

## Gender, Race, and Speech Style Stereotypes

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Considerable research has shown that people have stereotypical beliefs about the speech and communication style of women and men. There is less research about stereotypes of Black people's speech, and none that jointly or comparably investigates communication stereotypes as a function of both gender and race. In this study, White college students ( $n = 111$ ) rated a fictional character's speech on 36 pairs of words characteristic of communication style (e.g., emotional–unemotional) and also generated dialogue for the character. Targets' race and sex were varied. Results showed that beliefs about speech style were stronger for race than gender. Black speakers, both women and men, were rated as more direct and emotional, and less socially appropriate and playful, than White speakers. The dialogue generated by participants for Black speakers was less grammatical and more profane than for White speakers. Gender effects were consistent with earlier research but suggest a weakening of stereotypes; women's speech was seen as somewhat less direct and more emotional than men's speech. Beliefs about speech and communication style are important because they may function not only to describe "what is" but to prescribe "what should be" in social interaction.

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Power, privilege, and influence are all conveyed and perpetuated through interpersonal communication (Crawford, 1995; Heritage, 1984; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Previous studies indicate that there are gender and racial stereotypes related to communication style (Edelsky, 1976; Kramarae, 1981; Lakoff, 1973; Leonard & Locke, 1993; Ogawa, 1971; Rich, 1974; Siegler & Siegler, 1976; Spender, 1979) and that beliefs about gender-related differences in speech style can affect the way men and women interact (Berryman & Wilcox, 1980).

There are several limitations of research on beliefs about others' communication styles. First, the majority of studies that investigated gender stereotypes in talk were completed in the 1970s. However,

norms for speech style vary over time. For example, Twenge (2001), in a meta-analytic study, showed that self-reported assertiveness for women changed in tandem with changing social roles between 1931 and 1993. It might be expected that beliefs about typical or appropriate speech styles for women and men would have changed accordingly over the past several decades.

Second, there is a paucity of empirical research on beliefs about race and speech. Are Black Americans in general believed to adopt different communication styles than White Americans? If so, are these stereotypical speech styles judged as more or less socially skilled and appropriate than stereotypical White speech styles? Only a few studies (reviewed later) address these questions.

Finally, most researchers on communication stereotypes have investigated the effects of gender *or* race; the simultaneous effects of both have not been examined. Our review of the literature uncovered no studies of both gender and racial speech stereotypes. Examining gender and race separately can be

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problematic. When the sex but not the race of a target is mentioned, participants may attribute a target race of White because of the normativeness of the category White in our culture (Fiske, 1998). Research that specifies only race has a similar problem. Participants may assume a male actor because male is the default value. This “people = male” hypothesis, first proposed by Silveira (1980), has received empirical support (Hamilton, 1991; Merritt & Kok, 1995). For example, in a study by Hamilton (1991), participants spontaneously described a male character by a 3 to 1 margin after reading gender-neutral instructions. Indirect support also comes from studies in which participants overwhelmingly interpreted generic terms (e.g., he, man) as though they referred only to men or boys (Bem & Bem, 1973; Hamilton, 1988; Henley, 1989).

Research on categorization, stereotyping, and linguistic marking also supports these assertions. When an individual deviates from the unmarked (normative) category, the deviation is highlighted linguistically (e.g., Black lawyer, female doctor). When the category is unmarked (e.g., taxpayer), default values are usually assumed (Miller, Taylor, & Buck, 1991; Smith & Zárate, 1992). Thus, results from gender stereotype studies cannot be generalized to people of color, and results from race stereotype studies cannot be generalized to White and minority women. In particular, women of color are marginalized within both categories as the gender category prioritizes White women and the race category prioritizes Black men.

### Gender Stereotypes of Speech

People certainly believe that men and women speak differently (Crawford, 1995, 2001). Self-help and advice books aimed at women promise to help them understand how to decode and interpret the speech of men, teach them how to speak more assertively, and show them how to communicate with men effectively. Dichotomous beliefs about speech can be seen in popular books such as Robin Lakoff's (1975) *Language and Woman's Place*, Deborah Tannen's (1990) *You Just Don't Understand*, and, perhaps the best-known of the genre, John Gray's (1992) *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*.

