

Naomi Boyd

Grayson Chong

ENGLWRIT112

3 December 2021

How Body Language Can Affect & Be Affected by the Power Imbalance by Males & Females

00:00:00-00:00:10

[A pink drawing of a brain on a black screen and a white thought bubble. The spoken words appear in the thought bubble as well as “Body language + words = full meaning!”]

Naomi Boyd: Although we might not actively think about it we know that body language holds a similar amount of importance in interpreting the meaning of someone’s words as the actual words themselves.

00:00:10-00:00:12

[A black and white image of Dr. Ray Birdwhistell. Green text spells “Dr. Ray Birdwhistell”]

00:00:12-00:00:16

[Green text spells the spoke words starting with “Kinesics.”]

Boyd: Dr. Ray Birdwhistell founded kinesics, a field of study studying body language and movement.

00:00:16-00:00:21

[A book is opened to the title page. It reads: “Body Language by Julius Fast. Pages are turned and the camera zooms into a paragraph mentioning Dr. Birdwhistell.]

Boyd: Julius Fast paraphrases Dr. Birdwhistell in his book, *Body Language*:

00:00:21-00:00:29

[White text spells out the spoken words.]

Boyd: “Spoken language will not give us the full meaning of what a person is saying, nor for that matter will body language alone give us the full meaning” (Fast 118).

00:00:29-00:00:36

[A drawing of white glasses. In one of the lenses, green female and male symbols are drawn with smiley faces. In the other lens, yellow female and male symbols are drawn with frowny faces.]

Boyd: Observing interactions between males and females can assist in figuring out how to dismantle and correct the power imbalance between males and females.

00:00:36-00:00:50

[A white arc is drawn. Text under it reads: “Gender Exists on a spectrum!!” “Man” is written under one end of the arc; “Woman” is written under the other. A smaller arc is drawn under the middle of the arc; the text reads: “nonbinary.” Additional words: “genderfluid,” “agender,” “demigirl,” “demiboy,” “bigender,” “cisgender,” “transgender,” “genderqueer,” and “And more!”]

Boyd: For the purposes of this presentation, I will be using “male” and “female,” but I acknowledge that sex and gender are different. Gender exists on a spectrum. I, myself, identify as demigender, so I understand this on a personal level.

00:00:50-00:00:59

[Blue text spells the spoken words starting with “how does.”]

Boyd: I tried to answer the question: how does society affect body language and in turn contribute to the power imbalance between males and females?

00:00:59-00:01:04

[A white thought bubble with a yellow scale inside. Female and male symbols are on the scales.

A red “X” appears over the scale. Red text then spells “NOPE!”]

Boyd: We may think that the power imbalance between males and females is moving toward an equilibrium, but the fact that there are still fewer

00:01:04-00:01:09

[Green text spells: “Reality...” A yellow scale is drawn. One side of the scale has the woman symbol. Text on this side of the scale spells: “less power.” The other side of the scale has the man symbol and is weighed down. The text on this side spells “more power.”

Boyd: females in higher-paying jobs show that there is still room for improvement.

00:01:09-00:01:15

[Offwhite text spells “clothing and fashion.” Blue pants, a brown turtleneck, a green tanktop, a pink dress, a yellow skirt, and a gray sweatshirt are drawn.]

Boyd: One of the ways that society affects body language is through clothing and fashion.

00:01:15-00:01:23

[Two white arrows, one labeled “womens,” the other “mens,” point in opposite directions. A line between them is labeled “uncrossable line.” Red interdictory circles then appear over both arrows.

Boyd: The fashion industry has convinced people to believe that there are men’s and women's clothing and that these are completely discrete categories. However,

00:01:23-00:01:33

[Red text spells “No such thing as “women’s” or “men’s” clothes”]

Boyd: there is really no such thing as “men's clothing” and “women's clothing.” Rather, the fashion industry, as a branch of society, dictates the way that people should move and behave based on their gender.

00:01:33-00:01:42

[A white ipod is drawn. Text on the screen reads “Pockets: Articles of Interest #3. Produced By: Avery Trufelman”]

Boyd: In the podcast, “Pockets: Articles of Interest #3” Avery Trufelman speaks about how pockets can affect the way people move around in the world.

