**Communication and Contention**

The human system of communication is an integral piece to the puzzle that is civilization, and a few aspects that influence urbane interaction as well as the expression of novelty ideas include age, gender, and ethnicity. Naturally, one would ponder how the seemingly simple uttering of sounds could be of such magnitude, especially to something as supposedly advanced as mankind, but it has a profound effect on individuals, as well as on a larger scale, globally, because of perception and stereotypes. Our team decided to give a collective overview to better demonstrate how our respective backgrounds affected each of our communication styles differently.

To begin with, language is affected by a speaker’s age, considering varying maturing and comprehension levels. Where a toddler can string together simple sentences, an adult would be more eloquent and astute. There are many cases of miscommunication between speakers of drastic age differences; in my personal experience, there are multiple slang words I would use around my peers, such as “lit” or “dank”, that I would not use with my parents to avoid confusion. Moreover, a girl my age is part of the so-called “iGeneration”, and we are generalized as social media-oriented and focused on technology instead of people; other generations like millennials and baby boomers also have stereotypes.

Furthermore, gender also affects communication style. To feel connected to a person, a woman often feels obliged to become not only emotionally close, but physically close. Women often develop deep relationships with other women quicker because of similarities. As a woman, I’ve always felt closer to my own gender, feeling as if they understand my emotions more than a man could. Touch and the sense of being close establish trust between women. Miscommunication comes into play when a man may not understand the emotional depth behind a woman’s behavior. Women are stereotypically the more polite and light-hearted gender, having calming and subtle voices, and engaging in more physical touch.

Lastly, one’s ethnic background can affect how they use language in their day-to-day conversations, creating very different methods to send the same message. For example, being from a Filipino background, my mother is a louder person who will often make direct remarks to others with indifference. Her ethnic background as a Filipino encourages people to be open with their feelings, especially with and about each other. This principle from her ethnic past holds with her, despite immersing herself in an American culture that insists on politeness and keeping opinions of others to yourself. On the other hand, my father, being a conservative African-American raised in the South, prefers passive-aggressiveness and using a quieter voice. The social standards of my father’s conservative and African-American background entice him to be more reserved, a stark difference from the woman he married. Here we see how one’s ethnic background can influence one’s use of language.

 It is important to note that miscommunications are inevitable because humans are prone to error, but acting upon misconceptions or generalizations, language barriers, inability to relate, ignorance, and miscomprehension of the true meaning behind words is what ultimately causes it.  Although language is potentially an impediment to communing with people of cultures that differ from our own, it is also a gateway for the sharing of innovations.