Individuals can readily generate characteristics of “masculine” and “feminine” speech (Kramer, 1977). Empirical research has shown that men are believed to have demanding voices; to be dominant,

ing, authoritarian, straight to the point, blunt, forceful, aggressive, boastful, militant; and to use swear words and slang. Women are believed to use good grammar and enunciate clearly; to speak politely, gently, rapidly, and emotionally; to talk a lot; to talk about trivial topics; and to indulge in gossip and gibberish (Edelsky, 1976; Kramarae, 1981; Lakoff, 1973; Siegler & Siegler, 1976; Spender, 1979). Spender summed up beliefs about gender and talk: “In short, feminine talk is a lot of polite talk about silly things; whereas masculine talk is a little blunt talk about important things” (Spender, 1979, p. 41).

Although research on the relationship between gender and language is abundant, much of the work on stereotypes was done in the 1970s. It grew out of feminist concerns with overcoming limitations placed on women on the basis of perceived differences in speech. Lakoff's (1973, 1975) work is a good example. Based on anecdotal evidence, she described women's speech as hesitant, ingratiating, and weak. Lakoff explained this purported speech style as the result of women's desire to avoid offending men. On the other hand, other researchers found that descriptions of a “competent” speaker more closely resemble perceptions of women's speech than men's speech and that characteristics of women's speech are rated more socially desirable than men's (e.g., Scott, 1980). Another key characteristic of early work on gender stereotypes regarding speech is that almost all of it showed beliefs about speech to be dichotomous. Men and women were thought to use two contrasting styles with little overlap.

### Racial Stereotypes of Speech

Similar to stereotypes of speech based on gender, there is ample anecdotal evidence that people hold beliefs about the way White people and Black people speak. In a recent national television commercial for coffee, the stereotype of Black people's speech as loud and aggressive was dramatized when two White women were sitting quietly in a stopped subway car until a Black woman entered and started yelling for the car to get moving.

There is very little empirical research on beliefs about race and speech. In a study of communication stereotypes, Ogawa (1971) found that White students perceive Blacks as argumentative, emotional, aggressive, straightforward, critical, sensitive, ostentatious, defiant, hostile, open, responsive, and intelligent. In a comparable study, Leonard and

Locke (1993) found that White participants believed Black people's speech to be loud, ostentatious, aggressive, active, boastful, talkative, friendly, noisy, straightforward, emotional, argumentative, and witty.

Like gender stereotypes, beliefs regarding race and speech may be dichotomous. There is preliminary evidence that beliefs about the way people speak based on their race are nonoverlapping (Leonard & Locke, 1993). Of 21 adjectives used to describe speech, only 3 (i.e., aggressive, boastful, and noisy) were used to describe both Black people's and White people's speech. In general, Black people's speech is believed to be louder and more hostile than White people's speech.

Beliefs about gender and racial differences in speech should be revisited. There is a notable lack of research on current gender stereotypes, beliefs about the speech of Black Americans, and the influence of gender *and* race on speech stereotypes. Feminists, especially Black feminists, have long argued that gender and race are intimately connected and cannot be understood apart from each other (Collins, 1990; Davis, 1981; Fine, 1997; Goodwin, 1996; Hooks, 1981, 2000). In addition, combining gender and race may not produce a purely additive impact on White Americans' perceptions of Women of Color. Instead, gender and race may interact in complex ways that require additional research to untangle. A unique study by Weitz and Gordon (1993) supports this assertion. Weitz and Gordon examined images of "American" women and Black women and found that the top three traits used to describe American women were intelligent, materialistic, and sensitive, whereas Black women were most often characterized as loud, talkative, and aggressive.

