Nonverbal Behavior, Gender, and Influence

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Participants viewed a videotape of either a male or female confederate delivering a persuasive message using a high task, social, submissive, or dominant nonverbal style. Participants were influenced more after viewing the social and task styles than the dominant or submissive styles. Participants liked task and social confederates more than dominant confederates and considered submissive confederates to be less competent than the other 3 styles. Although both likableness and competence were predictive of influence, likableness was a more important determinant of influence for female than male speakers when the audience was male. Consequently, with a male audience, women exhibiting a task style were less influential and likable than men exhibiting that style. Men were not more influential than women when displaying dominance.

Gender differences in influenceability and power have been linked to the lower status of women in our culture (Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980; Meeker & Weitzen-O'Neill, 1985). Some researchers have indicated that, because of their higher status, displays of dominance by men are more effective at inducing influence than such displays by women, particularly with a male audience (Driskell, Olmstead, & Salas, 1993; Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Henley & Harmon, 1985; Keating, 1985; Lee & Ofshe, 1981; Petty & Lee, 1975; Rosen & Jerdee, 1973). Presumably, dominance is tolerated and even desired in men whereas submissiveness is preferred in women because these gender differences are consistent with traditional sex roles; moreover, because higher status individuals have more legitimacy as group leaders, dominance in women should be particularly ineffective with a male audience. However, research has not tested whether dominance is actually a more effective influence strategy for male influence agents than female agents, particularly with a male audience.

Some researchers have provided women with leadership training or increased knowledge of the group task to help them overcome women's status disadvantage (Brown, Dovidio, & Ellyson, 1990; Locke & Hall, 1976; Piliavin & Martin, 1978). Although women exhibit more confidence and appear competent and powerful as a result (see Berger, Webster, Ridgeway, & Rosenholtz, 1986), these strategies can actually cause men to like women less and to be less influenced by them (see Carli, 1990). Previous research has not determined how women could exert influence over a male audience in a nonthreatening manner while still conveying a high degree of competence, nor has previous research established that being likable is a more important determinant of influence for women than men.

The present study addresses three questions. First, is a dominant nonverbal style a more effective influence strategy for men than women, particularly with a male audience? Second, are women more influential with men when their nonverbal style combines competence with warmth than when they are merely competent? Finally, is the relation between influence and perceived competence and likableness different for male and female influence agents?

Gender as a Diffuse Status Characteristic

In task-oriented groups, expectations about a group member's future performance can be inferred indirectly from diffuse status characteristics—stable characteristics, such as race or gender, that are associated with status attainment outside the group—and from status cues—behaviors that are associated with having high or low status (Berger, Fiske, Norman, & Zelditch, 1977). Performance expectations are often self-fulfilling because those with high diffuse status are given more opportunity to talk and are perceived as making better contributions than low-status individuals even when they do not.
For example, in interactions between men and women, regardless of performance, group members expect men to perform better than women (Lockheed & Hall, 1976; Meeker & Weitzel-O’Neill, 1985) and challenge women more often (Altmeyer & Jones, 1974), and women evaluate themselves more negatively than do men (Carli, 1991) and conform more often to group pressure (Eagly & Carli, 1981; Pugh & Wahrman, 1985).

Status Cues for Dominance and Competence

Expectations about future performance can be inferred from status cues, in addition to diffuse status information (Berger et al., 1986). A variety of status cues have been identified in the literature, including nonverbal and paraverbal behaviors (Carli, 1991). For example, high-status individuals speak louder (Ridgeway et al., 1985) and more rapidly than low-status individuals (Sorrentino & Boutillier, 1975) and are more likely to point (Berger et al., 1977; Henley, 1977; Leffler, Gillespie, & Conaty, 1982) and maintain a relatively high amount of eye contact while speaking, compared with that shown while listening (Dovidio, Ellyson, Keating, Heltman, & Brown, 1988).

In fact, research linking status attainment to status cues has referred to two types of cues—those that convey varying degrees of competence (Berger et al., 1986; Ellyson, Dovidio, & Corson, 1981) and those that convey dominance or submissiveness (Berger et al., 1986; Mazur, 1985). Unfortunately, researchers have not consistently delineated dominance and competence (see Harper, 1985; Ridgeway, 1987). For example, Mehrabian (1980) defined dominance as high status and, in fact, used the two terms interchangeably. Other researchers do not specifically define dominance but do imply that dominance is associated with competence and status (see Lee & Ofshe, 1981). Research, however, indicates that cues that convey competence do not convey dominance and vice versa: behaviors judged to be dominant are also judged to be controlling and threatening and submissive behaviors are judged to be anxious and fearful (Carli, Martin, Leatham, Lyons, & Tse, 1993; Yukl & Falbo, 1993). Moreover, dominant behavior has been repeatedly defined as threatening, controlling, stress-inducing, and agonistic, whereas submissive behavior (the opposite of dominance) has been defined as helpless, appeasing, and fearful (Berger et al., 1986; Chase, 1980; Ellyson & Dovidio, 1985; Harper, 1985; Henley, 1977; Keating, 1985; Keating et al., 1981; Mazur, 1985; Mazur et al., 1980; Omank, 1980; Ridgeway & Diekema, 1989; Rosen & Jerdee, 1973; Sluckin & Smith, 1977; Strayer & Strayer, 1980). In distinguishing dominance and competence, Ridgeway (1987) noted that competent behavior conveys only expertise and no desire to influence, control, or threaten. Therefore, individuals may be perceived as high in status when exhibiting signs of dominance or competence and perceived as low in status when exhibiting submissiveness or relative incompetence.¹