00:01:42-00:01:58

[No longer drawings upon a screen, a rug-like surface is shown. White text at the upper left reads: “Pockets: Articles of Interest #3.” A hand places tools (wrench, screwdriver, pliers, etc.) in a row on the surface.]

Avery Trufelman: Man's great evolutionary advantage is the creation of tools. Problem is, we're not marsupials. We need to carry them somehow. And this idea of who has access to the tools they need, who can walk through the world comfortably and securely?

00:01:58-00:02:03

[White text mirrors spoken word.]

Trufelman: This is what we are talking about when we talk about pockets.

00:02:03-00:02:14

[View from inside of dorm room looking at the door. The door opens from the outside and a person walks into the room, struggling to hold many things (bag, umbrella, phone, water bottle, books).]

Hannah Carlson: Pockets speak to this question of preparedness and your ability to move in public and to be confident. It's really difficult to get around if you don't have what you need.

00:02:14-00:02:27

[A classroom with “Bog Test Today” written on the whiteboard. Two people walk into view.

Speaker 1 takes a seat at the table.]

Speaker 1: You ready?

Speaker 2: I was born ready.

Speaker 1: YEAH.

Speaker 2: It's going to be easy.

Speaker 1: Oh yeah.

Speaker 2: Wait. OH NO. MY PENCIL

Speaker 1: I don't have mine either!

00:02:27-00:02:31

[A person is standing between two cars outside. They try to open a car door and then pat their pockets]

Speaker 3: Oh no, Where's my key?

00:02:31-00:02:36

[Students walking to class outside on campus.]

Carlson: And it's about, I think, mobility and movement in public. If the formal question for me is:

00:02:36-00:02:38

[White text mirrors spoken word.]

Carlson: What's the difference between a pocket and a bag?

00:02:38-00:02:43

[A person stands with their hands in their pockets.]

Carlson: And I think the key difference is that the pocket is internal and it's secret.

00:02:43-00:02:47

[A person stands holding a bag.]

Trufelman: A bag can be stolen. A bag can be lost.

00:02:47-00:02:50

[Red text is drawn on a black background: "Lost & Found"]

Trufelman: And then that's it. You don't have your things anymore.

00:02:50-00:03:06

[One stock image of a pair of men's pants and two stock images of a pair of women's pants.

Green text labels the men's pair "bigger pockets" and "entire phone & wallet could fit." The two women's pairs are labeled "no pockets," "tiny, useless pockets," and "could only fit a credit card maybe." Orange text added to the men's pair says "Better for carrying things." Orange text added to the women's pair says "awful for carrying things."]

Boyd: Men's clothes, more often than not, have larger and more numerous pockets than women's clothes. If males are wearing men's clothes and females are wearing women's clothes, which is not always the case, males are the ones with the advantage of having a greater ability to carry their belongings.

00:03:06-00:03:13

["Jeans" in blue is written. Two pictures appear. On the left, is a person wearing men's jeans with their hands in their pockets. A red arrow points to the pockets, and red text says "larger pockets."]

On the right, a person wearing women's jeans with their fingers in one pocket. Red arrows point to the pockets, and red text says "tiny, useless pockets" and "hand barely fits."]

Boyd: This gives some logic behind why males might have the upper hand in society because they have access to their tools.

00:03:13-00:03:21

["Here have a bag" is written in red text. Images of purses, clutches, and bags appear.]

Boyd: Instead of putting large pockets on women's clothing, the fashion industry has thrust clutches, purses, and handbags into the hands of women as a "replacement."

00:03:21-00:03:30

[On the left, a purple drawing of a person holding fruit with their arms close to their center is accompanied by purple text spelling "with stuff." On the right, a yellow drawing of a person with their arms spread above their head is accompanied by yellow text spelling "without stuff."]

Boyd: Body language changes when you are holding things. Instead of having your arms free and accessible, you have to hold your object and limbs closer to your center, making yourself smaller.

00:03:30-00:03:36

[A green drawing of a person with their hands in their pockets. Green text reads: "with pockets."]

A checklist with items: keys, wallet, phone, and ID card is filled with checks.]

Boyd: Having pockets increases comfortability and boosts confidence because you know that you have all of your things with you.

00:03:36-00:03:40

[Green text spells "Preparation = outgoing & successful"]

Boyd: When you feel like you are prepared, you are more likely to be outgoing and successful.

00:03:40-00:03:48

[A person stands in front of the camera; their movements reflect the spoken word.]