On the other hand, gender and racial stereotypes may not intersect at all. Stereotypes about Black women may represent a unique cognitive category, not just the sum of stereotypes about women (with the default value White) and Blacks (with the default value male). In relation to speech style research, the stereotypes about Black women's speech may be different from the beliefs about women's speech (where no race or White race is identified) or men's talk (both White and Black). Yet, Black women are the group most neglected and overlooked when researchers examine solely gender *or* race stereotypes.

Stereotypes are important because they may function not only to describe "what is" but also

to prescribe "what should be" in social interaction. For White women, stereotypes of polite, deferential speech are linked to negative judgments of women who deviate from the norm by speaking directly and assertively (Crawford, 1995). Because there is scant research on the majority culture's perceptions of Black women, the impact of speech stereotypes on judgments of Black women is not substantiated by empirical evidence. By investigating how Black and White women and men are perceived to speak by White college students, we hope to make a step toward changing this situation.

In this study we extend previous research on gender and race-related talk stereotypes by (1) investigating current gender stereotypes about communication style; (2) expanding the scant research on race and communication style, and; (3) jointly studying gender and race allowing for direct comparisons between the two. Our study incorporates several methodological improvements over previous research. Beliefs were examined by asking participants to rate a target character on a variety of speech-related characteristics. In addition, an open-ended measure also was used to reduce the influence of the experimenters' predetermined categories. Participants were asked to generate dialogue for a fictional character. Further, to avoid confounding race and gender with other variables such as social class, all targets were described as college students in the Northeast thereby equating the targets with each other and making them comparable to the participants on educational level, occupational category, and social position.

## METHOD

### Participants

Participants were 170 undergraduate students at the University of Connecticut who volunteered in order to fulfill a course requirement for research participation. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 31 years, with a mean age of 19 years ( $SD = 1.45$ ), and included 73 men and 96 women. Of the sample, 87% ( $n = 148$ ) were White, 6% ( $n = 10$ ) were Black, and 7% ( $n = 12$ ) were from other ethnic backgrounds. This ethnic distribution is representative of the student population at the university.

For methodological and theoretical reasons,<sup>3</sup> data from participants who did not self-identify as White and from participants who could not correctly identify the target's race or sex during the manipulation check ( $n = 48$ )<sup>4</sup> were removed. The final sample consisted of 111 White participants including 47 men and 64 women.

## Procedure

Participants were assigned to one of four experimental conditions: Black male target, Black female target, White male target, or White female target. Participants were informed that they were participating in a study about accuracy and realism in art and literature. First, participants responded to filler questions about the realism and accuracy reflected in two pictures unrelated to talk, ethnicity, or gender. Second, they were asked to generate dialogue for a fictional college student whose race and sex were varied. For example, in the *Black male condition*:

In this next task we are interested in realism and accuracy in writing. We ask you to imagine the main character in a story. This character is a **Black male** who is a **college student** in the **Northeast**.

We are interested in the way you imagine your fictional character would sound. Imagine what it would be like to listen to your character talk. Visualize your character talking to a **friend** about something important. Take as much time as you want and write what he would say. Try to make your character's talk as real

as possible. Make the character someone you really might meet and have a conversation with.

Next, participants were asked to describe physical characteristics of the target including race, sex, height, build, and eye color as part of the manipulation check. Participants were then asked to rate the character's talk on 36 bipolar items (with response options on a 1–7 scale) on pairs of words or phrases that are characteristic of speech (e.g., articulate–inarticulate, emotional–unemotional, weak–strong, talkative–quiet). Instructions read as follows:

Next, we are interested in the way you imagine your fictional character would talk. Think about how they would speak **in general**, not only in the dialogue you just wrote. Please respond to the following statements regarding the speech of the fictional character you were asked to describe by **CIRCLING** the response that best fits with what you believe. We realize that it might be difficult to respond to some of these questions, but we ask that you try to answer them as realistically as you can about the way your character would usually talk.