A dominant nonverbal style is characterized by a complex of behaviors including intrusive hand gestures (i.e., pointing), a loud angry voice, maintaining constant eye contact while speaking, a tense posture, a backward body lean, and a tense facial expression with lowered brows (Berger et al., 1986; Bugenthal & Love, 1975; Carli et al., 1993; Ellyson & Dovidio, 1985; Exline, 1972; Keating, 1985; Keating et al., 1981; Ridgeway, 1987).² The submissive style includes nervous hand gestures (i.e., alternately clasped and shaking), a soft tremulous voice, little eye contact, a slumped posture, and verbal stumbles and hesitations (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1974; Keating, 1985; Mazur, 1985; Ridgeway, 1987).³ The high-task or competent style includes a rapid rate
of speech, upright posture, moderately high eye contact while speaking, few vocal hesitations or stumbles, and calm restrained hand gestures. The incompetent or low-task style includes slow speech, slumped posture, little eye contact, a soft voice, and many hesitations and stumbles (Berger et al., 1986; Carli et al., 1993; Ellyson, Dovidio, & Corson, 1981; Lee & Ofshe, 1981; Miller, Maruyama, Beaber, & Valone, 1976; Ridgeway, 1987).

Gender, Nonverbal Behavior, and Influence

The power to influence others is clearly a function of the perceived expertise of influence agents, and perceived expertise is itself a function of status cues (Hass, 1981). Individuals exhibiting submissive or low-task style nonverbal behaviors are actually perceived quite similarly; they are considered to be relatively incompetent and are, consequently, less influential than individuals exhibiting a high-task or competent style (Ridgeway, 1987). Although use of dominant nonverbal behaviors has been considered a method of status attainment in groups, presumably because dominant behavior conveys authority and evokes deference in others (Ellyson & Dovidio, 1985; Lee & Ofshe, 1981; Mazur, 1985; Petty & Lee, 1975; Rosen & Jerdee, 1973), nonverbal displays of dominance have not been found to be more effective at inducing persuasion than submissive displays (Driskell et al., 1993; Ridgeway, 1987). Moreover, verbal disagreement is associated with being less likable (Ridgeway & Diekema, 1989) and influential, particularly for female speakers (Carli, 1989). However, past research has not tested whether the effectiveness of the dominant style is affected by the gender of the speaker and the audience. Several researchers have suggested that because of their lower status, dominant women should be less influential than dominant men, especially with a male audience (Henley & Harmon, 1985; Keating, 1985; Lee & Ofshe, 1981; Petty & Lee, 1975; Rosen & Jerdee, 1973). For a woman, exhibiting dominance to men would constitute a clear violation of gender and status norms.

For women, exhibiting competence and avoiding dominant behaviors may not be enough to overcome the disadvantage of low diffuse status (Lockheed & Hall, 1976; Meeker & Weitzel-O’Neill, 1985). It is unlikely that they would be as influential as men, even when exhibiting the same degree of competence and the same status cues. High-status group members may resist influence attempts by competent but lower status individuals, perceiving such attempts as illegitimate ploys to gain status (Meeker & Weitzel-O’Neill, 1985) and may denigrate low-status individuals who exhibit high-status cues (Butler & Geis, 1990; Cohen, 1972; Katz & Cohen, 1962). Women, in particular, are actually more likable and influential with men when exhibiting uncertain and incompetent verbal behaviors than highly competent and confident behaviors (Carli, 1990; Wiley & Eskilson, 1985).

