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Speech Style and Impression Formation in a Court Setting: The Effects of "Powerful" and "Powerless" Speech

BONNIE ERICKSON,* E. ALLAN LIND,† BRUCE C. JOHNSON,* AND WILLIAM M. O'BARR‡

* *University of North Carolina,* † *University of New Hampshire, and* ‡ *Duke University*

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On the basis of a previous empirical analysis of speech patterns in court trials, speech styles were identified that covaried with speaker social status and power. The "powerless" style is characterized by the frequent use of such linguistic features as intensifiers, hedges, hesitation forms, and questioning intonations, whereas the "powerful" style is marked by less frequent use of these features. Male and female introductory psychology students heard the testimony of a male or female witness who used either a powerful or a powerless style to deliver the same substantive evidence. The testimony was presented either on audio tape or in written transcripts. Use of the powerful style resulted in greater attraction to the witness, regardless of the sex of the witness, the sex of the subject, or the mode of presentation of the testimony. The powerful style also resulted in greater perceived credibility of the witness than did the powerless style; however, this effect was stronger when the subject and the witness were of the same sex than when they were of the opposite sex. In all but the male witness–written presentation condition, the powerful style produced more acceptance of the position advocated in the testimony than did the powerless style. The results are discussed with regard to possible relations between speech style and person perception and persuasion processes and with regard to the social psychology of legal issues.

Research in sociolinguistics, a relatively new area of interdisciplinary endeavor investigating the relations between linguistic and societal vari-

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ables, has demonstrated that individuals vary considerably in the specific linguistic forms, or styles, they use in various verbal communication settings. Speech style is related to such variables as the speaker's sex (Fischer, 1958; Haas, 1944), social class (Labov, 1972a), and ethnic group (Fishman, Cooper, & Ma, 1971; Kochman, 1972; Labov, 1972b). Moreover, the use of particular speech styles appears to depend on the specific situation within which the speech occurs. Social psychologists in North America and Europe have also shown an interest in language variables, investigating the influence of speech styles on social evaluations of the speaker (see Giles & Powesland, 1975, for a comprehensive review of this literature).

Previous social–psychological research on the effects of speech style has generally involved the manipulation of gross linguistic variables. For example, Giles (1971) compared the effects of different British regional accents on evaluations of the speaker and found that the accents affected perceptions of the speaker's attractiveness and competence. Lambert, Hodgson, Gardner, and Fillenbaum (1960) found that subjects gave different evaluations of English- and French-speaking communicators. With the exception of such studies of the effects of accents and languages on social evaluations of speakers, previous theory and research on person perception and on communication and persuasion have ignored stylistic issues. The present experiment was designed to extend the study of speech style by examining the effects of a relatively subtle dimension of style variation on perceptions of the attractiveness and credibility of a communicator and on acceptance of the communication.

The speech-style variable examined in the experiment reported below was taken from a sociolinguistic, ethnographic study of variation in natural speech. This empirical examination of natural speech variation involved the observation, taping, and analysis of more than 150 hr of speech in a trial courtroom.[1] Speakers from a wide variety of backgrounds were observed. Among the dimensions of speech variation revealed by the sociolinguistic study was a cluster of linguistic features, the use of which appeared to vary with the social power and status of the speakers. Individuals with low social power and low status vis-à-vis the court tended to make frequent use of *intensifiers* ("so," "very," "surely," as in "I surely did."), *hedges* ("kinda," "I think," "I guess," etc.), *especially formal grammar* (the use of bookish grammatical forms), *hesitation forms* ("uh," "well," "you know," etc.), *gestures* (e.g., the use of hands and expressions such as "over there" while speaking), *questioning forms* (e.g., the use of rising, question intonation in declarative contexts), and *polite forms* ("please," "thank you," etc.).

[1] For additional information on the specific data leading to the statements made here, direct correspondence to the address provided for reprints of this paper.

These features tended to co-occur in the speech of low-power witnesses, and their frequent use constitutes what we term here the "powerless" style of speaking. The sociolinguistic analysis revealed that individuals with relatively high social power in court (e.g., parole officers, physicians, and other professionals) used these "powerless" features infrequently, speaking in a more straightforward manner which we term the "powerful" style.

