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Social gender norms in body language
The construction of stereotyped gender differences in body language in the
American sitcom *Friends*

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Abstract

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Abstract: Nonverbal communication such as body language is a vital component of our communication, and since scholars agree that there are some notable differences in the way men and women use body language, the study of gendered nonverbal communication as a social construction is vital to our understanding of how we create gendered identities. The aim of this paper is to investigate how social gender norms concerning body language appear in constructed communication. By studying the body language of the characters in the American sitcom *Friends*, and with focus on leg postures, I examine how the show *Friends* enacts and represents stereotyped sex differences in body language. The study encompasses both the distribution of leg positions between the genders, and what these postures seem to accomplish in interaction. As for the relationship between gender and leg postures, I observed the sitting positions of the characters Chandler, Ross, Joey, Monica and Rachel in six episodes from the 1999/2000 season of *Friends* for the first study. For the analysis of leg postures in relation to the communicative situation, the entire corpus of ten episode recordings was used. Based on repeated inspection of scenes where leg positions could be studied in relation to gender and communication, systematic patterns were identified.

The results of the study are consistent with the findings of scholars like Vrugt and Luyrink (2000); women tend to sit in closed postures or with their legs crossed, which is regarded feminine, while men sit in wide positions with their legs spread, which is regarded masculine. Furthermore, the characters/actors in *Friends* seem to perform their gender roles partly by using different leg positions and wideness of postures. However, leg positions alone were not found to be decisive in the messages communicated, and emotions and stance were communicated using verbal and other non-verbal channels and cues. Instead, leg positions remained gender-stereotypical regardless of the message communicated, and men and women seem to communicate the same message using different leg positions. It is therefore concluded that leg positions are an inherent part of “doing gender”, but that leg positions as such are not necessarily related to the type of message or emotional stance that is communicated.

Nyckelord: Gender norms, nonverbal communication, sitcom, body language, social construction, leg posture.

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1. Introduction and aims

Most often people think of human communication as mainly verbal and it is generally known that men's and women's speech differ on several levels. For instance, some research has indicated that men tend to lecture more in their speech than women, and it is common that men ask questions in a challenging way while women make more supportive contributions in social interaction (Tannen, 1998:367). The well-known linguist Deborah Tannen explains that when she talks with people about her profession as a linguist, women ask supportive questions related to their own experience, while men often want to prove themselves by giving a lecture on their thoughts about language, or by expressing skepticism towards her research (Tannen, 1998:367). However, speech is not the only fundamental element in human interaction. Nonverbal communication, such as body language, is also a vital component of our communication. We use body language in various ways, often in order to emphasize our speech or feelings, and we use it both consciously and unconsciously. Body language and speech are closely connected in the act of communication, and although different researchers argue that the two sexes are more alike than unlike in their communication manners (Andersen, 2004:306; Canary & Dindia, 1998:2; Wood & Dindia, 1998:23), scholars agree that there are some notable differences in the way men and women use body language. Even if there are researchers who claim that certain areas of these differences are biologically predetermined, most share the opinion that dissimilarities in the way men and women use body language are chiefly socially and culturally programmed. In other words, these variations are influenced by society's construction of stereotypical beliefs of what it is that represents masculinity and femininity (Andersen, 2004:314; Tyson, 2006:86; Vrugt & Luyterink, 2000:100f; Wood & Dindia, 1998:21f).

The study of gendered nonverbal communication as a social construction is vital to our understanding of how we create our gendered identities, since many people in our society "find themselves trapped in a society that rigidly pairs males with masculinity and females with femininity. There are no in-between spaces; there is no room for blurring the rigid lines; there are no options beyond the binary choices of male/female and masculine/feminine" (Wood, 2007:180). The purpose of this essay is to investigate how social gender norms concerning body language appear in constructed communication. By studying the body language of the characters in the American sitcom *Friends*, with a focus on leg postures, I will examine how the show *Friends* enacts and represents stereotyped sex differences in body language. I am interested in both the distribution of leg positions between

the genders, and in what these postures seem to do in interaction. I have chosen to use scripted interaction because by studying constructed communication we can understand how gender norms are interpreted and enacted. Additionally, sitcoms are particularly suitable for studying enacted norms, since exaggerations are vital in order to establish characters and get humorous points across in the rapid pace of sitcom drama.

2. Background

The following section presents an overview of research on socially and biologically conditioned differences in body language. This part also introduces differences in how men and women use and perceive body language. I am aware that in general, there are more similarities than differences in nonverbal communication between the genders; however, I will focus on those aspects of body language where there seem to be differences. Like most researchers, for instance Tyson (2006:86), Wood (2007:20), and Pearson et al. (1995:6), I refer to the social construction when using the word *gender*, while *sex* represents the biological makeup.

2.1 Socially or biologically conditioned?

Scholars agree that men's and women's body language differ to a certain extent, but there is an ongoing debate whether certain differences are mainly socially conditioned or if there are biological aspects to consider as well. For instance, women tend to sit in a closed posture with their legs crossed, while men sit in a wide position with their legs spread (Vrugt & Luyerink, 2000:100f). Since there is nothing physiological that prevents men from sitting with their legs crossed, or for women to sit with their legs spread, many researchers argue that these types of differences are social constructions (Andersen 2004:314; Tyson, 2006:86; Vrugt & Luyerink, 2000:100f; Wood & Dindia, 1998:21f). Furthermore, men and women walk differently. A stereotypical woman often takes short steps, walks like she is following a straight line, and swings her hips. A man's gait is more rigid: he does not swing his hips like a woman, and, in contrast to a woman, he moves his arms to a greater extent (Andersen, 2004:314). Since men and women do not have problems imitating each other's walking styles, Andersen argues that this kind of behavior is chiefly socially programmed and not biologically predetermined (Andersen 2004:314). Wood states that: "We are born into a gendered society that guides our understanding of gender and shapes our personal gendered identities" (Wood, 2007:158). Conversely, other studies show that dissimilarities like the ones mentioned above exist due to

innate features and genetics (Colapinto, 2001). Colapinto illustrates this point by referring to David Reimer, a baby boy who after a failed circumcision went through a sex change. Doctors advised his parents to raise David as a girl, and they did. But Brenda, as David was called, never acquired stereotypically feminine behavior. By nature he was a boy, and, despite him being raised as a girl, he behaved like a stereotypical boy (Colapinto, 2001). The Reimer case then functions as an argument for biological (rather than social) conditioning of behavior.

Apart from different views on why men and women are unlike in their use of body language, most researchers agree that differences in body language between the genders are attributable to both cultural and biological factors (Andersen, 1998:98; Andersen 2004:315; Knapp & Hall, 2006:32; Pease & Pease, 2006:22). However, determining whether differences in body language are socially conditioned or innate lies outside the scope of this paper. Still, as observed in the introduction, there is a need for more studies that can increase the awareness of how we create and identify our gendered body language, since many people feel they do not belong in society's categorization of male/female and masculine/feminine.

