

# This is what powerful people sound like

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## ***CBS News:***

What do you think of when you conjure the sound of a powerful voice? Something deep, loud, booming, most likely. According to a recent study in the journal *Psychological Science*, the sounds of power is actually in the details — a particular modulation of pitch and volume that lets even strangers know who's in charge.

Researchers at San Diego State University had participants role-play scenarios in which they felt powerful or subordinate, then read a passage of text into a recorder. When the scientists compared the recordings to baseline measurements of the participants' voices before the role-play exercise, they found that those placed in the high-rank condition stood out in three ways. They had higher pitch, lower pitch variability and high variability in loudness.

What's more, when a new set of volunteers came in and listened to all the tapes, they could reliably determine which speakers were in a position of power and which were not.

“They weren't even told that the speakers were in any kind of power role-play,” said Sei Jin Ko, one of the authors of the paper. “We had them judge the kinds of high/low power behavior these speakers are likely to engage in — for instance, ‘How likely is it that this person is in a position to reward others?’ versus ‘How good at following instructions would this person be?’ The perceivers were able to predict the speaker's power level.”

Read the whole story: [\*CBS News\*](#)