The use of a powerful or powerless style might affect both the perceptions of the speaker and the influence of his or her communication. Specifically, listeners may see the use of a powerful style as reflecting high status and may tend to think favorably of such individuals (cf. Hurwitz, Zander, & Hymovitch, 1953). To this extent, they may perceive powerful speakers as relatively more attractive. In addition, a powerless style, with its complex and possibly confusing features, makes attending to the communicator more difficult and psychologically costly and may decrease attraction to him for this reason (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959, pp. 31–39). Finally, listeners may believe that a powerful style, by virtue of its succinctness and lack of hedging, indicates that the communicator is confident about the positions stated in the communication. This may increase perceptions of the powerful speaker's credibility (Kelley & Thibaut, 1969; Moscovici & Faucheux, 1972; Moscovici, 1976). Since acceptance of a communication is affected by both the attractiveness and the credibility of the communicator (e.g., Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; Kelman, 1958), speech style should also affect subjects' beliefs about the issues addressed in the communication. The present study was designed to determine generally whether the style variable under examination affects impression formation. By assessing subjects' perceptions of the communicator's attractiveness and credibility as well as their acceptance of the communication, we expected to obtain information about the specific manner in which speech style affects person perception.

Many of the features that distinguish powerless from powerful speech have been hypothesized to show sex differences in language use (Lakoff, 1973, 1975; for additional discussion of this topic see also Key, 1975, and Thorne & Henley, 1975). In fact, Lakoff's description of what she terms "women's language" prompted our initial sociolinguistic examination of the features described above. However, the sociolinguistic examination revealed that the use of these features is more closely linked to social power and status than to the sex of the witness. Because both males and females had been observed using both styles, the experimental study examined the effects of stylistic variation on reactions to speakers of both sexes.

In addition to the speech style and the sex of the speaker, the experiment included manipulation of a third variable—the mode in which the stimulus speech was presented. Some subjects heard tape recordings of powerful

and powerless speech while other subjects read transcripts of the same speech. By comparing the style effects observed with oral and written presentation, it was possible to examine the influence of a subset of the features distinguishing the two styles. In written presentation, many of the features unique to the oral mode (e.g., pitch, tempo, volume, and the "uh's") were absent, while the lexical, syntactic, and grammatical characteristics of each style remained. Differences in the effects of the styles in the two modes were expected to indicate the extent to which oral features had an influence over and above that of features present only in the written mode.

The specific social context within which we examined the effects of powerful and powerless speech was the delivery of testimony in a court trial. There are several reasons for the choice of a court setting. Since the original sociolinguistic study had been conducted in court trials, we had more information about the details of the two styles in this setting than in any other speech setting. In addition, the use of a court setting provided a structured social context within which the language phenomena of interest could be studied in relation to well-defined role relationships and expectations (cf., Thibaut & Walker, 1975). The use of testimony as stimulus material also permitted us to assess the effects of powerful and powerless speech on both impressions of the speaker and persuasion without revealing that the study concerned speech styles.

METHOD

Subjects

One hundred and fifty-two undergraduate students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (73 male and 79 female) participated in the study in partial fulfillment of a course requirement. (Five additional subjects did not complete all of the questionnaire items and were omitted from analyses.) Four independent variables were included in the factorial design: speech style (powerful vs powerless), mode of presentation (written vs oral), sex of witness, and sex of subject. Cell sizes varied between 10 and 14 under the oral-presentation conditions and between 6 and 8 under the written-presentation conditions.

Materials

To develop the verbal stimuli, we examined the tapes of actual court trials and chose one trial in which a female witness had given her testimony in a style characterized by frequent use of powerless forms (i.e., hedges, intensifiers, rising intonations, especially formal grammar, and polite forms). Actors then reproduced this original testimony (changing only names, dates, places, and editing certain legal technicalities). A female witness powerful-style tape was also made (using the same actors) in which most of the powerless features were omitted, but the substance of the testimony remained unchanged.[2] An example

[2] Our distinction between "style" and "substance" is analogous to that between the form and the content of a communication (cf., Giles & Powesland, 1975). Some philosophers of language (e.g., Grice, 1975) would argue that such a distinction is difficult to make.

of some of the differences between the powerless- and powerful-style conditions is provided by the following segment of testimony. The questions were spoken by a male actor (playing the lawyer) and the answers were spoken by a female actor (playing the witness).