Boyd: When people wear clothes with pockets instead of standing with their arms crossed, or hands fidgeting, they can actually assume a more confident pose, a larger pose.

00:03:48-00:03:57

[Logo for *Brain Games* is shown.]

Boyd: To give a visual of how body language is related to confidence, we will play a little game inspired by the National Geographic-produced TV show, *Brain Games*.

00:03:57-00:04:11

[The screen is split vertically. On the left, labeled A, a person sits with their hands on their knees and their legs on either side of the chair, knees bent and staring straight ahead. On the right, labeled B, a person sits with their ankles crossed, hands between their legs, and looking down.

The countdown from 5 seconds is shown when spoken.]

Boyd: I want you to look at these two poses. Which one looks like the more confident pose? I'll give you five seconds. The answer is A.

00:04:11-00:04:20

[The screen is split vertically. On the left, labeled A, a person sits with their ankles crossed, arms wrapped around their side, and looking down. On the right, labeled B, a person sits with one leg crossed so that their foot/ankle rests on their knee, hands resting on the arms of the chair, and looking slightly to the side. The countdown from 5 seconds is shown when spoken.]

Boyd: Let's try another one: which is the more confident pose? The answer is B.

00:04:20-00:04:30

[The screen is split vertically. On the left, labeled A, a person sits almost sideways on the chair with their legs crossed at the knee, hands resting at their waist, and looking at the camera. On the right, labeled B, a person sits with their legs crossed at the knee, one hand on top of the knee, holding the other elbow whose corresponding hand rests beneath the person's chin. The person looks straight ahead. The countdown from 5 seconds is shown when spoken.]

Boyd: Alright, third one. Which is the more confident pose? Got it? The answer is A.

00:04:30-00:04:55

[The screen is split vertically. On the left, labeled A, a person sits with their legs spread, knees bent, hands on knees, and looking slightly sideways. On the right, labeled B, a person sits with their legs crossed at the knee, one arm crossing the front with hand resting on the arm of the chair, their other arm bent and their chin resting on this hand. The person looks straight ahead.

The countdown from 5 seconds is shown when spoken.]

Boyd: And now for the last one. This one might be a bit of a challenge! The answer is actually A.

A is the more classical high-power pose, but B is not low-power either. B is actually a mixture of high and low power positions. The legs and arms are crossed across the body, but chin is up and the posture is good. This is what we would consider a "medium power pose."

00:04:55-00:05:09

[Visuals match what is being described. The green ovals are larger than the blue ovals.]

Boyd: Now let's look at all of the confident poses on the left versus all of the unconfident poses on the right. Now let's add ovals. Confident poses in green. Unconfident poses in blue. Is there a trend in the oval size?

00:05:09-00:05:31

[Video cuts between three people sitting in chairs. Ovals are then drawn over them. Sethe, female; Thomas, male; and Emma, female. Emma has the biggest oval, then Sethe has a smaller oval, then Thomas has the smallest oval.]

Boyd: I asked a few of my friends to sit in a chair as they would normally and allow me to take pictures of them. After I got the pictures, I drew ovals around them. A bigger oval should indicate a higher power pose. I wanted to see if females or males sat in higher power poses. Despite not getting enough participants to come to any conclusions, I do think this is an interesting analysis technique worth looking into in the future.

00:05:31-00:05:39

[Photo of Amy Cuddy with purple arrow and text spelling “Amy Cuddy, Social Psychologist”]

Boyd: Amy Cuddy, a social psychologist, will now introduce you to the idea of high and low power poses and how those can affect power and confidence.

00:05:39-00:05:43

[Red text spells” “Amy Cuddy, TED Talk: “Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are”]

Boyd: Here is a snippet of her TED Talk, “Your Body Language May Shape Who You Are.”

00:05:43-00:07:20

[Amy Cuddy speaks at a TED Talk. Pictures are on the screen behind her: apes; a snake and a swan; people.]