Finally, participants completed the Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale (MCSDS; Crowne & Marlowe, 1960).<sup>5</sup> The MCSDS is a 33-item scale developed to measure socially desirable responses in self-reports. The true–false items measure desirable but uncommon (e.g., admitting mistakes) and undesirable but common behaviors (e.g., gossiping). Scores on the MCSDS range from 0 to 33; higher scores indicate more socially desirable responses. Crowne and Marlowe (1964) reported a mean of 15.5 and a standard deviation of 4.4 ( $N = 300$ ). Paulhaus (1984) reported means of 13.3 ( $SD = 4.3$ ) and 15.5 ( $SD = 4.6$ ) in anonymous and public disclosure conditions ( $N = 100$ ). Typical alpha coefficients for the MCSDS range from .73 to .88 (Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991).

## RESULTS

Analysis consisted of several steps. First, factor analysis was used to reveal the underlying structure of the rating data and permit the construction of

<sup>3</sup>Only 13% of participants overall identified their ethnicity/race other than White. Of those 13%, the largest number of participants ( $n = 10$ ) were Black. As a result, it was impossible to make meaningful comparisons between ethnic groups or to determine to what extent significant findings were attributable only to the responses of White participants. Theoretically, stereotyping may be viewed as a cognitive “short-cut” or heuristic that is employed by members of dominant groups to facilitate interaction with subordinate group members (Fiske, 1993). Therefore, for both methodological and theoretical reasons, the analyses reported here reflect only the responses of White participants.

<sup>4</sup>Post hoc analyses of participant-generated dialogue suggest that the manipulation check may have been confusing to participants. Approximately 21% ( $n = 10$ ) of participants who could not correctly identify target race and sex during the manipulation check explicitly listed them in their written dialogue. An additional 25% ( $n = 12$ ) of participants who failed the manipulation check did not complete the written dialogue portion of the experiment, the only page where target race and sex were identified. Using the most conservative method of exclusion, data from all participants who could not correctly identify target race and sex during the manipulation check, regardless of whether or not they explicitly stated the correct race and sex in their written dialogue, were excluded from analysis.

<sup>5</sup>Participants also completed the Traditionalism–Modernism Inventory (TMI; Ramirez, 1991). The TMI consists of 33 true–false items that assess a participant's orientation toward traditional versus modern viewpoints regarding gender roles. However, because there are no data available on the reliability and validity of this scale, and because it had no relationship to any of the dependent variables, it will not be discussed further.

composite scores. Second, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed on the composite scores. Next, univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were performed on significant multivariate effects. Finally, each of the composite scores was correlated with scores on the MCSDS.

A principal axis factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed on the 36 speech style items. Before analysis, items were rescored so that higher values indicated more socially desirable speech characteristics (i.e., speech characteristics associated with mainstream White androcentric ideals). Examination of the simple structure matrix and a scree plot of the factors suggested a five-factor solution. The factor analysis yielded five significant factors

with eigenvalues over 1 before rotation, which accounted for 54% of the variance. Items were assigned to a factor if their factor loading was at least .40. Five items (unpredictable–predictable, assertive–unassertive, friendly–unfriendly, gets straight to the point – talks in a roundabout way, gets interrupted frequently – doesn’t get interrupted frequently) were dropped because they had modest loadings on multiple factors. Composite scores were formed by taking the mean of the relevant items. The five factors were named by consensus among the authors based on item loadings. The factors (social appropriateness, dominance, directness, emotionality, and playfulness) and their item loadings are shown in Table I. Cronbach’s alphas for social appropriateness,