2.2 Emotional expressiveness

Scholars argue that it is typical for women to express their feelings both verbally and nonverbally, while it is characteristic for men to be less emotionally expressive (Andersen, 2004:310; Bull, 2002:86). For instance, it is more socially acceptable for girls to cry and girls are often comforted and calmed, while boys are told to behave like men and not to cry like girls (Andersen, 2004:310; Tyson, 2006:88). In a patriarchal gender order, it is considered negative for boys and men to be associated with female qualities, and it is degrading for a boy to be compared to a crying girl or a sissy (Tyson, 2006:88). Since the idea that women are more emotionally expressive than men is a widely held belief in society in general, it may affect the way we identify with gender roles and how we form our identities. Nevertheless, different scholars and theorists argue that anger and power-related emotions are more commonly expressed by men than women (Andersen, 2004:310; Tyson, 2006:88). Tyson argues that men use anger in order to hide feelings like pain and fear, which are associated with failure, weakness, femininity, and inferiority; emotions which are undesirable in stereotypical men (Tyson, 2006:88).

2.3 Personal space and touch

Personal space and touch are central components in the use of body language. Personal space is the space which surrounds our bodies and which we regard and protect as our private

property. To be more precise, the *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary* (2000:943) defines it as “the space directly around where you are standing or sitting”. The demand for personal space in interaction depends on a number of circumstances. For instance, when we interact with people we know very well, such as family members, lovers, or close friends, we feel relaxed with a rather close distance; we are comfortable with hugging them, touching them, and sitting and standing close to them. When we interact with people we do not know well, our demand for personal space increases with the level of alienation we feel towards people (Pease & Pease, 2006:169). We do not feel at ease sitting too close to strangers on the bus, and we do not want to stand close together with people we do not know in an elevator, even if we are sometimes forced to (Pease & Pease, 2006:171). However, though the conditions discussed above regarding comfortable distances during interaction are true for most western societies, the demand for private zones in different situations is culturally conditioned and differs between civilizations (Pease & Pease, 2006:168).

The demand for personal space and the relation to touch also differ between the genders. During interaction, most people are comfortable with an arm's length distance between them. In general, either women or men have problems sitting or standing closer together, as long as the ones they are interacting with are women. Because of homophobia and male role conventions concerning masculinity, power and authority, communication between men tends to require more personal space than an arm's length (Andersen, 2004:311). Furthermore, in our childhood we are taught to use touch differently depending on our gender: “Parents tend to touch daughters more often and more gently than they do sons, which teaches girls to expect touching from others and to view touching as an affiliate behavior. Boys are more likely to learn to associate touching with control and power and not to expect nurturing touches from others” (Wood, 2007:144). In northern Europe and in the United States, it is not that common to see two men greeting each other warmly on the street by embracing or kissing, but that kind of behavior is frequently seen among women. On the fields of sports it is different, though. Here men embrace each other, gather closely in groups to celebrate, and even pat each other's bottoms when they have scored. In general, intimate body language among stereotypical men in northern Europe and the United States is accepted merely during particular activities like the ones mentioned above (Andersen, 2004:312; Knapp & Hall, 2006:433).

2.4 Facial expressions and eye activity

Two of the main differences in body language between the genders are facial expressions and eye activity. Women use more facial expressions than men, and above all, they smile more than men when interacting with other people (Andersen, 2004:313). In their work on body language, Pease and Pease state that women smile more than men in order to avoid expressing dominance. And they believe this behavior is based on traditional beliefs about gender roles: women are supposed to be caring and consoling while men are expected to be dominant authoritarians (Pease & Pease, 2006:77).

Women also use their eyes and look at people more than men (Andersen, 2004:312). Women maintain eye contact more than men while talking, listening, and even during silence, and it is in the interaction between two women that eye contact is the most intense (Andersen, 2004:312). According to Wood, women use eye contact during interactions in order to stress their interest and active participation (Wood, 2007:145). Again, men avoid intense eye contact with one another because of male role conventions regarding control, authority, and homophobia. Women avoid looking at men due to fear of sending unintentional signals that can be misinterpreted as flirtatious (Andersen, 2004:312).

2.5 Body posture

Body posture is another area within body language where men and women differ. The *Oxford advanced learner's dictionary* (2000:986) defines posture as “the position in which you hold your body when standing or sitting”. Wide positions, which demand more space, are associated with power and masculinity and are more commonly used by men than women. Closed positions, which require less space, are often regarded as inferior and feminine and are more often used by women (Andersen, 2004:94; Pearson et al, 1995:140). For instance, Vrugt's and Luyerink's study shows “that a closed sitting position was considered feminine and a wide sitting position masculine” (Vrugt & Luyerink, 2000:100). The same study confirms that women tend to sit in a closed posture or with their legs crossed, irrespective of clothing, while men sit in a more wide position with their legs spread. Furthermore, women tend to keep their arms closer to their body than men do, and men are more likely than women to use leaning postures (Pearson et al, 1995:126).

The purpose of the present investigation is to examine how social gender norms concerning body language are manifested in constructed communication. I have taken Vrugt's and Luyerink's study titled *The contribution of bodily posture to gender stereotypical impressions* (2000) as a point of departure. Their report includes two studies, and one of these

studies examines stereotypical judgments, where university students observed photographs of male and female stimulus persons. The stimulus persons all wore the same kind of clothes and applied the same neutral facial expression. Two different sitting postures were displayed by the stimulus persons, one with legs wide apart, which represented the masculine posture, and one with legs crossed, which represented the feminine posture. Regardless of sex, the person in the picture could sit in either the masculine or feminine position. Each observer observed four photographs, two showing a man and two a woman, and then answered questions concerning the pictures. My investigation is based on Vrugt's and Luyerink's findings from the above mentioned study, namely that closed sitting postures are regarded as feminine, while wide sitting postures are considered masculine (Vrugt & Luyerink, 2000:100).

The other study included in Vrugt's and Luyerink's report (2000), examines if women tend to sit in a closed posture or with their legs crossed, while men sit in a wide position with their legs spread. This study is based on field observations from an underground railway in Amsterdam, where observations of men's and women's sitting positions were conducted. Four female observers, unaware of the aim of the study, observed 193 men and 198 women by using an observations scheme provided by Vrugt and Luyerink. The observation scheme includes three leg postures: narrow (which includes legs crossed), medium, and wide. As mentioned earlier, Vrugt's and Luyerink's study shows that women tend to sit in a closed posture or with their legs crossed, while men sit with their legs spread (Vrugt & Luyerink, 2000:100f). Table 3, further down under 4.2, shows the results from the above mentioned study concerning men's and women's leg postures in more detail. A hypothesis underlying the study is, therefore, that the actors in *Friends* will utilize open and closed leg positions in performing the gender of their characters.

2.6 Sensitivity and detection

Nevertheless, despite the above mentioned dissimilarities, numerous studies confirm that the two genders are more alike than different in their communication styles (Andersen, 2004:306; Canary & Dindia, 1998:2; Wood & Dindia, 1998:23). The only area regarding body language where women and men differ to a great extent is in sensitivity and detection of body language. According to a number of investigations, women detect and interpret body language better than men (Andersen, 2004:306; Bull, 2002:81). Various researchers argue that women have "female intuition": an innate ability which allows them to read body language better than men. Scholars also claim that women who have raised a child have stronger intuition due to the special bond between mother and child. And in this relationship, during the child's earliest

years, women learn how to rely completely on body language (Andersen, 2004:306ff; Pease & Pease, 2006:19).