Q. Then you went next door?
A. (Powerless): And then I went immediately next door, yes.
(Powerful): Yes.
Q. Approximately how long did you stay there before the ambulance arrived?
A. (Powerless): Oh, it seems like it was about uh, twenty minutes. Just long enough to help my friend Mrs. Davis you know, get straightened out.
(Powerful): Twenty minutes. Long enough to help get Mrs. Davis straightened out.
Q. Now how long have you lived in Durham?
A. (Powerless): All my life, really.
(Powerful): All my life.
Q. You're familiar with the streets?
A. (Powerless): Oh yes.
(Powerful): Yes.
Q. You know your way around?
A. (Powerless): Yes, I guess I do.
(Powerful): Yes.

Two additional tapes were also made in which the testimony was given by a male witness with either relatively frequent or infrequent use of powerless characteristics. [In these versions, the victim was identified as male ("Mr. Davis") in order to maintain the role relations discussed in the testimony.]

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the experimental tapes. As the data in the table indicate, both powerless versions were characterized by more frequent use of hesitation forms, hedges, intensifiers, question intonation, polite forms, and formal grammatical forms than were the corresponding powerful versions.[3]

Two aspects of the tapes require further comment. First, the male powerless tape contained fewer hesitation forms and somewhat fewer intensifiers than the female powerless tape. These differences were necessary in order to construct a male powerless tape that stood psychologically and linguistically in similar relation to the male powerful tape as

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The meaning of an utterance is more than its literal meaning; it includes as well its contextual meaning within the conversation. The difference, for example, between "I think the car hit him." and "The car hit him." might be argued, on the one hand, to be merely a matter of "style," or, on the other, to be a difference in "implied meaning." In either case, however, differences of the sort we have termed "powerful" and "powerless" do in fact occur in trial courtrooms and, as reported below, have been shown to act together in altering the social perceptions resulting from a communication.

[3] The regional and social class markers in the two witness actors' speech were similar and may be characterized as slightly southern Standard American English. It was not possible to control the realization of all phonological variables in the speech of the actors, but an examination of the tapes confirmed that these variables were fairly constant across the four tapes. Postvocalic *−r* was always constricted (*their* and *car* rather than *theah* and *cah*) and interdental fricatives always received fricative realization (*this* and *thing* rather than *dis* and *ting*). The realization of two other phonological variables are noted in Table 1. The proportion of develarized unstressed *-ing* was identical for the male and female powerful-style tapes but differed for the powerless-style tapes. The female witness actor retained the high level of develarization of the original witness, while the male witness adopted a slightly more precise pronunciation in his powerless style. The lawyer actor was consistently more precise in his pronunciation than the witnesses.

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF THE FOUR EXPERIMENTAL TAPES

	Female witness				Male witness			
	Powerless		Powerful		Powerless		Powerful	
Style features								
Intensifiers[a]	34		0		30		0	
Hedges[b]	22		2		21		2	
Questioning forms[c]	5		2		6		2	
Gestures[d]	3		1		3		1	
Use of "sir" by witness to lawyer (polite form)	3		0		4		0	
Hesitation forms								
uh, *eh*, *ah*, and *um*	45	(27)[e]	10	(26)	21	(27)	15	(25)
you know	12	(0)	0	(0)	12	(0)	0	(0)
other[f]	20	(12)	4	(11)	21	(12)	4	(11)
One-word answers[g]	3		15		3		15	
Other linguistic features								
Proportion of final consonant clusters simplified[h]	.76 (.33)		.60 (.35)		.71 (.39)		.70 (.32)	
Proportion of final unstressed *-ing* develarized[i]	.81 (.15)		.53 (0.0)		.25 (.08)		.53 (0.0)	
Running time of testimony								
Duration (sec)	569.5		450.9		579.3		462.5	

[a] Forms which increase or emphasize the force of an assertion such as *very*, *definitely*, *very definitely*, *surely*, *such a*, etc.

[b] Forms which reduce the force of an assertion by allowing for exceptions or avoiding rigid commitments such as *sort of*, *a little*, *kind of*, etc.

[c] Use of question intonation in response to lawyer's questions, including rising intonation in normally declarative contexts (e.g., "thirty?, thirty-five?") and questions asked by witness of lawyer (e.g., "Which way do you go?").

[d] Deictic phrases such as *over there*, *like this*, etc. which normally accompany gestures.

[e] Values in parentheses refer to the lawyer's speech.

[f] "Meaningless" particles consisting in these tapes of the following: *Oh*, *well*, *let's see*, *now*, *so*, *you see*.