If, for women, competence is not enough, what else may be necessary to influence men? One possibility would be for women to exhibit a nonverbal style that combines competence with social cues. Such a style might be perceived as both likable and competent and thereby reduce men’s resistance to female influence. The complex of nonverbal behaviors that have been linked to a social nonverbal style—communicating friendliness and affiliation—including a relaxed, forward-leaning (i.e., oriented toward the listener) body, a smiling face, moderately high but not constant eye contact, and nonintrusive gestures (Carli et al., 1993; Halberstadt & Saitta, 1987; Hall, 1987; Mehrabian, 1968a). These behaviors are, in fact, more typical of women than men (Hall, 1984, 1987; Hall & Halberstadt, 1986; Miller, Dovidio, & Keating, 1984). Several researchers have suggested that women may exhibit a social communication style in order to overcome their status disadvantage (Kramarae, 1981; Meeker & Weitzel-O’Neill, 1985), and social verbal behaviors, such as expressing agreement with others and encouraging or complimenting them, have already been found to increase both liking and influence for both men and women in the absence of competence cues (Carli, 1989; Godfrey, Jones, & Lord, 1986). Use of a social nonverbal style may be of particular importance for women displaying competence cues.

The purpose of the present study was to examine the effects of gender and nonverbal style on social influence. Because previous research has revealed that submissive and low-task nonverbal styles are perceived quite similarly (see Ridgeway, 1987), the low-task style was not included in this study. Instead, male and female confederates were videotaped presenting a persuasive message using high-task, dominant, submissive, and social nonverbal behaviors. Also, to identify the effects of dominant and social cues independent of competence, dominant and social confederates displayed competence cues comparable to those displayed by high-task confederates. Any differences between the high-task and dominant or social style could then be attributed to dominance or social cues and not to different levels of competence.

In this study, we expected that individuals exhibiting dominant and submissive nonverbal behaviors would be less well liked than those exhibiting high-task nonverbal behaviors whereas those exhibiting social behaviors would be perceived as most likable. Likableness should be particularly important for female influence agents presenting to a male audience because displays of competence among these women may not be enough for them to overcome their relatively low status and may, in addition, threaten male status.

Hypothesis 1

With a male audience, women exhibiting a task style were expected to be less likable and more threatening than men exhibiting that same style, and women exhibiting a dominant style were expected to be less likable and more threatening than men exhibiting that style.

Hypothesis 2

Because influence was expected to be a function of both the perceived competence and likableness of the influence agent, agents were expected to be more influential when using a task

\footnote{Ridgeway (1987) considered a forward lean to reflect dominance when combined with pointing, a loud voice, a threatening manner, and other dominance cues; in fact, in the absence of other behavioral cues, a forward-leaning body conveys friendliness and sociability (Carli et al., 1993; Hall, 1987; Mehrabian, 1968a; Patterson, 1982).}
or social style than when using a submissive or dominant style. In addition, men were expected to be influenced more by men in the high-task and dominant conditions than by women in those same conditions, respectively. With a male audience, female speakers were expected to be more influential when using a social than task style.

Hypothesis 3

Both competence and likableness were expected to predict influence, but with a male audience, likableness was expected to be a more important determinant of influence for female than male speakers.

Method

Pretest of Topic

A pretest questionnaire was administered to 95 male and 114 female undergraduates enrolled in introductory level psychology courses. The questionnaire contained a list of 30 issues, including “Laws should be passed prohibiting the possession of handguns in this state (Massachusetts),” “There should be a constitutional amendment against burning the American flag,” “In the selection of courses, no preference should be given to majors,” and “The drinking age should be lowered to 18 in this state.” Participants rated each of these issues, indicating their agreement with each item on a scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 10 (completely agree), their interest in each item on a scale ranging from 1 (no interest) to 10 (extremely high interest), and their knowledge of each item on a scale ranging from 1 (no knowledge) to 10 (extremely high knowledge).

Because gender differences in social influence can be affected by topics that favor the interests or knowledge of one gender over the other (Eagly & Carli, 1981; Feldman-Summers, Montano, Kasprzyk, & Wagner, 1980), the pretest was conducted to select a gender-neutral topic, revealing no sex differences in opinion, interest, or knowledge. In addition, to present an identical persuasive message to all participants, only a topic that revealed little variability in opinion could be selected. The topic that satisfied all these conditions and was chosen for use in this study was “Students should only pay for the meals that they eat.”

At the time that this study was being conducted, the student meal plan required students to pay for all meals prepared by the college cafeteria, whether they ate the meals or not. The pretest revealed that students were overwhelmingly in favor of changing the meal plan so that they would pay only for the meals that they ate (M = 8.96 for women and 8.89 for men, p > .25). The pretest also revealed that students considered themselves quite interested (M = 6.89 for women and 8.38 for men, p > .25) and knowledgeable (M = 7.39 for women and 7.45 for men, p > .25) concerning the topic.

Participants

A sample of 80 men and 80 women was recruited from introductory psychology classes to participate in the study.

Procedure

The procedure was a modification of that used by Ridgeway (1987). Participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to investigate how first impressions affect subsequent group interactions. They were told that later in the semester they would be participating with other students in a group discussion of campus issues. First, however, they would be providing their impressions of a student who had been selected to be a member of their group. To do this, they would be viewing a videotape of this other student presenting his or her opinion on a current campus issue.