3. Methods and points of departure

3.1 Points of departure

In the present study, scripted material is used instead of naturally occurring situations. As mentioned above, by studying scripted interaction we can understand how gender norms are interpreted and enacted. While Vrugt's and Luyerink's study also includes observations of arm positions, the main focus of the present study will be on leg positions as communication. Accordingly, this investigation aims to determine whether Vrugt's and Luyerink's observations regarding leg postures also hold for constructed communication, and what communicative functions in a given context different leg positions appear to serve, particularly in relation to gender. In other words, do women tend to sit in a closed posture or with their legs crossed while men sit in a more wide position with their legs spread in constructed communication as well as in reality? Secondly, since body language and speech are closely connected in the act of communication, in what ways, if any, are leg positions of the different characters incorporated into the whole communicative event? And are there systematic patterns in the way leg positions, particularly in relation to gender, are deployed in the interaction? A hypothesis underlying the study is that the actors in *Friends* will utilize open and closed leg positions in performing the gender of their characters. It is worth mentioning that it is impossible to know how much body language is actually scripted and how much is acted out freely. However, the show *Friends*, like other sitcoms, aims to create humorous characters and for this purpose, body language is an important tool. The study falls within the scope of paralinguistics, that is, the non-verbal aspects of communication that also convey meaning (Kendon, 1981).

3.2 Material

I chose to use the American sitcom *Friends* as the data source for my two investigations. *Friends* is an American sitcom created by David Crane and Martha Kauffman. It was broadcast in numerous countries from 1994 to 2004¹ (though re-runs are still regularly broadcast) and has won the Emmy Award for best comedy. *Friends* portrays six friends and their daily lives in New York City. The main characters are Chandler, Ross, and Joey, who

¹tv.com: <http://www.tv.com/show/71/summary.html>

are male, and Monica, Phoebe, and Rachel, who are female. Most of the scenes take place at their favorite café, Central Perk, or in Monica's, Joey's or Ross's apartment. The reason for using this particular show is that the comedy is based on the interaction between six close friends, three men and three women, a reasonably large group for this study, and also a well balanced group in relation to gender.

Each episode of *Friends* is about twenty minutes long and I have used six (4, 5, 6, 13, 14, and 15) episodes from the 1999/2000 season for the first investigation. I chose these particular episodes on the basis of availability. More precisely, I recorded ten episodes from the 1999/2000 season (4, 5, 6, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, and 20), which were re-run on Swedish television in December 2007. For the first study, I used as many episodes as needed to reach fifteen sitting positions for each character. For the second investigation, I looked for representative examples to show how the actors work to construct the gender of their character and how leg positions appear to be deployed by the actors/characters to communicate a particular message, together with verbal and other non-verbal actions. Here, the entire corpus of recordings was used, and based on repeated inspection of scenes where leg positions could be studied in relation to gender and communication, systematic patterns were identified. These patterns, presented as themes in chapter 5, are the result of detailed study of body language in relation to other social actions.

3.3 Methods of analysis

This section presents the used coding categories of leg positions, the used episode material for each character in *Friends*, and how the material was approached in the two studies.

3.3.1 Coding categories of leg positions

Since I wanted a more detailed categorization than that of Vrugt and Luyerink, I have categorized the observed leg postures as follows:

1. Legs crossed (Lc):

Lc signifies that the character crosses his/her legs at the knees or the thighs. There is no space between the crossed legs.

2. Legs wide crossed (Lwc):

Lwc signifies that the character's legs are crossed with one foot, ankle, or calf on the other knee. There is space between the character's crossed legs.

3. Legs wide apart (Lwa):

Lwa signifies that the character sits with legs wide apart. There is much space between the legs.

4. Legs medium apart (Lma):

Lma signifies that the character sits with legs medium apart. There is space between the legs, but not as much as it would be if the character would sit with legs wide apart, and not as little as it would be if the character sat with legs together.

5. Legs together (Lt):

Lt signifies that the character sits with legs close together; the legs can touch, but they do not have to.

6. Other (O):

One of the registered sitting positions did not correspond to any of the above described categories; therefore, I have categorized this position as Other (O). In this one example, the female character Monica is sitting on the sofa with one foot on the floor and the other foot placed under her leg on the sofa.

3.3.2 Study 1, Frequency of use of different sitting postures in *Friends*

In study 1, where the material is approached quantitatively, by studying the leg postures of the characters in *Friends*, I have examined how social gender norms concerning body language are manifested in constructed communication. I have analyzed the leg postures of five characters, three male and two female: Chandler, Ross, Joey, Monica, and Rachel. I have only observed leg postures where at least one leg touches the floor, and have therefore excluded, for instance, postures where the character is sitting on the floor or on the sofa with both legs on a table. I have also excluded sitting positions where the character is wearing a skirt, reading a newspaper or a book which is leaning in his/her lap, or has a large object in his/her lap (for instance a bag), since these are “factors which can influence a person’s sitting position” (Vrugt & Luyerink, 2000:94). It is also worth mentioning that I have only analyzed the leg positions where the legs can be observed directly. I am stressing this because in many contexts, it is possible to figure out the characters leg postures without definite visual proof (by their arm positions, body movements and so on).

The idea was to analyze the sitting postures of all six characters, but since one of the female characters, Phoebe, always wears a skirt, I had to exclude her. I have used fifteen sitting postures for each character, (Chandler, Ross, Joey, Monica and Rachel), and I have used the first fifteen sitting postures occurring of the five characters from the earlier mentioned six episodes. Since the number of postures per character varies in each episode, I have used a different number of episodes for different characters. Table 1 shows which episodes I have used for each character.

Table 1. Episode material for each character (E= episode number)

Character	E 4	E 5	E 6	E 13	E 14	E 15	Total number of episodes
Chandler	X	X	X	X			4
Monica	X	X	X	X	X		5
Ross	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
Joey	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
Rachel	X	X	X	X	X	X	6

3.3.3 Study 2, Leg postures in relation to message communicated

In study 2, I have examined how the actors work to construct the gender of their character and how leg positions appear to be deployed by the actors/characters to communicate a particular message, together with verbal and other non-verbal actions. In study 2, the material is approached more qualitatively (whereas the first is quantitative) to see if leg positions seem to communicate different things for men and women, and if so, what leg postures seem to communicate. I have used the same coding categories of leg positions as for study 1 (see 3.3.1), but in study 2, I have included Rachel's sister Jill as well.

4. Results and analysis, study 1

The following section presents a table which shows the frequency of the six categories of leg postures used in the six observed episodes of *Friends*. Table 2 is followed by a short discussion focused on what the table shows.

4.1 Frequency of use of different sitting postures in *Friends*

Table 2 presents the frequency of the six categories of leg postures used in the six episodes of *Friends*. (The numbers in percent have been rounded off to the nearest whole number.)