**Table I.** Rotated Factor Pattern of Speech Characteristics

|                                                                           | Factor 1<br>(social appropriateness) | Factor 2<br>(dominance) | Factor 3<br>(directness) | Factor 4<br>(emotionality) | Factor 5<br>(playfulness) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Inarticulate/articulate                                                   |                                      |                         | .55                      |                            |                           |
| Emotional/unemotional                                                     |                                      |                         |                          | .49                        |                           |
| Demanding/nondemanding                                                    |                                      |                         |                          | .47                        |                           |
| Weak/strong                                                               |                                      | .47                     |                          |                            |                           |
| Submissive/dominant                                                       |                                      | .50                     |                          |                            |                           |
| Talkative/quiet                                                           |                                      |                         |                          | .50                        |                           |
| Nonseductive/seductive                                                    |                                      |                         |                          |                            | .51                       |
| Ignorant/intelligent                                                      | .54                                  |                         |                          |                            |                           |
| Incompetent/competent                                                     | .52                                  |                         |                          |                            |                           |
| Insensitive/sensitive                                                     | .62                                  |                         |                          |                            |                           |
| Powerful/powerless                                                        |                                      |                         |                          | .44                        |                           |
| Loud/soft                                                                 | .54                                  |                         |                          |                            |                           |
| Impolite/polite                                                           | .78                                  |                         |                          |                            |                           |
| Humorless/humorous                                                        |                                      |                         |                          |                            | .49                       |
| Inappropriate/appropriate                                                 | .75                                  |                         |                          |                            |                           |
| Cold/warm                                                                 | .69                                  |                         |                          |                            |                           |
| Unpleasant/pleasant                                                       | .66                                  |                         |                          |                            |                           |
| Offensive/inoffensive                                                     | .82                                  |                         |                          |                            |                           |
| Passive/active                                                            |                                      | .57                     |                          |                            |                           |
| Uses foul language/Doesn’t use foul language                              | .61                                  |                         |                          |                            |                           |
| Not self-assured/self-assured                                             |                                      | .70                     |                          |                            |                           |
| Loses train of thought/stays on topic                                     |                                      | .52                     |                          |                            |                           |
| Talks mostly about unimportant things/talks mostly about important things |                                      |                         | .64                      |                            |                           |
| Speech not worthy of attention/speech worthy of attention                 | .47                                  |                         |                          |                            |                           |
| Indecisive/decisive                                                       |                                      | .75                     |                          |                            |                           |
| Argumentative/cooperative                                                 | .54                                  |                         |                          |                            |                           |
| Exaggerated gestures/appropriate gestures                                 |                                      |                         |                          | .54                        |                           |
| Grammatically incorrect/grammatically correct                             | .52                                  |                         |                          |                            |                           |
| Talks mostly about feelings/talks mostly about facts                      |                                      |                         | .58                      |                            |                           |
| Interrupts/doesn’t interrupt                                              | .67                                  |                         |                          |                            |                           |
| Unsure of statements/sure of statements                                   |                                      | .54                     |                          |                            |                           |
| Eigenvalue                                                                | 8.58                                 | 4.88                    | 2.19                     | 1.95                       | 1.71                      |
| Percent of total variance (%)                                             | 23.83                                | 13.57                   | 6.07                     | 5.42                       | 4.74                      |

*Note.* Only items with a loading of .40 or higher are shown.

**Table II.** Multivariate and Univariate Analyses of Variance for Composite Scores

| Source          | Multivariate <sup>a</sup> |          | Univariate <sup>b</sup> |           |            |              |             |
|-----------------|---------------------------|----------|-------------------------|-----------|------------|--------------|-------------|
|                 | <i>df</i>                 | <i>F</i> | Social appropriateness  | Dominance | Directness | Emotionality | Playfulness |
| Target race (R) | 1                         | 6.19***  | 15.08***                | 3.18      | 4.29*      | 10.15**      | 3.93*       |
| Target sex (T)  | 1                         | 3.41**   | 2.09                    | 1.03      | 4.53*      | 4.01*        | 1.07        |
| Subject sex (S) | 1                         | 1.12     |                         |           |            |              |             |
| R × T           | 1                         | 0.45     |                         |           |            |              |             |
| R × S           | 1                         | 2.21     |                         |           |            |              |             |
| T × S           | 1                         | 1.29     |                         |           |            |              |             |
| R × T × S       | 1                         | 1.14     |                         |           |            |              |             |
| <i>MSE</i>      |                           |          | .89                     | .68       | .41        | .63          | 1.24        |

<sup>a</sup>Multivariate *df* = 5, 99.<sup>b</sup>Univariate *df* = 1, 103.\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.

dominance, directness, emotionality, and playfulness are .91, .79, .64, .60, and .43, respectively.