Each participant viewed a videotape of one of four confederates (two men and two women) presenting a persuasive message to a second partly visible student, actually another confederate, whose gender could not be identified. The message was written to favor the current meal plan and to contradict participants’ views that students should only pay for the meals that they eat. Some of the arguments included in the message were as follows: new equipment would have to be purchased to keep track of the food that each student eats, which would increase costs; additional time would be required to record the quantity and composition of each student’s meal; the additional time would result in long lines to enter the cafeteria and to pay for meals; because students would choose to have some meals off campus or to eat only part of a meal, the food service department would not be able to determine in advance how much of each type of food to prepare; food would be wasted; selections would have to be limited to reduce waste; students would not be able to have as many helpings of particular foods as they desire; and room and board costs would go up to pay for the new system.

Each confederate was taped presenting the message using each of four nonverbal styles: dominant, submissive, social, or task. The message was identical in all other respects. Each participant viewed one of the videotaped versions of the message. After viewing the tapes, each participant indicated his or her opinion on the topic: “Students should pay only for the meals that they eat” on a scale with endpoints 1 (disagree completely) and 9 (agree completely), with lower scores reflecting greater attitude change. They also rated how well they could work with the speaker on the tape, with endpoints 1 (not at all) and 9 (very well), and rated the speaker on 9-point adjective scales indicating the extent to which the speaker was likable, trustworthy, competent, persuasive, powerful, knowledgeable, confident, condescending, influential, anxious, intelligent, intimidating, threatening, group-oriented, friendly, and believable with a 9 reflecting the strongest endorsement of each characteristic. Finally, participants gave their estimates of the speaker’s grade point average and guessed whether the second person on the tape, to whom the speaker was talking, was a man or a woman. This last question was included to determine whether participants hold stereotypes about the nonverbal styles that are used when addressing men or women.

Pretest of the Confederates’ Behavior on the Videotapes

The nonverbal styles used by the confederates were based on past research on perceptions of nonverbal behavior and were modeled after the styles used by Ridgeway (1987). While using the dominant style, confederates spoke in a loud voice, used an angry tone, pointed intrusively at the other person on the tape, maintained almost constant eye contact with the other person, and had a stern facial expression. The submissive style included a soft, pleading voice with many hesitations and stumbles, a slumped posture, nervous hand gestures, and an averted
and 9 (not intrusive). Five of these items—pleading tone of voice, an angry tone of voice, a relaxed posture, an upright posture, and intrusive pointing—were recoded so that higher scores reflected greater amounts of each variable.

One-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) with nonverbal style as the independent variable were performed on the ratings of the videotapes.6

Note. Ratings were made on 9-point scales, with 9 indicating the highest amount of each behavior. Means having different subscripts differ with significance levels ranging from \(p < .05\) to \(p < .001\).

A group of 32 raters each viewed a version of the tapes and rated each actor’s nonverbal behaviors including the loudness of the voice, the tone of the voice, with endpoints 1 (soft) and 9 (loud); the rate of speech, with endpoints 1 (slow) and 9 (fast); the number of hesitations, with endpoints 1 (none) and 9 (many); the number of verbal stumbles, with endpoints 1 (none) and 9 (many); the amount of eye contact with the other person on the tape, with endpoints 1 (none) and 9 (constant); the facial expression, with endpoints 1 (relaxed) and 9 (nervous); the overall posture, with endpoints 1 (relaxed) and 9 (stiff); the leaning body posture, with endpoints 1 (no body lean) and 9 (leaning body posture); and the gestures, with endpoints 1 (nervous) and 9 (calm), and 1 (intrusive) and 9 (not intrusive).
Planned contrasts were conducted on the means (see Table 1) using the modified Bonferroni test (Hays, 1988; Keppel, 1982). This procedure takes into account the number of degrees of freedom between groups (i.e., the numerator degrees of freedom in ANOVAs) and is a more powerful procedure than the unmodified Bonferroni. Significance levels (i.e., the numerator degrees of freedom in ANOVAs) and is a more powerful procedure than the unmodified Bonferroni test (Hays, 1988; Keppel, 1982). This procedure

\[ F(9, 144) = 21.92, p < .001. \]

\[ F(3, 144) = 69.90, p < .001. \]

\[ F(3, 144) = 24.97, p < .001. \]

\[ F(3, 144) = 297.24, p < .001. \]

\[ F(3, 144) = 100.19, p < .001. \]

\[ F(3, 144) = 78.51, p < .001. \]