Table 2. Frequency of use of different sitting postures in *Friends*

Type of leg posture:	Chandler	Ross	Joey	Monica	Rachel	Male usage	%	Female usage	%
Lc	7	0	0	5	7	7	15%	12	40%
Lwc	2	1	0	0	0	3	7%	0	0%
Lwa	5	8	13	0	0	26	58%	0	0%
Lma	1	6	1	3	3	8	18%	6	20%
Lt	0	0	1	6	5	1	2%	11	37%
O	0	0	0	1	0	0	0%	1	3%
Total number of leg postures:	15	15	15	15	15	45	100%	30	100%

Table 2 shows that the women in *Friends* sat with their legs crossed in 40 percent of the investigated cases, with legs medium apart in 20 percent, with legs together in 37 percent, and in one other leg position in 3 percent of the studied cases. The men sat with crossed legs in 15 percent of the cases, with legs wide crossed in 7 percent, with legs wide apart in 58 percent, legs medium apart in 18 percent, and with their legs together in 2 percent. Vrugt's and Luyerink's study showed that the women sat with their legs crossed or close together 59 percent of the investigated cases (Vrugt and Luyerink do not make a distinction between the crossed and the closed position), with legs medium apart in 35 percent, and with legs wide apart in 6 percent. The men sat in closed positions or with their legs crossed in 16 percent of the cases, legs medium apart in 50 percent, and with legs wide spread in 34 percent. In essence, the examined cases of the present study are consistent with the findings of Vrugt and Luyerink; in both Vrugt's and Luyerink's study and in *Friends*, the women more often sat with their legs in a closed position or with their legs crossed than the men, but the difference between the genders in this regard was greater in the data from *Friends*. Furthermore, in both Vrugt's and Luyerink's study and in *Friends*, the men more often sat with their legs medium or wide apart than the women, but again, the difference between the genders was greater in the data from *Friends*, especially regarding the Lwa position. It thus seems as if the stereotypical gender patterns in leg positions, which Vrugt's and Luyerink's field study points out, appear to transfer to scripted communication as well.

The female character Monica also used a position categorized as other. Since this is the only O position used, I find it impossible to decide, for instance, if women are more likely than men to use leg positions like the one categorized as O.

5. Results and analysis, study 2

Study 1 is consistent with Vrugt's and Luyerink's study; the female characters in *Friends* more often sat with their legs in a closed position or with their legs crossed than the men, and the men more often sat with their legs medium or wide apart than the women. Furthermore, study 1 showed that the difference between the genders is greater in the *Friends* study than in Vrugt's and Luyerink's study. The next step is to investigate what the leg positions seem to communicate.

The following section is divided in two categories: 1) *Different expressions – similar message* with the subcategories *excitement*, *unease*, and *dejection*, and 2) *Exception*. These themes have emerged from repeated inspection of the data, and I chose to present these particular themes because this is where leg positions and other signals of body language appear to be used differently or similarly by men and women. Each of these categories is explained further below.

Each example starts with the number of the example, the name of the character studied, and a figure within brackets that indicates which episode the example is taken from. Then a short summary of the scene is given, after which the transcription is presented. Each example presents the transcription of *one* character's body language (with exceptions when another character's body language is of importance to the studied character's behavior) and the verbal interchange. Only the body language of current importance for the category under discussion is described. In the transcripts, the description of body language is set off in double parenthesis and italicized. In a few examples, some parts of the conversation were inaudible, and this is indicated by the usage of *((Inaudible))*. When the transcript of a particular scene is presented, an analysis of actions and patterns in the transcript follows. When all the examples of a particular subcategory are presented, a short summary analysis for all the examples in that category follows. When the examples of all the subcategories are presented, a summary analysis for all the examples of the current theme is presented. Finally, the category labeled *Exception* is presented.

5.1 Different expressions – similar messages

As discussed in the background (see 2.5 Body posture), wide and space demanding postures, which are regarded as masculine, are more commonly used by men than women. By contrast, closed and less space demanding positions, which are regarded feminine, are more commonly used by women than men (Andersen, 2004; Pearson et al, 1995, Vrugt and Luyerink, 2000).

Also mentioned in the background (see 1. Introduction and aims) is that most researchers agree that women and men are more alike than unlike in their communication manners (Andersen, 2004; Canary & Dindia, 1998; Wood & Dindia, 1998). Therefore, the following section presents examples taken from *Friends* where men and women seem to express three emotional states labeled *excitement*, *unease*, and *dejection* by using different as well as similar manners.

5.1.1 Excitement

The following examples show how women and men in *Friends* seem to express excitement both verbally and nonverbally by using different phrases, vocals, leg positions, and other nonverbal signals such as hand and facial gestures.

Example 1, Monica (5)

Description of the scene: Monica and Chandler are sitting on the sofa at Central Perk, Phoebe walks in and asks them if they want to help her baby-sit three puppies the following day. (Later on, the puppies turn out to be babies.)

((Monica is sitting on the sofa in a Lt position, one arm on the armrest and putting a coffee cup down on a table with the other hand. She turns her head and looks at Phoebe who is standing behind her))

- Phoebe: - Oh, good, good! You guys are here. Listen, how would you like to spend tomorrow taking care of three incredibly cute little puppies?
- Monica: - My god! *((Alters between looking at Phoebe and Chandler. Smiles very intensively, eyes wide open, keeps her Lt position but puts both hands on the sides of her body and pushes her body further in on the sofa, claps her hands))*
- What a fun day, that sounds great! *((Squeezes her hands tightly together between her legs, which she also squeezes together in a tight Lt position))*
- Chandler: - Yeah, all right.

Phoebe makes Monica and Chandler an offer to spend time with what she describes as “incredibly cute little puppies”. The offer is related in a positive way with an energetic tone of voice which also encourages an optimistic/exited response from Monica and Chandler. While pushing back her body further in on the sofa, Monica remains in her Lt position as she expresses the requested excitement over taking care of puppies using a broad and intense smile, wide open eyes, lifted eyebrows and clapping hands. Her verbal communication “My God” and “What a fun day, that sounds great” confirms her body language of excitement.

Without moving out of the Lt position, she displays further excitement for taking care of the puppies by squeezing her hands between her knees, as if she was willing to perform the task instantly. Without actually leaving the tight leg position, it seems like she is verbally and nonverbally demonstrating clear excitement by using verbal, facial, vocal, and gestural signals.

Example 2, Rachel (4)

Description of the scene: Rachel is sitting on the sofa in Monica's apartment and Monica is sitting on a table in front of her. They are joking with Ross (who is not present) by making a fake phone call to his office phone. Ross has a new job as a professor at a university and for some reason he has been talking with a British accent during his lectures. Now he does not know how to stop it or how to explain he is American to his students.