[g] One-word answers are less frequent in the powerless style because of the tendencies to answer in sentences (using more formal grammar) and to use intensifiers and hedges in answering.

[h] Proportion of cases in which the second of two word-final consonants is dropped as in *kep'* for *kept*, *jus'* for *just*, *han'* for *hand*, etc.

[i] Proportion of cases in which an unstressed word-final *-ing* becomes alveolar as in *drivin'* for *driving*, *goin'* for *going*, *mornin'* for *morning*, etc.

did the female powerless tape to the female powerful tape. The original testimony, reproduced in the female powerless tape, was not inappropriate when spoken by the female witness. However, if the male witness had used exactly the same powerless speech forms as did the female witness, it would have appeared inappropriate in the context of

stereotypes and expectations for male speech. Instead of risking confounding the style manipulation with the appropriateness of the style, the tapes were designed for "functional equivalence" of the style manipulation within each sex of witness.

Second, the powerless testimony lasted approximately 2 min longer than the powerful testimony. A small portion of this time difference is accounted for by the tendency of the witness actors to speak somewhat more slowly on the powerless tapes (for example, the female actor averaged 3.8 syllables/sec on the powerless tape and 4.3 syllables/sec on the powerful tape). The greatest portion of the time difference (approximately 80 sec) is due to the extra speech involved in the powerless features that were edited from the powerful tapes. The hedges, intensifiers, hesitation forms, more formal grammar, et cetera that were present in the powerless versions of the testimony consumed additional speech time. However, even in the powerless versions of the testimony the witness' answers responded to the lawyer's questions without wandering to new topics and without being overly repetitious in substance. The substance of each answer, whether it was given in the powerless or the powerful style, was the same on each tape.

The tapes described above were used in the oral presentation conditions of the experiment. Stimulus materials for the written presentation conditions were produced by having a professional court reporter listen to the tapes and transcribe the testimony as she would the testimony in an actual trial. The major differences between the taped and the transcripted testimony were due to differences inherent in the two modes of presentation and to differences in conventions for conveying information in the two modes. That is, the transcripts did not convey the idiosyncratic phonetic features of the actors' speech, nor did they carry such paralinguistic aspects of speech as tempo, pitch level, intonation, or volume except where these aspects were easily conveyed by punctuation (e.g., some instances of question intonation on the powerless tapes are indicated by question marks on the transcripts). Except for standard contractions, phonological variation was not indicated on the transcripts. The hesitation forms "uh," "um," and "eh" were also not present in the transcripts, though other hesitation forms (e.g., "oh," "you know") were included. Many, but not all, of the false starts on the tapes were omitted on the transcripts. The other major differences between the tapes and the transcripts were due to conventions in written presentations. For example the transcripts used numbers, initials, and standard abbreviations where the tapes used words and also added occasional parenthetical information, e.g., "unh-hunh (yes)."

Procedure

Subjects reported to a study entitled "Legal Research Experiment," were seated at desks, and were provided either with earphones through which they could hear the stimulus tape (in the oral-presentation conditions) or with envelopes containing one of the four experimental transcripts (in the written-presentation conditions). In all conditions, the subjects were given written instructions stating that the purpose of the experiment was to study the reactions of people to trial testimony, explaining that they would hear (or read) a segment of testimony from an actual trial, and briefly outlining the details of the lawsuit and the major issues to be decided.

The stimulus case involved a collision between an automobile and an ambulance. The patient in the ambulance, already critically ill and en route to the hospital, died shortly after the accident. Subjects were instructed that the patient's family was suing the defendants (the ambulance company, its employees, and the driver of the automobile) to recover damages for the patient's death. The witness was a friend and a neighbor of the patient who had been in the ambulance at the time of the collision. The lawyer in the stimulus testimony was said to be representing some of the defendants in the case. The substance of the witness' testimony described the events taking place before, during, and after the collision. The major legal points included in the testimony were statements by the

witness that the victim had been alive and conscious just prior to the accident and that the ambulance's siren was not in use at the time of the accident.

After receiving this information subjects heard or read the testimony. As soon as the testimony was finished, the subjects completed a questionnaire asking for their reactions to the case and to the individuals involved.