Table 1 presents the ratings of the four nonverbal styles. Task speakers’ voices were moderately firm and loud, displaying little pleading or anger. Task speakers spoke relatively rapidly, with few hesitations or stumbles, and had a moderately neutral facial expression, somewhat relaxed upright posture, moderately high eye contact, and calm, moderately intrusive hand gestures. Dominant speakers were rated as similar to task speakers with the following exceptions. Their voices were rated as louder, firmer, and angrier. They maintained the highest amount of eye contact, had a moderately stern and threatening facial expression, maintained the highest amount of eye contact, had a moderately stern and threatening facial expression, and displayed intrusively at the other confederate. Social speakers were rated as similar to the task speaker except they had a somewhat more pleasing tone of voice, a friendlier facial expression, and a more forward-leaning and slightly slump posture, and moderately calm hand gestures. Submissive speakers had the softest, shakiest, and slowest voice, with some hesitations and stumbles. Compared with task speakers, they sounded more pleasing, had a slightly stiff, backward-leaning body, and pointed intrusively at the other confederate. Social speakers were rated as similar to the task speaker except they had a somewhat more pleasing tone of voice, a friendlier facial expression, and a more forward-leaning and slightly slump posture, and moderately calm hand gestures. Submissive speakers had the softest, shakiest, and slowest voice, with some hesitations and stumbles. Compared with task speakers, they sounded more pleasing, had a facial expression that conveyed no threat and minimal friendliness, and displayed a stiff, slumped posture, nervous hand gestures, and averted eyes.

Results

In order to simplify analysis of ratings of the speaker, a principal-components factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted on the data. Five factors were extracted. Individual variables were combined based on the size of their factor loadings; variables were assigned to factors for which they had the highest loadings. The factors and their alpha reliabilities were as follows: likableness included ratings of how likable, friendly, group-oriented, and trustworthy speakers were and how much participants would like working with the speaker (\( \alpha = .81 \)); competence included how competent, intelligent, and knowledgeable speakers were (\( \alpha = .78 \)); power included how powerful, persuasive, and influential speakers were (\( \alpha = .88 \)); threat included how threatening, condescending, and intimidating speakers were (\( \alpha = .85 \)); and anxiety included ratings of how anxious a speaker was and reversed ratings of how confident speakers were (\( \alpha = .72 \)).

A 2 (gender of participant) \( \times \) 2 (gender of speaker) \( \times \) 4 (nonverbal style) ANOVA was conducted on the opinion measure, each of the combined ratings of the speaker, and participants’ estimates of the speakers’ grade point averages and believability. All significant results from the ANOVAs are reported; interactions not predicted by the hypotheses were further examined with post hoc tests, if needed. In addition, planned contrasts were conducted to test the hypotheses.

### Ratings of the Speaker

No effects were found for how believable the speaker was perceived to be, indicating that participants found each type of nonverbal style equally realistic (\( M = 6.43 \) for social speakers, 5.97 for submissive speakers, 6.70 for dominant speakers, and 6.03 for task speakers).

The means for the main effect of nonverbal style are presented in Table 2. ANOVAs revealed main effects of nonverbal style for how likable, \( F(3, 144) = 21.92, p < .001 \), competent \( F(3, 144) = 21.87, p < .001 \), powerful, \( F(3, 144) = 69.90, p < .001 \), anxious, \( F(3, 144) = 100.19, p < .001 \), and threatening, \( F(3, 144) = 78.51, p < .001 \), speakers were perceived to be.

All reported planned contrasts were conducted using the modified Bonferroni test. They revealed, as expected, that social speakers were liked more than task speakers, \( F(1, 144) = 7.87, p < .01 \), and that task speakers were liked more than submissive and dominant speakers, \( F(1, 144) = 19.59, p < .001 \). In addition, a Tukey test (Myers & Well, 1991) revealed that submissive speakers were liked more than dominant speakers, \( p < .05 \). Planned contrasts revealed that submissive speakers were considered less competent \( F(1, 144) = 63.64, p < .001 \), and more anxious, \( F(1, 144) = 297.24, p < .001 \), than task, social, and dominant speakers. Dominant speakers were rated as more threatening, \( F(1, 144) = 24.97, p < .001 \), and higher in power \( F(1, 144) = 12.02, p < .01 \), than task and social speakers, who, in turn, were rated as more threatening, \( F(1, 44) = 81.35, p < .001 \).
A main effect of gender of participant was obtained for how much participants liked the speakers, $F(3, 144) = 5.92, p < .05$. Planned contrasts revealed that women liked the speakers more than men did ($M = 4.88$ vs. $4.43$). An interaction between nonverbal style and the gender of the participant was obtained for ratings of the speakers' anxiety, $F(3, 144) = 2.61, p = .05$. Tukey tests comparing the means of male and female participants for each nonverbal style revealed no significant differences.\footnote{Inspection of the means suggests that female participants judged social speakers to be somewhat more anxious than did male participants ($M = 4.30$ vs. $3.15$).}

**Tests of Hypothesis 1.** As predicted, a planned contrast revealed that men liked male task speakers more than female task speakers, $t(144) = 2.17, p < .05$, one-tailed. Contrary to prediction, male participants liked dominant male and female speakers equally (see Table 3). No gender-of-speaker effects were found for how much female participants liked task or dominant speakers.