Monica: - Ok, come on, do it one more time!
((Rachel is sitting on the sofa in the lotus position))
 Rachel: - Really?! Really?! *((Smiles broadly and claps her hands))*
 Monica: - Yes!
 Rachel: - Ok. *((She picks up the phone and dials. She distorts her voice while talking on the phone))*
 Rachel: - Hello, Ross. This is Dr. McNeely from the fake accent university. We would like you to come on board with us full time! *((She hangs up, throws the phone on the sofa, looks at Monica and laughs violently, puts her hands on the sides of her body, pushes her body further in on the sofa, puts her feet on the floor and adopts a Lt position where she squeezes her legs together while she puts her hands closely together on her knees, grabbing them, and smiles broadly while looking at Monica.))*

Monica is enthusiastically pushing Rachel to make another fake call to Ross's office phone in order to make fun of his fake British accent. Rachel responds excitedly by asking in a lively tone of voice "Really?! Really?!", and her body language expresses excitement as well as she uses a broad smile and clapping hands. After having made the phone call, she laughs out loud, looks at Monica, pushes her body further in on the sofa and changes her leg position from the lotus position to a Lt position. She continues to express her excitement by putting her hands on her knees, grabbing them, as if she needs to hold on to something in order to control her excitement. The interplay between Rachel's body language, tone of voice, and laughter, thus seem to demonstrate excitement.

Example 3, Joey (17)

Description of the scene: Ross, Phoebe and Chandler are sitting on the sofa/armchair at Central Perk. Joey is working there and he complains about the tip they are giving him. He sits down to discuss how he is going to earn the money he needs for his new portfolio. (He is also working as an actor, therefore he needs to update his portfolio.)

Ross: - Isn't it something you can do to earn a little extra money, I mean can't you, can't you pick up, I don't know, an extra shift here?

Phoebe: - Or, you know I used to beg for money. Of course, it helps if you've got, you know a little bit of this going on. *((Shakes her breasts))*
- Wow, still have it!

Chandler: - Yeah..

Ross: - Oh, wait, wait! Don't you have an audition today? Hey, maybe you'll get that job.

Joey: - Oh, ha, ha, ha! *((Facing Ross, lowered eyebrows, sitting in a Lwa position, arms widely leaning on each leg))*
- Oh, wait a minute. *((Leans forward and leans back in the sofa again, eyebrows raised, keeps the Lwa position, arms in a wide position, raises one hand with the palm facing upwards and fingers spread, the other arm is resting on one knee))*
- I used to get medical experiments done on me all the time! *((Puts his hand back to lean on the other knee))*

Chandler: - Ah, finally an explanation.

Joey: - No,no, *((Facing Chandler, leans forward, keeps the Lwa position, arms in a wide position, raises one hand with the palm facing upwards and fingers spread, the other arm is resting on one knee))*
- I used to get paid for all kinds of medical stuff, remember?! *((Keeps his position but points at Chandler, eyes wide open))*
- Let's see, ahh.. no, I don't wanna donate sperm again. I prefer doing that at the home office, you know. Oh,oh, maybe they want some of my blood..*((Facing Chandler, keeps his Lwa position, arms wide apart, one still leaning on one knee while the other hand is raised while he is pointing at Chandler))*
- ..or spit or something, ah?! *((Keeps his wide position but faces Ross and points at him with the whole hand, palm facing upward and fingers spread, smiles intensively, eyebrows lifted and wide open eyes))*

Joey, Ross, Phoebe and Chandler are discussing possible ways for Joey to earn some extra money in order to pay for his new portfolio. Ross suggests that Joey might get the actors job he is auditioning for that same day. Joey's exclaimed "Ha, ha, ha" in relation to his tone of voice, which is very unenthusiastic, and body language, lowered eyebrows and unchanged Lwa position, indicates that he is not taking Ross seriously. But when he recalls what he has done in the past to earn some extra money and says "Oh, wait a minute. I used to get medical experiments done on me all the time!", his body language changes: he leans forward and back again, but keeps the Lwa position, eyebrows raised, arms in a wide position with one leaning

on the knee while the other is raised with the palm facing upwards. When the dialogue continues and Joey says “I used to get paid for all kinds of medical stuff, remember?!” his body language becomes more enthusiastic and lively: he keeps his Lwa position, his eyes are wide open and he points at Chandler. He uses the same expressions but even more intensively when he continues “Oh, oh, maybe they want some of my blood...or spit or something, ah?!” At this point, he is smiling broadly, eyebrows lifted high, eyes wide open, he is still in the Lwa position but faces Ross and Points at him with his whole hand, the palm facing upwards and fingers spread. Consequently, Joey’s verbal and nonverbal communication seem to express excitement over finding a solution to his money problem.

To summarize the main findings of the *excitement* category, the above transcribed examples show that leg positions were used differently by the men and women in *Friends*, but the genders could still communicate similar messages of excitement by using other signals such as vocals, phrases, and hand and facial gestures. Both women and men used broad and intense smiles, wide open eyes, raised eyebrows, and lively tones of voices to express their excitement. Monica squeezed her hands between her legs and Rachel grabbed her knees, and they both used clapping hands to communicate their excitement. Joey did not use any of these signals; instead he used wider gestures such as wide and raised arm positions and pointing gestures, which the female characters did not use.

5.1.2 Unease

The following examples show how women and men in *Friends* seem to express unease both verbally and nonverbally by using different phrases, vocals, leg positions, and also other nonverbal signals such as hand and facial gestures.

Example 4, Rachel (13)

Description of the scene: Rachel’s sister, Jill, is visiting and she and Rachel are sitting on the couch at Central Perk. Earlier, Phoebe has told Rachel that she believes she saw a spark of interest between Jill and Ross the other day, and now Rachel wants to find out the truth since she and Ross used to date. Rachel tells Jill what Phoebe said and asks her if she is going out with Ross. Jill’s response is that they are not going out and that Ross is too much of a geek for her. Rachel does not think Ross is a geek (since she has been dating him) and a discussion on the subject follows.

Rachel: - No, no.
- Ross is not a geek.

Jill: - Fine. Then let's just say he's not my type.

Rachel: - What? Handsome is not your type?!
- Smart?! Kind, good kisser?! What?! Those things aren't on your list?!
- Ross is a great guy, you'd be lucky to be with him!

Jill: - Well, ok, if it means that much to you, then I'll just ask him out.

Rachel: - Oh, no, no. No, no, that's not what I meant. *((She is sitting in a Lc position, leans forward, turns towards Jill, puts one hand on the side of her body on the couch, the other elbow is resting on the knee and with the hand of the resting arm she is shaking her finger towards Jill))*

Jill: - You know what Rachel, you're right. You know, ah, he has been really nice to me.

Rachel: - Yeah, but he's not your type. *((Keeps her Lc position, she is still leaning forward and facing Jill, eyebrows lowered, mouth slightly open, one arm is resting on the knee, the other one is raised a little bit and her index finger is pointing at Jill))*

Jill: - Yeah, but maybe that's a good thing. You know I'm doing all these different sorts of things, so maybe I should just try dating a geek too.

Rachel: - Yeah, but you know, you know.. you don't wanna try too much too fast. *((She keeps her Lc position but puts both her hands on the side of her body on the couch and lifts her body a little bit, eyebrows lowered, making a frowning grimace with her mouth, stretches her back, leans her head and interlaces her hands on the knee))*
- You know, I mean, you, you do remember what happened to the little girl who tried too much too fast, don't you? *((Keeps her position but swings slightly back and forth and her head is now straight))*

Jill: - What?