Amy Cuddy: What are nonverbal expressions of power and dominance? Well, this is what they are. So in the animal kingdom, they are about expanding. So you make yourself big, you stretch out, you take up space, you’re basically opening up. It's about opening up. And this is true across the animal kingdom. It's not just limited to primates. And humans do the same thing. So they do this both when they when they have power sort of chronically. And also when they're feeling

powerful in the moment. What do we do when we feel powerless? We do exactly the opposite. We close up. We wrap ourselves up. We make ourselves small. We don't want to bump into the person next to us. So what do the minds of the powerful versus the powerless look like? So powerful people tend to be, not surprisingly, more assertive and more confident, more optimistic. They actually feel that they're going to win even the games of chance. They take more risks. There are a lot of differences between powerful and powerless people. Physiologically, there also are differences on two key hormones: testosterone, which is the dominance hormone, and cortisol, which is the stress hormone. So what we find is that high-power alpha males in primate hierarchies have high testosterone and low cortisol, and powerful and effective leaders also have high testosterone and low cortisol. In primate hierarchies, if an individual needs to take over an alpha role sort of suddenly, within a few days that individual's testosterone has gone up significantly and his cortisol has dropped significantly. So we have this evidence, both that the body can shape the mind and also that role changes can shape the mind.

00:07:20-00:07:31

[Cuddy's TED Talk continues. When Cuddy says "I want you to stand like this," she stands straight with her hands at her hips.]

Cuddy: So what happens, okay, you take a role change. What happens if you do that at a really minimal level, like this tiny manipulation, this tiny intervention? "For two minutes," you say, "I want you to stand like this, and it's going to make you feel more powerful."

00:07:31-00:07:59

[Cuddy's TED Talk continues. A flowchart appears on the screen behind her. The first step shows a person giving a saliva sample. Then the next step is either a person sitting with their legs up on a table and their head resting on bent arms behind them OR a person with their legs

crossed at the ankles and their arms wrapped around them. The next step is an image of dice. The final step is another saliva sample.]

Cuddy: This is what we did. We decided to bring people into the lab and run a little experiment. They come in, they spit into a vial. For two minutes, we say, “You need to do this or this.” They don’t look at pictures of the poses. We don't want to prime them with a concept of power. We want them to be feeling power. So two minutes they do this. We then ask them “How powerful do you feel?” on a series of items, and then we give them an opportunity to gamble, and then we take another saliva sample. That's it. That's the whole experiment.

00:07:59-00:08:46

[Cuddy’s TED Talk continues. Bar charts are shown, reflecting what Cuddy says.]

Cuddy: So this is what we find. Risk tolerance, which is the gambling, we find that when you are in the high-power pose condition, 86% of you will gamble. When you’re in the low-power pose condition, only 60 percent, and that’s a whopping significant difference. Here's what we find on testosterone. From their baseline when they come in, high-power people experience about a 20-percent increase, and low-power people experience about a 10 percent decrease. So again, two minutes, and you get these changes. Here’s what you get on cortisol. High-power people experience about a 25-percent decrease, and the low-power people experience about a 15-percent increase. So two minutes lead to these hormonal changes that configure your brain to basically be either assertive, confident, and comfortable, or really stress-reactive and, you know, feeling sort of shut down.

00:08:46-00:08:57

[Purple text spells the spoken word.]

Boyd: Though Cuddy's experiment has been found to fail reproducibility tests, the general idea that powerful people are more confident and that confident people are more powerful makes sense.

00:08:57-00:09:03

[Blue text spells "confident & self-assured"]

Boyd: People are more likely to listen to those who seem to know what they are doing, which is usually people who are confident and self-assured.

00:09:03-00:09:08

[White text mirrors spoken word from "low stress..." A red box with "Stress" inside blinks.]

Boyd: Like Cuddy mentioned, low stress levels accompany confidence and power.

00:09:08-00:09:22

[Blue text mirrors spoken word from "Martha Davis..."]

Boyd: Results from a study by psychologists Martha Davis and Shirley Weitz "suggest it may be useful to examine the nonverbal indicators of 'relaxation' or 'ease' and 'tension' as they vary by sex of subject and whom he or she is interacting with."

00:09:22-00:09:30

[Yellow text mirrors spoken word.]

Boyd: Though more studies need to be done to come to conclusions, it seems that comfortability does play a role in determining the types of body language a person uses.

00:09:30-00:09:39

[Green text spells "Relaxation & Ease" with an arrow to "comfortability & confidence." Red text spells "Tension" with an arrow to "lack of comfort & lack of self-assurance."]

Boyd: Relaxation and ease are usually signs of comfortability and confidence, while tension shows the lack of comfort and lack of self-assurance.

