which an individual's gendered communication style may influence the interpersonal dynamics and outcomes of these encompassing arenas.

## Conclusion

We have introduced gendered communication style as a testable construct in communication and organizational research. Our study is the first to offer an empirical investigation of gendered communication styles in the workplace. Results highlight the usefulness of this construct and provide revelatory insight into how women and men may communicate to achieve important organizational outcomes. The consideration of gendered communication in organizational research provides a critical redirection of existing views regarding career advancement and the paradigm by which we train women and men to communicate effectively. Although we have provided initial evidence of the relationship between gendered communication styles and career outcomes, a more refined approach would enhance our findings by asking context- and environment-specific research questions. We hope that this study sparks further conceptual and empirical investigations on the relationships between masculine and feminine communication styles and important workplace outcomes.

## Appendix A

The gendered communication instrument was designed to capture the enacted bivariate set of gendered communication tendencies elaborated conceptually by gendered communication scholars (e.g., Mumby, 2006; J. T. Wood, 2013) along the traditional dimensions of masculinity and femininity (S. L. Bem, 1974). Whereas S. L. Bem's (1974) Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) captures personality characteristics regarding the degree to which someone "has internalized society's sex-typed standards of desirable behavior for men and women" (p. 155), gendered communication literature focuses on communication—the dynamic and systemic process through which humans create and reflect meaning through interaction (J. T. Wood, 2013)—and our instrument is designed to represent this focus. However, as conceptualizations of gendered communication build on S. L. Bem's bivariate categorization of gender, the constructs are expected to relate strongly to one another. Thus, prior to assessing convergent and discriminant validity (see Appendix B), we conducted a separate robustness check to verify that the gendered communication instrument adequately represents perceptions of enacted communication in a manner congruent with S. L. Bem's conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity.

In a panel sample of 265 U.S. adults currently employed in full-time positions, we confirmed that our gendered communication instrument converges with the short-form BSRI (S. L. Bem, 1981), with approximately 31.5% and 45.5% of the variance shared between the respective masculine and feminine composite variables. Moreover, each

instrument was found reliable with Cronbach's alphas of .84 and .91 for masculine and feminine communication, respectively, and .91 and .95 for the BSRI's respective masculine and feminine facets. Respondent demographics for this robustness check are as follows: Respondents were 54.3% male and 79.2% White/Caucasian, with an average age of 33.7 years. Ninety-two percent of panel respondents were college educated.

## Appendix B

In order to assess convergent and discriminant validity of the gendered communication instrument, we conducted a separate study to directly test the relationships between masculine and feminine communication styles and a number of conceptually similar concepts. Masculine communication is egocentric and assertive and, as such, it is likely that a strong masculine communication style would be related to Rahim's (1983) conception of a dominating style of handling interpersonal conflict. However, this should *not* imply that the individual has a high level of hostility or a generally aggressive temperament. It is also important to distinguish masculine communication from attempts to capture personality traits that define masculinity differently, such as Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp's (1974) personal masculinity attribute.

Because feminine communication style is cooperative, considerate, and egalitarian, reflecting a degree of interpersonal sensitivity, it is likely that it relates to the concept of individualized consideration, which is concerned with giving personal attention to and treating each employee individually (Hinkin & Tracey, 1999). By encouraging others to participate and to elaborate on their thoughts, feminine communication style is also conceptually similar to participative decision making and the leadership practice of enabling others to act (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000; Posner & Kouzes, 1988). Due to its focus on equality, a feminine communication style may be related to being psychologically collectivist (Jackson, Colquitt, Wesson, & Zapata-Phelan, 2006), defined as being considerate of peers' interests and motivated by a concern for their well-being over one's own self-interests. Finally, the considerate and collaborative nature of feminine communication may resemble integrating and obliging styles of conflict resolution (Rahim, 1983), both characterized as having a high degree of concern for others. However, because feminine communication style is distinct from low-masculinity, much as masculine style is not expected to relate to hostility (Buss & Perry, 1992) or self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965), feminine communication should *not* be negatively related to either of these constructs.

One hundred eighty-five potential respondents who either worked for organizations that partner with (57%) or were evening MBA students from (43%) a private southern university were requested via email to complete an online survey related to their self-perceptions of their communication styles at work. In all, 145 respondents fit our criteria of being currently employed with responses that had no missing data (a 78% response rate). Women represented 65.6% of respondents compared with 35.4% men, and 84.5% identified as White/Caucasian. On average, respondents worked 43.43 hours per week and were 35.7 years old.

We assessed validity by inspecting the estimates of trait variance and examining the correlations between the two factors, following the method suggested by Bagozzi, Yi,

and Phillips (1991). All factor loadings were statistically significant, providing initial evidence in support of convergent validity. The estimate of the correlation between masculine and feminine communication was .14, considerably less than 1.00, providing initial evidence in support of discriminant validity (Bagozzi et al., 1991). Correlation analyses, summarized in Table B1, provide further evidence of convergent and discriminant validity for each of the construct's two facets against conceptually similar and distinct extant concepts.

**Table B1.** Means, Standard Deviations, Alphas, and Intercorrelations Between Variables Assessed in Appendix B.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Biological sex (male/female)	0.66	0.48	—												
2. Masculine communication	2.83	0.54	-.10	(.75)											
3. Feminine communication	4.05	0.46	.22**	-.20*	(.82)										
4. Dominating style of conflict resolution	3.05	0.69	-.18*	.53**	-.20*	(.79)									
5. Verbal aggression	2.60	0.61	-.28**	.45**	-.30**	.32**	(.69)								
6. Hostility	2.22	0.73	-.07	.15	-.16	.10	.39**	(.84)							
7. Self-esteem	4.13	0.57	.02	-.04	.15	-.03	-.27**	-.59**	(.87)						
9. Enabling others	4.09	0.51	.06	-.10	.51**	-.11	-.16	-.32**	.28**	(.84)					
10. Psychological collectivism	3.36	0.52	.00	.12	.29**	.16*	-.13	-.23**	.21**	.19**	(.88)				
11. Integrating style of conflict resolution	4.22	0.49	.05	.04	.57**	-.01	-.14	-.20**	.23**	.39**	.30**	(.91)			
12. Obliging style of conflict resolution	3.49	0.51	-.06	.06	.26**	-.03	.02	.31**	-.24**	-.06	.14	.06	(.78)		
13. Participative decision making	4.11	0.50	.10	-.14	.45**	-.13	-.20**	-.30**	.21*	.72**	.18*	.39**	-.02	(.80)	
14. Individualized consideration	3.91	0.52	.15	.02	.53**	-.08	-.12	-.16*	.20*	.63**	.39**	.45**	.12	.56**	(.86)

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Cronbach's alpha is displayed in parentheses along the diagonal.

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## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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