Rachel: - She.. she died Jill. *((Keeps the entire position, serious facial expression and keeps swinging back and forth))*

Rachel wants to find out if her sister and Ross are going out, and since Rachel and Ross have been dating, Rachel takes offence when Jill describes Ross as a geek. Rachel lists some of Ross's good qualities and wonders if those are not what Jill is looking for in a guy. When Jill offers to ask Ross out, in order to please Rachel, Rachel says "Oh, no, no. No, no, that's not what I meant". While saying this, her body language, leaning forward in an Lc position and shaking her finger at Jill, clearly confirms that she is serious about that that was not what she meant; she is clearly not at ease with the thought of her sister and Ross going out. Rachel's lowered eyebrows and pointing index finger when she says "Yeah, but he's not your type" to remind Jill that she just seconds ago considered Ross not to be her type, stresses her unease even clearer. It seems as if she is expressing her unease further when she keeps her Lc position, says "Yeah, but you know, you know.. you don't wanna try too much too fast", leans her head as if to convince her sister, lifts her body, stretches her back and makes a frowning

grimace with her mouth, as if she does not know what to do with herself, or as if she is trying to make her body look bigger and threatening in order to hide her unease or to appear convincing to her sister. Rachel's unease culminates in the end of the dialogue when her body starts swinging back and forth as if she is really annoyed with the whole situation, and she says "You know, I mean, you, you do remember what happened to the little girl who tried too much too fast, don't you?". Accordingly, without leaving her Lc position, Rachel seems to send signals to demonstrate her unease regarding her sister's and Ross's alleged feelings towards each other, both verbally and nonverbally.

Example 5, Ross (19)

Description of the scene: Ross is working as a professor at a university and he is secretly dating one of his much younger students, Elisabeth. Ross's friends, Chandler, Joey, Monica, Phoebe and Rachel, know about their relationship and in an earlier scene Ross has told them that Elisabeth is about to go on spring break. Ross is not sure what "going on spring break" means and becomes worried when his friends tell him that it involves partying, alcohol, dancing, bathing suits, and a lot of guys. After being told what going on spring break means, he rushes off to call Elisabeth. When he comes back, he tells his friends that Elisabeth confirmed their description of spring break. Ross then utters phrases like "Ok, she can't go", "What am I suppose to do?", and "What if she goes down there and sleeps with a bunch of guys?". The above described scene confirms Ross's unease verbally, but in that scene, Ross's leg position and the rest of his body is hidden, and therefore, only the verbal interchange, a few arm movements and his tone of voice are included in the first transcription (a) below. The other scene transcribed below (b) presents how Ross expresses his unease over Elisabeth's spring brake plans nonverbally when he is visiting her at her place when she is packing for her trip. Ross is sitting on a sofa in Elisabeth's apartment. Elisabeth is running around packing a suitcase.

(a)

((Monica, Chandler, Rachel, Joey, and Phoebe are at Central Perk. Ross comes back from calling Elisabeth, sits down on a chair. His legs are not visible))

Chandler: - Oh, there you are. So what did Elisabeth say?

Ross: - Well, turns out that she is going to Daytona for Spring break-who-ho. *((His tone of voice is very unenthusiastic))*
 - That means wet t-shirt contests, guys doing shots off girls' bodies, waking up next to people you don't even know. *((Flings both hands out and looks away from his friends))*

Joey: - Man! She is going to have a great time!
 - Is she staying at the Hotel Corona?
 Chandler: - Do you know the hotels?
 Joey: - Sure! I was there Spring break -81, whihi!
 Monica: - In 1981 you were thirteen!
 Joey: - So what? I drove down, sold T-shirts. I had a blast. And you know who knows how to party? Drunk college chicks!
 Ross: - *((Puts one hand on his hip so that his arm is forming a triangle from the shoulders to his hip))*
 - Ok, she can't go.
 Phoebe: - Ross, you can't tell her not to go, you just started dating.
 Ross: - Then what am I supposed to do?
 Phoebe: - Nothing. You just have to be cool with it.
 Ross: - What if she goes down and sleeps with a bunch of guys?
 Chandler: - Well, maybe you don't marry this one.

(b)

((Ross is visiting Elisabeth at her place and she is packing for her trip. Ross is sitting on a sofa in Elisabeth's apartment. Elisabeth is running around packing a suitcase))

Ross: - I'm so glad you're going on this trip, ehe. *((He is sitting in a Lwa Position, facing Elisabeth, both elbows widely leaning on each knee, he is holding and fidgeting with something that looks like a small teddy bear and smiling broadly))*
 Elisabeth: - Yeah. We've been working so hard this semester. I really need to go crazy, you know, blow of some steam.
 Ross: - Sure! Sure! *((Keeps his position but is fidgeting even worse with the teddy bear and nods his head. Then he puts down the teddy bear and raises to go over to Elisabeth who is still running around looking for things to pack))*

Ross is visiting Elisabeth in her apartment while she is packing for her spring break trip. From the above described previous scene (a), where Ross verbally explains his unease to his friends while he is flinging his arms out, using a tone of voice which is very unenthusiastic, and placing his hand on his hip as if to demonstrate he is very serious when he says "Ok, she can't go", it is clear that Ross is not telling the truth when he in scene (b) tells Elisabeth "I'm so glad you're going on this trip, ehe." His Lwa position is steady, but his voice, which is unstable and nervous, especially when he in the end of the sentence says "ehe", and his fidgeting indicates that he is everything but glad about Elisabeth's spring break plans. Consequently, despite a stable Lwa position, the rest of Ross's body language seem to confirm his unease which he has expressed verbally to his friends in the previous scene.

To summarize the main findings of the *unease* category, the above transcribed examples show that leg positions were used differently by the men and women in *Friends*, but the genders

could still communicate similar messages of unease by using other signals such as vocals, phrases, and hand and facial gestures.

5.1.3 Dejection

The following examples show how women and men in *Friends* seem to express dejection both verbally and nonverbally by using different phrases, vocals, leg positions, and also other nonverbal signals such as hand and facial gestures.

Example 6, Chandler (15)

Description of the scene: In this episode, the characters are speculating about how things would have been if they had made different choices in life, and the entire episode presents the characters in a different life. In the scene transcribed below, Joey, Monica and her boyfriend are sitting on the sofa at Central Perk. Chandler walks in and tells the others that his writing has been rejected once more.

Chandler: - Hey. *((He walks in at Central Perk, drags his feet and his head is hanging))*
 Monica: - Hello. What's the matter?
 Chandler: - Well, I just got another rejection letter.. *((He throws some papers on the coffee table, sinks down in an Lwa position in an armchair, arms leaning in a wide position on each armrest, his upper body sagging, his mouth tightly closed and his eyebrows lowered))*
 - They said my writing was funny, just not Archie comic funny. *((Keeps his Lwa position, faces Monica, Joey and Monica's boyfriend, swings his head slightly back and forth, lifts his hands and gestures quotation marks with both hands, wrinkles his nose and pulls down the corners of his mouth))*

Chandler arrives at Central Perk and before he has said nothing more than “Hey”, Monica, just by judging by his body language (dragging feet and hanging head), and his tone of voice, which is very unenthusiastic, senses something is wrong. When Chandler says “Well, I just got another rejection letter” his dejection becomes clear as he throws the papers on the table, as if he does not want anything to do with his own writing in that moment, and sinks down in an Lwa position so that his upper body adapts a sagging position, as if his feelings of dejection are running through his entire body. When he continues “They said my writing was funny, just not Archie comic funny”, he stays in his sagging Lwa position and gestures quotation marks with his hands, as if to show his disappointment over being compared with the writer of Archie, or maybe as if he is disappointed because he can not live up to certain

expectations, his dejection becomes even more clear. The combination of Chandler's body language, tone of voice and verbal expressions, thus seem to express dejection.