A three-way interaction between nonverbal style, gender of participant, and gender of speaker, $F(3, 144) = 4.03, p < .01$, was revealed for how threatening the speaker was perceived to be. Planned contrasts were conducted on the means. As predicted, men rated female task speakers to be more threatening than male task speakers, $t(144) = 2.63, p < .01$, one-tailed, but contrary to prediction, men did not rate dominant female

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### Table 3

*Opinion and Ratings of Speaker as a Function of Nonverbal Style, Gender of Participant, and Gender of Speaker*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Male speaker</th>
<th>Female speaker</th>
<th>Male speaker</th>
<th>Female speaker</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>SD</td>
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<td><strong>Social style</strong></td>
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<td>6.73</td>
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<td>3.15</td>
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<td><strong>Submissive style</strong></td>
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<td>1.35</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>6.93</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>5.90</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Higher means reflect greater likableness, threat, competence, anxiety, power, or attitude change. Contrasts were conducted comparing the means for male and female speakers separately for male and female participants. For male participants, means with subscripts $a$ and $b$ differ significantly at $p < .05$. For female participants, means with subscripts $c$ and $d$ differ significantly at $p < .05$. 

.001, and powerful than submissive speakers, $F(1, 144) = 145.48, p < .001$. In addition, a speaker's nonverbal style affected participants' estimates of his or her grade point average, $F(3, 144) = 7.16, p < .001$; Tukey tests revealed that submissive speakers were judged to have a lower grade point average than social, task, or dominant speakers, $p < .05$.
speakers to be more threatening than dominant male speakers (see Table 3). In addition, female participants rated male task speakers to be more threatening than female task speakers \( t(144) = 2.74, p < .01 \), one-tailed, but did not rate dominant male speakers to be more threatening than dominant female speakers.

**Opinion Change**

**Test of Hypothesis 2.** The opinion item was recoded so that higher scores would reflect greater attitude change. The analysis of the opinion measure revealed a main effect of nonverbal style, \( F(3, 144) = 3.56, p < .05 \). In support of Hypothesis 2, planned contrasts revealed that speakers using the task and social nonverbal styles were more influential than those using the submissive or dominant styles, \( t(144) = 3.22, p < .01 \), one-tailed (see Table 4). In addition, with a male audience, female speakers using a task style were less influential than male speakers using a task style, \( t(144) = 2.20, p < .05 \), one-tailed (\( M = 3.20 \) vs. 5.50, respectively), and less influential than female speakers using a social style (\( M = 3.20 \) vs. 5.00), \( t(144) = 1.72, p < .05 \), one-tailed (see Table 3). However, contrary to prediction, with a male audience, dominant female speakers were not less influential than dominant male speakers (see Table 3). No effect of gender of speaker was found for how much female participants were influenced by task or dominant speakers.

**Relation of Influence to Competence and Likableness**

**Test of Hypothesis 3.** To examine the relation between opinion change and participants’ perception of the speakers, we performed regression analyses using opinion change as the outcome measure and the combined measures of the speakers’ anxiety, likableness, competence, threat, and power as predictors. We entered all of the predictors simultaneously to test for the unique contribution of each predictor (as suggested by Baron & Kenny, 1986). The analyses were conducted for all the data combined and again separately for male participants with a male speaker, male participants with a female speaker, female participants with a male speaker, and female participants with a female speaker. As can be seen from Table 5, overall, higher levels of competence and likableness were associated with greater influence, and higher levels of threat were marginally associated with reduced influence.

To test whether likableness was a more important predictor of influence with a male audience for female than for male speakers, a planned comparison was conducted on the beta weights for likableness for these two groups. Results supported the hypothesis, \( t(154) = 1.75, p < .05 \), one-tailed. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey procedure revealed that, with a male audience, competence was not a more important predictor for male than female speakers. In addition, Tukeys revealed that with a female audience, there were no gender-of-speaker effects for the importance of either likableness or competence.

**Participants’ Judgment About Sex of Listener**

A chi-square test was conducted to determine whether there was an association between the speakers’ nonverbal styles and participants’ guess as to the sex of the listener. An association was found \( \chi^2(3) = 14.86, p < .01 \); participants were more likely to believe that submissive and dominant speakers were addressing men (79% and 65%, respectively) and that social and task speakers were addressing women (57% and 55%, respectively). In order to assess whether the presumed gender of the listener had an effect on opinion and the ratings of the speaker’s likableness, competence, power, anxiety, or threat, the ANOVAs were repeated including gender of the listener as a covariate. Inclusion of the covariate had no effect on the outcome of the results in any case, indicating that participants’ ratings were based on the speakers’ behaviors and their reactions to the speaker rather than their beliefs about the gender of the listener.