Composite scores for each participant were analyzed using a 2 (target race) × 2 (target sex) × 2 (participant sex) MANOVA. Dependent variables were the five composite scores. The MANOVA procedure revealed significant main effects for target race,  $F(5, 99) = 6.19$ ,  $p < .001$ , and target sex,  $F(5, 99) = 3.41$ ,  $p < .01$ . No other main effects or interactions reached significance (see Table II).

With the overall experiment-wise error protection afforded by the multivariate significance tests, 2 (target race) × 2 (target sex) × 2 (participant sex) ANOVAs were performed on each of the five composite measures (*F* values for all main effect tests of target sex and target race are shown in Table II).

### Social Appropriateness

This analysis resulted in a main effect of target race,  $F(1, 103) = 15.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ; the White targets were rated as more socially appropriate ( $M = 5.02$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ) than the Black targets ( $M = 4.32$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ). The size of this effect was moderate to large,  $g$  (Cohen's  $d$ ) = 0.73. There was no effect for target sex.

### Dominance

The ANOVA on dominance revealed no significant effects. However, there was a trend for target race,  $F(1, 103) = 3.18$ ,  $p < 0.08$ ,  $g = 0.26$ ; Black targets were rated higher ( $M = 5.21$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ) than White targets ( $M = 4.99$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ).

### Directness

In the analysis of directness, the main effects of target race,  $F(1, 103) = 4.29$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $g = 0.36$ , and target sex,  $F(1, 103) = 4.53$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $g = 0.32$ , were both significant. The main effect of target race was attributable to the White targets being rated as less direct ( $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ) than the Black targets ( $M = 3.86$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ). The main effect of target sex was attributable to the female targets being rated as less direct ( $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 0.67$ ) than the male targets ( $M = 3.83$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ).

### Emotionality

Higher scores on the emotionality factor indicate less emotional speech. This analysis resulted in a main effect of target race,  $F(1, 103) = 10.15$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $g = 0.56$ ; White targets were rated as lower in emotionality ( $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ) than Black targets ( $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ). There was also a main effect of target sex,  $F(1, 103) = 4.01$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $g = 0.55$ ; the male targets were rated as having lower emotionality ( $M = 3.57$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ) than the female targets ( $M = 3.10$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ).

### Playfulness

In the analysis of playfulness, the main effect of target race was significant,  $F(1, 103) = 3.93$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $g = 0.38$ . The main effect revealed that the White targets were rated as more playful ( $M = 4.87$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ) than the Black targets ( $M = 4.44$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ). There was no effect for target sex.

The composite scores for each of the five factors were correlated with the MCSDS. Scores on the

MCSDS ranged from 0 to 25 with a mean of 13.53 and a standard deviation of 4.94. There were no significant correlations with any of the five factors, which indicates that participants' responses were minimally affected by social desirability.

### Analysis of Dialogue

First, 2 (target race)  $\times$  2 (target sex) ANOVAs were performed on the total number of words in the elicited written dialogue and on the number of words spoken by the target within the dialogue. There were no significant differences in either the total number of words or the number of words spoken by the target. Next, the dialogue was analyzed by counting the number of occurrences of slang, profanity, depiction of nonstandard pronunciation (e.g., "gonna," "doin'," "cuz"), and depiction of nonstandard grammar (e.g., "I told him he don't have to get a ride with me, he can walk him damned self"; "I gots to tell you somethin'") generated by each participant. A composite score of nonstandard speech was derived by summing these variables and a 2 (target race)  $\times$  2 (target sex) ANOVA was performed on the composite score. There was a significant main effect for target race,  $F(1, 107) = 10.76$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $g = 0.59$ . The Black targets were depicted as using more nonstandard speech ( $M = 1.74$ ,  $SD = 2.71$ ) than the White targets ( $M = .58$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ). There was no effect for target sex and no interaction.