Example 7, Jill (14)

Description of the scene: Rachel's sister Jill is visiting and she and Ross were supposed to go on a date. When Jill meets Rachel at Central Perk, Jill tells Rachel that Ross canceled their date and that she cannot understand why. What Jill does not know is that Ross canceled the date because Rachel asked him to, since she is not at ease with her former boyfriend dating her sister.

- Jill:
- Oh, it's probably because I'm not mature enough.. *((She is standing at the counter talking to Rachel, she exhales loudly, eyebrows lowered, one hand is holding a handbag on her shoulder, she flings out the other hand and starts walking towards the couch))*
 - ..or smart enough. Maybe he does not like the way I dress? *((She stands in front of the sofa, looks down, eyebrows deeply lowered))*
 - No, that can't be it. *((Grunts, smiles, and sits down in an Lc position on the sofa, leaning back on the couch, puts the handbag on the side of her body on the couch and crosses her arms over her chest))*
 - It's really got to be the smart thing.
 - Oh! *((She slaps her hands on her crossed legs))*
 - I'm so stupid. I'm just like this incredible pretty, stupid, girl! *((Keeps her Lc position, flings her hands out in front of her three times, palms facing her face and fingers spread and tense, nods her head quickly three times, eyebrows deeply lowered, the corners of her mouth pulled down, crosses her arms over her chest again))*
- Rachel:
- ((Walks over from the counter and sits down next to Jill on the couch))*
 - You know..honey..Ok, you wanna know why Ross canceled the date? *((Jill keeps her position and turns her head towards Rachel))*
 - Because I asked him to.

Jill is trying to understand why Ross canceled their date and she expresses her dejection over the situation verbally by uttering "Oh! I'm so stupid. I'm just like this incredible pretty, stupid girl!" Her body language confirms and reinforces her feelings of dejection as she adapts and stays in the Lc position, crosses her arms over her chest, lowers her eyebrows, pulls down the corners of her mouth, flings her hands out repeatedly and slaps them against her crossed legs, as if she does not know what to do with herself if she does not find out why Ross rejected her, before she once more crosses them over her chest. Accordingly, Jill seems to express dejection over being rejected, and she does it both verbally and nonverbally.

To summarize the main findings of the *dejection* category, the above transcribed examples show that leg positions were used differently by the men and women in *Friends*, but the genders could still communicate similar messages of dejection by using other signals such as vocals, phrases, and hand and facial gestures.

5.1.4 Summarizing analysis

The above transcribed examples show how the female and male characters of *Friends* seem to express what I have termed excitement, unease, and dejection by using different but also similar signals. In example 1, the verbal communication and the body language tell us that Monica is excited about babysitting the puppies. In example 2, by using verbal and nonverbal communication, Rachel expresses exaltation when joking with Ross. In example 3, the combination of verbal and nonverbal expressiveness shows Joey's excitement over finding a solution to his money problem. Furthermore, Rachel communicates unease over Ross's and Jill's dating plans by using both verbal and nonverbal signals in example 4, just like Ross's body language and verbal message confirms his unease over Elisabeth's spring break trip in example 5. In example 6, Chandler's combined verbal and nonverbal signals express dejection when his writing has been rejected, and in example 7, Jill's dejection over Ross's rejection becomes clear due to her verbal statements and her body language. Monica, Rachel and Jill are expressing their excitement, unease, and dejection by adapting close body postures with their legs tightly squeezed together or crossed, hands clapping, squeezed together between the legs, or closely together resting on their legs. Joey, Ross, and Chandler on the other hand, express their excitement, unease, and dejection by adapting wide body postures with legs wide spread and arms wide apart. Accordingly, in the constructed communication of *Friends*, women tend to adapt close postures which are regarded feminine while men tend to use wide postures which are considered masculine. In other words, both the female and male characters/actors in *Friends* use stereotypical patterns concerning leg positions to create and communicate their gender and to express their excitement, unease and dejection.

However, even though the female and male characters in *Friends* use different leg positions to express their gender, they use other signals in similar ways. To demonstrate, in example 1 and 2, Monica and Rachel smiles broadly, and Monica's eyes are wide open, to expresses excitement, just like Joey is smiling broadly with eyes wide open when he communicates excitement in example 3. In example 6 and 7, Chandler and Jill are both displaying dejection by lowering their eyebrows, pulling down the corners of their mouths, and their tones of voices are both very unenthusiastic. Furthermore, both female and male

characters are using hand and arm gestures to reinforce their messages. In example 3, Joey raises one hand, his palm facing upward and fingers spread, as if to underline his excitement, just like Jill flings her hands out, her palms facing upward and fingers spread, and slaps her hands on her legs, as if to stress her dejection. Consequently, in the above transcribed examples, it does not seem as if the leg postures in themselves communicate *different* messages – rather, the characters perform their gender partly using different leg postures, but communicate emotions etc. using other channels and cues, which are sometimes used similarly by the genders.

5.2 Exception

While inspecting the data, one interesting example which did not confirm the pattern of used sitting postures described in study 1 emerged. The following section presents this example.

Example 9, Rachel (18)

Description of the scene: Rachel has moved from Monica's apartment to Phoebe's apartment since Chandler, who formerly lived in Joey's apartment, has moved in with Monica. There has been a fire in Phoebe's apartment and Rachel and Phoebe have to stay somewhere else while the apartment is fixed. The two of them have been fighting over who should stay at Monica's and Chandler's and who should stay at Joey's. No one wants to stay at Monica's since she is very strict when it comes to keeping her apartment in good shape. Finally they decide that Phoebe will stay with Monica and Rachel with Joey. In the scene transcribed below, Rachel and Joey are having dinner and watching TV in Joey's apartment.

((Joey is sitting in an Lwa position in an armchair eating pasta from a plate which stands on a table in front of him. Rachel is sitting in an Lwa position on a chair next to Joey. Her elbows are resting widely on each armrest and she is also eating pasta. She has no table but holds her plate in one hand and holds a fork in the other hand))

- Rachel: - Oh! Joey..I'm sorry.. *((She drops some spaghetti on the carpet and reaches for a tissue on the table, keeps her Lwa position, still holding the plate in one hand and bends down to wipe the carpet with the other hand))*
- Joey: - Ah, it's all right, don't worry about it.
- Rachel: - No, but look! Ah, it's gonna leave a stain. *((Keeps her Lwa position and continues to wipe the carpet))*
- Joey: - Rach..Hey, it's fine, you're at Joey's!
- Rachel: - Really? *((Keeps her Lwa position, raises and sits straight))*

Joey: - Yeah, look. ((Takes some spaghetti from the plate and throws it on the carpet))

Rachel: - Haa. ((Keeps her Lwa position, looks at the spaghetti on the floor, faces Joey and smiles))

Joey: - Yeah!