**Raters’ Judgment of the Speakers’ Status**

A group of 32 raters each viewed one version of the tapes and rated it on 10-point scales with endpoints 1 (not at all dominant) to 10 (very dominant) and 1 (very low status) to 10 (very high status). This was done as a manipulation check to establish that the dominant nonverbal style was perceived to be more dominant than the other three styles and that the dominant and high-task styles were perceived to be of higher status than the social and submissive styles. A one-way ANOVA with nonverbal style as the independent variable revealed that both dominance, \( F(3, 28) = 14.11, p < .001 \), and status, \( F(3, 28) = 9.91, p < .001 \), were affected by nonverbal style. As predicted, pairwise modified Bonferroni contrasts revealed that the dominant style was rated to be more dominant than the task style, \( t(28) = 2.18, p < .05 \), one-tailed, the social style \( t(28) = 2.49, p < .01 \), one-tailed, or the submissive style, \( t(28) = 6.39, p < .001 \), one-tailed (\( M = 6.88, 5.13, 4.88, 1.75 \), respectively). Planned contrasts revealed that the dominant style was rated to be higher in status than the social \( t(28) = 2.86, p < .01 \), one-tailed, or submissive styles, \( t(28) = 4.84, p < .001 \), one-tailed; the task style was also rated to be higher in status than either the social, \( t(28) = 2.32, p < .05 \), one-tailed, or submissive styles, \( t(28) = 4.29, p < .001 \), one-tailed, (\( M = 6.63 \) for dominant speakers, 6.25 for task speakers, 4.63 for social speakers, and 3.25 for submissive speakers).

**Discussion**

The results of this study revealed, as predicted, that male participants found women exhibiting a high-task style to be less...
likable, more threatening, and less influential than men exhibiting that same style. Although we had not expected it, female participants were more threatened by a man exhibiting a high-task style than by a woman exhibiting the same style, suggesting that participants are generally threatened by competent opposite-sex speakers more than competent same-sex speakers. However, unlike male participants, women did not like male task speakers less or find them less influential than female speakers. Although both likableness and competence were generally predictive of influence, likableness was a more important predictor of influence with a male audience for female speakers than male speakers, as expected.

Contrary to prediction, dominant women were not perceived as less likable or more threatening than dominant men, nor were they less influential with a male audience. Although participants perceived the dominant style to be more powerful than other nonverbal styles, it was actually no more influential than the submissive style and less influential than the social or high-task styles. Moreover, dominance was as ineffective an influence strategy for men as it was for women. It appears that dominance is undesirable, even when, as in the present study, dominance is combined with competence and the dominance is displayed by men communicating with a female audience.

**Gender, Competence, and Likableness**

The results of the regression analyses demonstrate that both men and women influence agents benefited from using a social style. Speakers exhibiting this style, which conveyed both competence and sociability, were perceived to be friendlier and more likable than other speakers, and they were at least as influential as task speakers. Nevertheless, the results clearly demonstrate that the social style is particularly effective for female speakers. The regression analysis reveals why this is so. With a male audience, likableness is a more important determinant of influence for female speakers than male speakers. For women, being merely competent is not enough. As suggested by Meeker and Weitzel-O’Neill (1985), high-status behavior, such as that shown by high-task agents, may be considered illegitimate when exhibited by a low-status person, such as a woman interacting with a man.

The results of the present study suggest that men are more inclined to like and be influenced by a competent woman when she is also sociable than when she merely competes. A reasonable conclusion, and one consistent with the results of this study, is that women who display high-status behavior are threatening to a male audience unless they also communicate that they have no desire to usurp male status. Previous research suggests that one way that women can do this is be tentative (see Carli, 1990). An alternative method would be the use of a social nonverbal style, which has the added advantage of maintaining the perception that the speaker is highly competent.

Figure 1 depicts the relation of nonverbal behavior to perceived competence and likableness, and influence. In general, nonverbal behavior affects perceived competence and likableness, which, in turn, affect influence. As the ANOVA results reveal, the nonverbal style used by speakers affects how competent and likable they are perceived to be. However, the relation of nonverbal behavior and perceived likableness is mediated by the gender of the participants and the speakers. Specifically, for male participants, the effect of

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**Table 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Anxiety</th>
<th>Likableness</th>
<th>Competence</th>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>Power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.46****</td>
<td>.56****</td>
<td>-.20*</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.71****</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male speakers</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.62**</td>
<td>-.24</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.47*</td>
<td>.77***</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male speakers</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.60**</td>
<td>.64*</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Positive betas reflect a positive association between each characteristic and participants’ agreement with the speakers. Residual degrees of freedom were 154 for the overall regression and 34 for the other regression analyses.

*p ≤ .07. **p ≤ .05. ***p ≤ .01. ****p ≤ .001.
Male Subjects

Relation of nonverbal behavior to perceived competence and likableness, and influence.