00:09:39-00:09:41

[A blue drawing of a person with “comfort & comfortability” inside them, and a yellow drawing of a person with “comfort & comfortability” on the outside.]

Boyd: Internal feelings of confidence and comfortability

00:09:41-00:09:44

[Blue text spells “internal feelings -> external body language”]

Boyd: can translate to external body language.

00:09:44-00:09:52

[Red men symbols with frowny faces and a blue woman symbol with a surprised face. Red text spells “Social Fear Conditioning”]

Boyd: When females are raised to believe that they should fear males in what is called social fear conditioning their body is most likely going to reflect this fear.

00:09:52-00:09:57

[A red men symbol with a smiling face wearing a crown and a blue woman symbol with a frowny face.]

Boyd: Social fear conditioning ultimately keeps males in power and females in powerless roles.

00:09:57-00:10:04

[A picture of Jack Halberstam with label “Jack Halberstam. Gender and Queer Theorist”]

Boyd: Luckily, there are people studying this issue. For example, Jack Halberstam, a gender and queer theorist

00:10:04-00:10:10

[Cover of *Trans**, a yellow book with a person icon representing both the “traditional” woman/man icons.]

Boyd: writes in his book, *Trans** about how labels can be used both positively and negatively.

00:10:10-00:10:19

[Blue, purple, and pink words scatter the screen: femininity, woman, girl, femme, feminine.]

Boyd: When applied to feminism, reclaiming descriptors such as “femininity,” “woman,” and “girl” can help those who identify with being female or feminine regain power.

00:10:19-00:10:24

[Yellow text spells “Femininity.”]

Boyd: Instead of femininity being looked down upon, femininity can be embraced and celebrated!

00:10:24-00:10:31

[Blue and then white text mirrors spoken word.]

Boyd: So back to my question of: “how does society affect body language and in turn contribute to the power imbalance between females and males?”

00:10:31-00:10:42

[Blue text mirrors spoken word.]

Boyd: From what I have learned from researching body language and how it can affect and be affected by power dynamics between males and females, I think that a large part of the issue is comfortability and confidence.

00:10:42-00:10:50

[Purple text mirrors spoken word.]

Boyd: The fashion industry, various upbringings, and maybe even biology are large contributors to the power imbalance.

00:10:50-00:11:02

[Green text mirrors spoken word.]

Boyd: There may be ways to remedy this, including boosting confidence and comfortability, whether that is through wearing comfortable clothes (preferably those with pocket!), assuming “high power poses,” or being proud of who you are.

00:11:02-00:11:07

[Orange text mirrors spoken word.]

Boyd: Being comfortable in your own skin is one of the keys to being a confident person overall.

00:11:07-00:11:09

[Green text mirrors spoken word.]

Boyd: Confidence is power.

00:11:09-00:11:09

[White credits scroll up the screen.

Graphics editing, background music and voiceover: Naomi Boyd

Featured actors: Sethe; Thomas

Participants in Mini Study: Sethe; Thomas; Emma

Special Credit to Avery Trufelman; Amy Cuddy.

Works Cited:

“Battle of the Sexes.” Brain Games, season 2, episode 7, National Geographic, 20 May 2013.

Disney+, www.disneyplus.com/video/64658da5-8elc-4995-885b-9107e9f41490.

“Battle of the Sexes 2.” Brain Games, season 4, episode 5, National Geographic, 28 July 2014.

Disney+, www.disneyplus.com/video/3e377b9c-2c9a-4768-a12f-b51fbc246674.

Cuddy, Amy. “Your body language may shape who you are.” TED, 12 Oct. 2014,

https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_may_shape_who_you_are?language=en.

Davis, Martha and Shirley Weitz. “Sex Differences in Body Movements and Positions.” *Gender and Nonverbal Behavior*, edited by Clara Mayo

Fast, Julius. *Body Language*. M. Evans and Company, 1970.

Halberstam, Jack. *Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability*. University of California Press, 2018.

Trufelman, Avery. “Pockets: Articles of Interest #3.” *Articles of Interest from 99% Invisible*, 2 Oct. 2018, 99percentinvisible.org/episode/pockets-articles-of-interest-3/transcript. Accessed 16 Nov. 2021.

Reichenberger, Jonas et al. “Men Scare Me More: Gender Differences in Social Fear Conditioning in Virtual Reality.” *Frontiers in psychology* vol. 10 1617. 18]