

How the Powerful Change Their Speech

December 16, 2014

The Wall Street Journal:

Accents often signal social status, but it turns out that your voice indicates status pretty well all by itself.

Researchers from San Diego State and Columbia Universities have found that the voices of people put into more powerful roles changed in consistent—and somewhat surprising—ways by becoming higher and more monotonous, while varying more in loudness.

To investigate the role of voice in hierarchy, the scientists designed two experiments. In the first, they recorded 161 college students reading a brief text routinely used to assess speaking skills.

Then the students were randomly assigned to a high or low rank in a negotiation exercise in which each was told something in keeping with this status. In the high-rank condition, for instance, some were told “you have valuable inside information,” while in the low-rank group some were asked to think of a past situation in which they lacked power.

Read the whole story: [*The Wall Street Journal*](#)