Figure 1. Relation of nonverbal behavior to perceived competence and likableness, and influence.

A nonverbal style on perceived likableness depends on the gender of the speaker, as is depicted in the model at the top of Figure 1. Male participants liked male task speakers more than female task speakers. For female participants, likableness is independent of the gender of the speaker, as is depicted in the model at the bottom of Figure 1.

The relation of likableness and competence to influence is also mediated by the gender of the speaker and the gender of the audience. Specifically, the regression analyses reveal that the relation of likableness to influence is affected by the sex of the speaker for male participants. With a male audience, likableness was a more important predictor of influence for female than male speakers (see the model at the top of Figure 1). The effect of likableness on influence is not mediated by the gender of the speaker for female participants (see the model at the bottom of Figure 1).

Past research indicates that women are presumed to be less competent than men. This study suggests that overcoming this obstacle is not enough. Our model suggests that in interactions between men and women, women are allowed a narrower range of acceptable behaviors and are at greater risk of being disliked if they violate status norms. Moreover, because likableness has a greater effect on the influence of women than men, adhering to status norms is of even greater importance to women.

**Dominance and Influence**

Previous research reveals that displays of nonverbal dominance without additional displays of competence do not lead to increased status and influence (Driskell, Olmstead, & Salas, 1993; Ridgeway, 1987). Dominant behavior, conveying threat and power, is, in itself, of little value to a group because it alone does not assist the group in attaining its goal and most likely reduces feelings of group cohesion and cooperation. However, if a dominant group member were also highly competent, other members might benefit from yielding to his or her influence. Given this, it may be assumed that dominant individuals could be influential as long as they convey high levels of competence. The results of the present study indicate that this is not the case. Dominance interferes with influence, even when combined with displays of competence.

Even men, who possess high diffuse status relative to women, have little to gain by displaying dominant nonverbal behavior. In this study, there were no differences in the way dominant men and women were perceived. They were equally disliked and were disliked even more than submissive individuals. Dominant men and women were considered by participants to be equally threatening and were equally ineffective as influence agents. Dominant men, moreover, were not perceived less negatively than dominant women by male participants, who might be expected to find dominance in women to be less acceptable than dominance by men.

Although dominant speakers were generally disliked, they were also seen as more powerful and influential than task and social speakers. In actuality, dominant speakers were less influential than task and social speakers and were no more effective than submissive speakers. Apparently, participants' commonsense notions about what constitutes effective persuasive communications are not entirely correct, at least with regard to the effectiveness of dominant behaviors. This may have occurred because participants were not interacting with the speakers, but viewing them on videotape—the latter being far less emotionally engaging than face-to-face interactions. Similar findings, however, have been reported in research on verbal style in which participants were interacting face to face; in this case, participants deliberately attempting to influence men showed increased disagreements compared with those not attempting to be influential, even though disagreement tended to reduce influence, not increase it (Carli, 1989). It may be that participants generally base their assumptions about what constitutes effective influence on past observations of overt reactions to dominant individuals. Whereas dominance may not evoke deference, as has been previously suggested (see Lee & Ofshe, 1981; Mazur, 1981), it may cause others to go along with the dominant individual, at least on the surface, to say, for example, “Fine, you're right. Let's not discuss it anymore.” Although in such circumstances observers may not be at all privately influenced by the dominant person and may have an opinion even more opposed to his or hers than they had originally, they may publicly go along with him or her to end a disagreeable and unpleasant interaction. Dominance, like coercive power (see French & Raven, 1959; Raven & Kruglanski, 1970), may temporarily yield public agreement, but is not likely to lead to internalized attitude change.

**Status Cues**

Past research has demonstrated that high-status individuals exhibit different verbal and nonverbal behaviors than low-status individuals and that these status cues can be used to make inferences about a person's status. The present research reveals, however, that individuals who display high-status cues are not necessarily more influential than those who display low-status cues. For example,
both dominant and high-task nonverbal behaviors convey power and status, but dominance interferes with rather than enhances influence. Similarly, previous research has revealed that both social and submissive behaviors are displayed more often by low- than high-status individuals (Carli, 1991; Deutsch, 1990), yet our results reveal that social behaviors enhance influence when combined with competence, particularly for women, whereas submissiveness interferes with influence. These effects occur because, as the regression analysis revealed, participants yield in opinion to someone because they feel that he or she is the expert or likable, and these effects appear to be independent of one another.

Some status cues, such as high-task or low-task nonverbal behaviors, may affect influence by increasing or decreasing perceived competence and may be considered competence cues. Others, such as social and dominant nonverbal behaviors, affect influence because they make a speaker more or less likable to others; these may be considered sociability cues. A person who conveys both sociability and competence should be an effective influence agent. In fact, when it comes to social influence, nice and able does it.

References


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NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR, GENDER, AND INFLUENCE