Dependent Measures

The major dependent variables in the study were questions asking subjects for their impressions of the witness on a variety of dimensions and questions asking for subjects' beliefs concerning the proper disposition of the case. Subjects rated the witness on a series of 11-point semantic differential-type rating scales with the endpoints: powerful–powerless, competent–incompetent, masculine–feminine, trustworthy–not trustworthy, likeable–unlikeable, strong–weak, intelligent–not intelligent, and active–passive. Subjects also used 11-point scales to rate how much they believed the witness, how convincing the witness was, how sympathetic they felt toward the witness, how similar the witness was to themselves, and how qualified they felt the witness was to testify. Additional questions asked how responsible and how negligent the defendants were for the victim's death and how much the defendants should pay the plaintiffs in damages ($0–$50,000).[4]

RESULTS

Initial Analyses

To identify the dimensions underlying subjects' ratings of the witnesses, a principal components factor analysis was performed on the within-cells correlation matrix of the scales relating to the witness. This analysis yielded three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, accounting for 57.4% of the standardized variance. These three factors were varimax rotated, and factor scores were computed for use in the analyses of variance reported below. The first of these factors, which appears to reflect subjects' specific perceptions of the witness' *credibility* in court, shows high loadings for the scale asking how much the subject believed the witness (loading = .91) and for judgments of the witness as convincing (.82), trustworthy (.74), and competent (.63). The second factor seems to reflect subjects' perceptions of the witness' *attractiveness*: scales loading highly on this factor pertained to judgments of the witness as strong (.73), active (.72), likeable (.61), intelligent (.69), and powerful (.61). The third factor, which we label "*masculine–feminine*," showed high loadings only for the scale with these endpoints (.90).

Perceptions of Witness

Mean scores on each factor described above are shown in Table 2 as a function of speech style, mode of presentation, sex of witness, and sex of subject.[5] Least-squares analyses of variance were performed on each set of data separately as a function of these variables.

[4] A number of additional items were included in the questionnaire. Since these items were not relevant to the evaluation of the witness, they are not considered here.

[5] To present more clearly the results of the analyses, all factor score means have been multiplied by 10.

TABLE 2

MEAN JUDGMENTS OF WITNESS AND DAMAGES ALLOCATED AS A FUNCTION OF EXPERIMENTAL VARIABLES

	Male witness		Female witness	
	Powerful style	Powerless style	Powerful style	Powerless style
Credibility				
Taped presentation				
Male subjects	4.37 (12)	−2.01 (10)	−.27 (12)	−2.48 (12)
Female subjects	3.32 (13)	−1.45 (12)	4.23 (11)	−5.95 (14)
Transcribed presentation				
Male subjects	4.92 (7)	−2.69 (7)	−.73 (7)	−2.84 (6)
Female subjects	1.66 (8)	4.07 (6)	6.94 (7)	−8.50 (8)
Attractiveness				
Taped presentation				
Male subjects	−3.11	−8.14	7.44	−4.34
Female subjects	5.11	−5.94	8.67	1.29
Transcribed presentation				
Male subjects	4.72	−.55	1.16	−6.67
Female subjects	5.69	−4.26	−1.73	−4.02
Masculine–feminine				
Taped presentation				
Male subjects	13.67	9.24	−11.39	−9.08
Female subjects	20.39	10.27	−13.43	−15.37
Transcribed presentation				
Male subjects	12.16	7.19	−11.67	−10.99
Female subjects	8.17	10.45	−9.51	−10.68
Damages index				
Taped presentation				
Male subjects	2.25	1.70	2.42	2.00
Female subjects	2.15	1.83	2.27	2.00
Transcribed presentation				
Male subjects	2.00	2.57	2.14	1.67
Female subjects	2.00	2.00	2.14	1.75

Note. Higher values indicate greater credibility or attractiveness, ratings toward masculine endpoint, or higher damages recommended. Cell frequencies are given in parentheses.

Credibility. Analyses of credibility scores yielded a significant main effect of speech style, $F(1,136) = 13.28$, $p < .01$, and an interaction of speech style, sex of witness, and sex of subject, $F(1,136) = 5.05$, $p < .05$. As expected, powerful speakers were perceived as more credible ($M = 2.99$) than were powerless speakers ($M = -3.07$); however, this difference was greater when the subject and witness were of the same sex (4.92 vs −4.88) than when they were of the opposite sex (1.20 vs −1.11). No other effects were significant on this dependent variable.