### DISCUSSION

Although this study is comparable to earlier research on gender, race, and speech style, it also has noteworthy differences. First, we examined stereotypes of race and gender jointly and comparably. Second, we included an open-ended measure that revealed different aspects of speech stereotypes than did the rating scales. Third, all targets were described as college students in the Northeast. This methodological choice created targets that were better equated with each other than in previous studies where targets' social class and status were unspecified, and participants may have made implicit assumptions about race, class, and gender linkages. Thus, the design of the study was biased against finding significant differences on the basis of target race and sex. Yet, our results show that even when targets were explicitly equated on geographical and cultural location, social class, and educational level, stereotypes about communication

style were still present among White college students.

Our results suggest that gender stereotypes have weakened over time. Earlier researchers found that women were believed to use good grammar and enunciate clearly, and their speech was viewed as polite, gentle, rapid, and friendly (Edelsky, 1976; Kramarae, 1981; Lakoff, 1973; Siegler & Siegler, 1976; Spender, 1979). Although these beliefs were not replicated in our study, we found that women's speech still is believed to be less direct and more emotional than men's speech. Consistent with earlier studies, women's speech was perceived as more talkative, emotional, and trivial (Kramarae, 1981; Spender, 1979).

However, stereotypes about the speech and communication styles of Black people are alive and well 30 years after they were first measured. The effects found for race were not only more numerous but also stronger than those found for gender. Consistent with Ogawa's and Leonard and Locke's findings (Leonard & Locke, 1993; Ogawa, 1971), we found that White students perceive Black students' speech as loud, argumentative, emotional, and talkative. Our data indicate that Black Americans' speech is believed to be less socially appropriate (i.e., louder, less intelligent, less grammatically correct, more offensive, and argumentative) and more direct (i.e., articulate and mostly about facts and important things) than White Americans' speech. Black students' speech is also viewed as more emotional (i.e., talkative, demanding, powerful, and uses exaggerated gestures) and less playful (i.e., seductive and humorous). There is a trend for Black students' speech to be perceived as more dominant (i.e., stronger, self-assured, active, and decisive). Analyses of dialogue for targets generated by participants further revealed that Black speakers were depicted as using more nonstandard speech forms (e.g., slang, profanity, and variant pronunciation and grammar) than White speakers. For example, one Black male character said, "Yo what up dog! I gots to tell you something important." One Black female character said, "Hey I was just chillin' wit my bitches."

Although the race by sex interaction was not significant, there are internal contradictions between main effects that allow interesting comparisons to be made. To be Black means that one's speech may be viewed as too direct, whereas to be female means that one's speech may be viewed as not direct enough.

Although these findings make sense for Black men and White women, they create a complicated picture for Black women. Unlike Black men and

White women, Black women are uniquely disadvantaged by their positioning within both race and gender hierarchies. As such, they may be “caught between a rock and a hard place.” On the one hand, race, not gender, may be the most salient characteristic in evaluating a Black woman. This may prompt individuals to devalue her speech as overly direct and emotional. On the other hand, gender may be more salient, and it may prompt individuals to marginalize the Black woman’s speech as less direct and more emotional than men’s speech. Paradoxically, Black women’s speech may be perceived as more or less direct depending on which category, gender or race, is most salient to an observer.

Because researchers have not studied beliefs about speech comparably with both gender and race, there is little understanding of the double bind Black women may face. Feminists have argued that gender and race cannot be studied apart from each other, and that examining this intersection is as important for Whites as it is for Blacks (Carter, 1997; Fine, Weis, Powell, & Wong, 1997; Roman, 1997). Further research is needed to elucidate beliefs about speech style, particularly how individuals perceive the speech of Black women. These stereotypes are important because they can significantly impact social interactions.

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