

Gender-Related Differences in Interaction

Discourse and Gender

Source: Schiffrin, D. (1994). *Approaches to Discourse*. Oxford: Blackwell

Example

Henry: Y' want a piece of candy?

Irene: No [I don't

Zelda: She's on a [diet.

Debby: [Who's not on [a diet.

Irene: I'm on a diet and my mother [buys

Zelda: [You're not

Irene: my [mother buys these mints...

Debby: [Oh yes I am:::

Quick Notes

- **Henry** makes an offer.
- **Irene** rejects the offer.
- Zelda supports **Irene** creating more solidarity.
- **Debby** uses the positive politeness strategy to establish a shared identity and affiliation that everyone is on a diet just like **Irene**.
- **Irene** starts telling a story.
- **Zelda** uses the negative politeness strategy as an indirect compliment to exclude **Debby** from the category of people with undesirable characteristics saying: only overweight people should go on a diet, you're not.
- **Debby** again establishes affiliation with **Irene** with positive politeness.

Women Collaborate

- **Zelda** has created a **subtopic** or a **topic shift** that is **picked up** by the other **women participants**.
 - **Debby** makes a comment about all people being on a diet.
 - **Zelda's** response: "**You're not!**" is meant to **remedy** the **negative self-assessment** implied by **Debby's** statement.
- **Irene shifts** from her utterance "**I don't-**" to **repeat Zelda's** statement that she is on a diet and starts to tell a story of her mother buying candy ...etc.

Men Collaborate?

- **Henry** simply **did not** participate in the **topic shift**.

Sociolinguistic Explanation

- **Women display** their **gender identities** as they take part in **conversations by**:
 1. **Pursuing topics** of talk **more** interactively **than men**.
 - **i.e. by cooperative topic building**.
 2. Attending to **maintaining solidarity** during **interaction more than men** by avoiding conflict and minimising threats.