Attractiveness. Analyses of perceptions of the witness' attractiveness yielded a significant main effect of speech style, $F(1,136) = 23.02, p < .01$; powerful speakers were judged more attractive ($M = 3.75$) than were powerless speakers ($M = -3.84$). No other effects involving speech style were reliable ($p > .10$). However, the interaction of mode of presentation with sex of witness was significant, $F(1,136) = 9.86, p < .01$. The female witness was perceived as significantly more attractive than the male witness when the testimony was taped [$M = 3.07$ and -2.63 for male and female witnesses, respectively, $F(1,136) = 7.80, p < .01$], but the female witness was perceived as slightly less attractive than male witnesses when the testimony was transcribed [$M = -2.72$ and 1.76, respectively, $F(1,136) = 2.81, p < .10$].

Masculinity–femininity. Analyses of masculinity–femininity scores yielded only a significant main effect of sex of the witness, $F(1,136) = 214.03$, $p < .01$; subjects rated the male witness as more masculine ($M = 12.11$) than the female witness ($M = -11.79$). In view of previous identification of powerless-style features with female speech (Lakoff, 1973, 1975), the absence of any significant effects involving speech style is noteworthy.

Influence of the Speech

Analyses of beliefs about the defendants' responsibility for the accident and negligence yielded no significant effects; subjects in all conditions felt that the defendant had been somewhat responsible ($M = 6.80$) and negligent ($M = 7.51$). A third item asked subjects to indicate the damages they felt should be paid to the plaintiffs by indicating a dollar amount between \$0 and \$50,000. The majority (64%) of responses to this item fell within three very restricted portions of the stated range: 10% of the subjects recommended no damages, 38% recommended \$20,000 to \$30,000 in damages, and 16% recommended the maximum damages of \$50,000. To correct for this discontinuity of the response distribution, a *damages index* was constructed by coding the response "\$0" as "1," the responses "\$1–\$49,000" as "2," and the response "\$50,000" as "3." Means of this index are shown in Table 2 as a function of experimental variables. Analysis of variance of the index (cf. Harris, 1975, pp. 225–226) yielded a significant main effect of speech style, $F(1,136) = 12.18$, $p < .01$, and significant interactions of (a) speech style and mode of presentation, $F(1,136) = 4.23$, $p < .05$, (b) mode of presentation and sex of witness, $F(1,136) = 6.52$, $p < .05$, and (c) speech style, mode of presentation, and sex of witness, $F(1,136) = 6.53, p < .05$. This latter interaction may be attributable to the fact that when the testimony was taped, subjects recommended higher damages if the witness' speech style was powerful than if it was powerless, regardless of the sex of the witness. However,

when the testimony was transcribed, this difference occurred only if the witness was female; when the witness was male, the damages awarded were nonsignificantly greater in the powerless condition ($M = 2.31$) than in the powerful condition ($M = 2.00$), $F(1,136) = 3.13, p < .10$. Alternatively, this interaction may be described as showing a sex of witness × mode of presentation interaction within the powerless conditions, $F(1,136) = 13.86$, $p < .01$, but not within the powerful conditions, $F < 1.0$. Possible interpretations of this interaction are discussed below.

DISCUSSION

The powerful–powerless speech style manipulation affected not only subjects' perceptions of the speaker's credibility and attractiveness but also their acceptance of the information contained in the speaker's testimony. However, certain of these effects were rather complex. Although our interpretation of these effects must be treated as speculative, it suggests some possible relations between speech style variables and traditional concerns in person perception to be pursued in future research.

The effects of the powerful–powerless style variable on perceptions of the speaker's credibility might be explained in terms of each style's effects on attributions concerning the speaker's own beliefs about the information in the testimony. Kelley (1972, pp. 16–17) suggests that a major feature of credibility is the attribution that the communicator holds veridical beliefs about the issues he or she addresses. The use of the powerless style may undermine this attribution if listeners interpret the hesitations and hedges as suggesting that even the communicator lacks confidence in the statements he or she makes. The more definite powerful style, in contrast, may lead to the attribution that the communicator does indeed believe the statements to be true.

A modification of the above explanation is suggested by the finding that the effect of speech style on perceived credibility was greater when the witness and the subject were of the same sex than when they were of the opposite sex. Moscovici (1976, p. 110) notes that the elements of any style can have meaning only in relation to shared understandings between the speaker and the recipient. Perhaps listeners felt less confident about attributing the speaker's speech style to his or her level of certainty when the speaker was not of the same sex and when the listeners could not use their own speech behavior as a referent. The fact that this pattern of effects was not observed on any of the other dependent variables suggests that the effects of the style manipulation on such variables as attractiveness of the speaker may not be mediated by these attributional processes.