Rachel: - I've never lived like this before. ((Keeps her position))

Joey: - I know!

Rachel: - Ha! ((Keeps her position, throws the tissue on the floor))
- Uii! ((Keeps her position and takes some of her pasta and throws it on the carpet and laughs))

Joey: - Well don't waist it. I mean, it's still food. ((Bends down, picks the food up and puts it on his plate))
((Rachel keeps her Lwa position and stairs at Joey's plate))

Rachel is temporary living at Joey's place since there has been a fire in Phoebe's apartment were Rachel usually stays. In the above transcribed scene, Rachel is sitting in a Lwa position. According to study 1, this is a very rarely displayed position for the female characters in *Friends*; thirty sitting positions among the female characters were registered, and not a single one was a Lwa position. One explanation as to why Rachel is actually using a Lwa position in the above transcribed example could be that she is trying to fit in and to fill the gap between the genders, since she is now living with a man and not a woman as she used to. Moreover, she is living with Joey, the character who in study 1 registered most Lwa positions of all the characters. Rachel could also be using the Lwa position in order to stress the difference of staying with the female, strict character Monica, who Phoebe is living with, and the male character Joey, since Rachel and Phoebe had an argument about where they should stay. Joey expresses this difference as well when he says "Rach.. Hey, it's fine, you're at Joey's!" and throws some spaghetti on the carpet, which would be impossible to do at Monica's. A third explanation could be that even though it is rare for the female characters to adapt stereotypical masculine sitting positions, it does occur.

6. Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate how social gender norms as reflected in body language appear in scripted communication, and the first question to be answered was if women tend to sit in a closed posture with their legs crossed, which is regarded as feminine, while men sit a wide position with their legs spread, which is regarded as masculine. After comparing the data for the characters in *Friends* (table 2), it is clear that the women in *Friends* do tend to sit with their legs crossed or in closed leg postures, while the men tend to adopt wide sitting positions with their legs spread. These findings are consistent with the findings of Andersen (2004), Pearson et al (1995), and Vrugt and Luyerink (2000).

Accordingly, in constructed communication, as well as in reality, women and men use stereotypical leg positions to create and communicate their gender.

However, it is interesting to note that there are differences in the data from *Friends* and those from Vrugt's and Luyerink's field study. The reason for this could be the fact that the communication in *Friends* is scripted, and in order to establish characters and get humorous points across in the rapid pace of sitcom drama, exaggerated body language is a required feature. In other words, it seems as if scripted communication exaggerates the characters' feminine and masculine features, and plays on society's construction of stereotypical beliefs of what it is that represents masculinity and femininity, in order to create humor.

Furthermore, in *Friends*, the women seem to be *slightly* more stereotyped than the men, since they did not sit with their legs wide crossed or wide apart one single time, while the men sat with their legs crossed seven times. But it is worth stressing that the women in *Friends* seem to be just *slightly* more stereotyped than the men, since the men did not sit with their legs tight together more than one time, and all of the seven male Lc positions were taken by the same character, Chandler. Ross and Joey, the other two male characters, did not sit with their legs crossed at any time. The only category where the men and women are fairly equal is in the Lma category: the women used this position in 20 percent of the situations, and men applied the Lma posture in 18 percent of the cases. Again, it is worth pointing out that the genders are *fairly* equal in this category as well, since Chandler and Joey only used the Lma posture one time each, Ross six times and Rachel and Monica three times each. Additionally, one of the female characters, Monica, used a position categorized as *other* when she is sitting on the sofa with one foot on the floor and the other foot placed under her leg. As pointed out, since this is the only position categorized as *other* that was used, I find it impossible to decide if women are more likely than men to use leg positions like the one described.

The second study aimed to investigate in what ways, if any, leg positions of the different characters in *Friends* are incorporated into the whole communicative event, and if there are systematic patterns in the way leg positions, particularly in relation to gender, are deployed in the interaction. Study 2 shows how women and men in *Friends* seem to express excitement, unease, and dejection by using different combinations of signals. Both women and men use cues like broad smiles, wide open eyes, and hand and arm gestures to underline their verbal communication and to express excitement. The genders similarly use lowered eyebrows, pulled down corners of their mouths and unenthusiastic tones of voice to

demonstrate dejection. However, as researchers like Andersen (2004), Pearson et al (1995), and Vrugt and Luyerink (2000) claim, there seem to be differences between the genders in the wideness of their postures and in the way the characters/actors use leg postures, in combination with the above described signals, to demonstrate excitement, unease, and dejection. The female characters most often seem to adopt close positions where their hands are squeezed together between their legs or closely rest on their knees while their legs are crossed or placed tightly together. By contrast, the male characters seem to display wide arm postures with legs wide apart. The exception where the female character Rachel actually uses wide leg and arm positions (5.2 Exception, example 9) could be interpreted as further stressing of the male and female difference in body language, since Rachel now is living with the very masculine male character Joey, and not with the female characters Monica and Phoebe, which she formerly used to live with. But Rachel's usage of a stereotypical male position could also indicate that even though it is rare for the female characters in *Friends* to use wide positions, they sometimes do.

Accordingly, it seems clear that leg positions of the different characters in *Friends* are incorporated into the whole communicative event. Moreover, it seems as if the characters/actors in *Friends* construct their gender by using leg positions and different wideness of their postures to some extent, but display emotions etc. using other signals as well.

7. Summary and conclusions

To sum up, nonverbal communication such as body language is crucial to our communication, and since scholars agree that there are some notable differences in the way men and women use body language, the study of gendered nonverbal communication as a social construction is vital to our understanding of how we create our gendered identities. Again, the purpose of this essay was to investigate how social gender norms concerning body language, with focus on legs postures, appear in scripted communication. I focused on constructed communication since designed interaction offers access to the interpretation and enactment of gender norms.

Researchers like Andersen (1998; 2004), Pearson (1995), and Vrugt and Luyerink (2000) claim that women tend to sit in closed postures with their legs crossed, which is regarded as inferior and feminine positions, while men sit in wide, space demanding positions with their legs spread, which is regarded as superior and masculine postures. The results of the study of the characters in *Friends*, with focus on leg postures, agree with the

claims of these scholars. In line with Vrugt's and Luyerink's field study (2000), the scripted female characters in *Friends* most often sit in close positions with their legs closed or crossed, while the men sit in wide positions with their legs wide apart. More precisely, in 40 percent of the investigated cases, the female characters sat with their legs crossed, and with their legs close together in 37 percent, while the male characters sat with their legs wide apart in 58 percent of the observed cases. Furthermore, the study shows the characters seem to perform their gender *partly* using different leg positions and wideness of their postures, but communicate emotions etc. using other channels and cues.

Since society in general strictly categorizes the genders and creates stereotypical beliefs about men, women, masculinity, and femininity, there is a need for more studies that can help us understand the creation and identification of our gendered body language. Therefore, another suggestion for further research is to investigate how body language in general is categorized and used as masculine and feminine.

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