Two possible mediators of the style effects on perceptions of the speaker's attractiveness were mentioned earlier. The use of the powerless style might increase the costs associated with listening to the speech

and lead to less liking for the cost-producing speaker. Alternatively, the use of one style or the other might serve as a marker of the speaker's status and provoke possible biases favoring high-status speakers. The present data do not favor one of these potential explanations over the other.

The female speaker was seen as more attractive than the male speaker in the oral-presentation conditions while the male speaker was seen as more attractive than the female in the written-presentation conditions. If it is assumed that there is a general stereotypic bias against female communicators (cf. Mischel, 1974), this bias might operate to favor the male speaker in the written presentation conditions, where subjects have fewer direct cues to infer attractiveness. In the oral-presentation conditions, the idiosyncratic voice qualities of the speakers may provide additional information that permits subjects to respond less according to their stereotypes. Insko and Schopler (1972, p. 226) also suggest that stereotypes are used most in situations where there is little information about the target.

There was no evidence that style effects on the person perception measures were restricted to the oral-presentation conditions. This finding indicates that the style features present in the written mode were sufficient to produce differences in perceptions of the witness and that the style features unique to the oral mode did not have any effects over and above those produced by features present in both modes of presentation. It is also noteworthy that no style effects were observed on the masculinity–femininity index; apparently the subjects did not consider the use of one style or the other as relevant to this person perception dimension. These two findings demonstrate the generality of the effects of the style variable on person perception. The style effects are not restricted to one mode of presentation nor can they be accounted for simply by suggesting that particular styles are inappropriate for one sex or the other.

Subjects' responses to the damages index revealed that the use of a powerful or powerless style can affect acceptance of the speech. However, these effects do not seem to be mediated by the perceived credibility of the witness. For example, the effect of style on damages awarded, unlike its effect on credibility judgments, was not greater when speaker and listener were of the same sex than when they were of the opposite sex. Nor was there any significant within-cells correlation between the damages and credibility indexes ($r = -.01$).

The effects that were observed on the damages index were rather complex. A sex of witness $\times$ mode of presentation interaction was observed within the powerless-style conditions but not within the powerful-style conditions. In the powerless-style conditions subjects appeared to accept the testimony of the male witness more than the testimony of the female

witness when the written mode was used, and they appeared to accept the testimony of the female witness more than the testimony of the male witness when the oral mode was used. Thus, in the powerless-style conditions, the damages index showed an effect similar to that observed on the attractiveness index. In the powerless-style conditions there was less similarity in the effects observed on the two measures; no such interaction is apparent on the damages index in this condition. Perhaps the powerful style, with its straightforward communication of information, leads to acceptance of the information on such bases as its internal consistency, whereas the powerless style, with its more complex and perhaps more personalized structure, may prompt listeners to consider source characteristics relatively more in deciding whether to accept the information. While this interpretation is provocative, it is nevertheless noteworthy that the generally more favorable reaction to the powerful style is also evident in the influence of the speech: In all but one combination of the sex of witness and mode of presentation, the powerful speech was more persuasive than the powerless speech.

The different patterns of effects observed on the credibility, attractiveness, and damages indices suggest that there may be several different psychological processes involved in the style effects found here. Only additional research can determine whether the tentative, highly speculative explanations offered here are accurate. More generally, the present experiment emphasizes the need for additional studies of the effects of style variables on impression formation, person perception, and persuasion—especially studies on such "subtle" style variables as that considered here. The approach used in this study, combining sociolinguistic field observation (to identify forms of linguistic variation which actually occur in a given context) with subsequent experimental manipulation and assessment (to determine the effects of such variation), may be fruitful in this effort.

The present results also suggest a need to expand the range of variables considered in studies of the social psychology of the law. Previous studies in this area have concentrated on structural and substantive variables, while controlling at constant levels stylistic variables (cf., Davis, Kerr, Atkins, Holt, & Meek, 1975; Doob, 1976; Lind, Thibaut, & Walker, 1976; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). The present study indicates that stylistic factors may affect court judgments and suggests that the understanding of the social psychology of the law would benefit from a consideration of such factors.

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