Influence of language power on self-perception

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The Influence of Language Power on Self-Perception

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B.A., Whitworth College, 1991

Presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
1994

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March 28, 1995
Date
Research on powerful/powerless language has demonstrated that people who use powerful language are perceived differently than those who use powerless language. In the present study, this line of research was integrated with the finding that behavior can influence self-perception. It was hypothesized that college students who were trained to use powerful language would demonstrate a carryover effect; that is, they would rate themselves as less warm, but more assertive, competent, and attractive than they did prior to the training. Results did not support the hypotheses. However, it was found that subjects could be trained to alter significantly ($p < .0005$) the power of their language within a relatively short training period. Implications of these findings and suggestions for future research are discussed.
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The Influence of Language Power on Self-Perception

The influence that behavior can have on attitude is a popular topic of research with a long history within the field of psychology. One can find journal articles from as early as the 1920's suggesting that a person's actions can influence their attitudes (Myers, 1921). Although widely accepted and applied for a decade prior (Bavelis, 1947; Lippit, 1943; Moreno, 1946; Zander & Lippit, 1944), this assumption came under initial empirical validation in the 1950's (Janis & King, 1954; Kelman, 1953; King & Janis, 1956). Since these successful initial tests, this principle has been applied in numerous settings, including therapy (Jupp & Griffiths, 1980; Newman, 1981), education (Barrett, 1986; Florian & Kehat, 1987; Renaud & Stolovich, 1988), and conflict resolution (Carlson-Sabelli, 1989).

Most relevant to the present study is research which has revealed that not only can our behavior influence our attitude toward external stimuli, but our behavior can also influence our attitude toward ourselves, or our self-perception. Bem's self-perception theory (1972) provides a cohesive explanation of this phenomenon, and its validity has been demonstrated repeatedly in research. For example, Klinger (1987) demonstrated that non-stuttering students who are taught to pseudostutter rate their own inner and outer beauty significantly lower after stuttering than before the stuttering task. More relevant to the
present study is research which influences subjects' self-ratings by manipulating how they are instructed to describe themselves. For example, subjects who were instructed to describe themselves in a self-enhancing manner showed subsequent increases on self-esteem measures, and those who described themselves in a self-deprecating manner showed subsequent decreases (Jones, Rhodewalt, Berglas & Skelton, 1981; Rhodewalt & Agustsdottir, 1986). This effect has also been demonstrated with the variables of sociability and independence; when subjects were instructed to present themselves as "sociable" or as "independent," their subsequent self-ratings on the traits of sociability and independence increased, respectively (Schlenker, Dlugolecki, & Doherty, 1994). This effect was termed the "carryover effect" by Jones, et al. (1981).

Although it has been consistently demonstrated that subjects' self-presentation can effect a change in their self-concept, Jones, et al. (1981) found that the mode of action was different depending on whether the self-presentation was within the subject's latitude of acceptance, or latitude of rejection. If the self-presentational behavior was within the subject's latitude of acceptance, then using self-referential material generated by the subject was both necessary and sufficient to produce a carryover effect. Alternatively, if the self-presentational behavior was within the subject's
latitude of rejection, then giving the subject a clear sense of choice over their participation was necessary and sufficient to produce the carryover effect. Thus, in studies which intend to show a carryover effect, attention must be paid to giving the subjects a clear choice and/or self-referencing the behavior. (For an in-depth discussion of their conceptualization of the phenomenal self, see Rhodewalt and Agustsdottir, 1986.)

Language style has also been a popular topic of research, in both the fields of psychology and communication. During the last two decades, researchers have focused their attention on powerless and powerful language styles. This concept was first developed during studies on "women's language" in a courtroom setting (Erickson, Lind, Johnson & O'Barr, 1978; O'Barr, 1982). Erickson, et al. (1978) determined that the constructs which had previously been identified as characteristics of women's language by Robin Lakoff (Lakoff, 1975) were being used with varying degrees of frequency by both sexes; further, their study revealed that the use of these constructs seemed to be less related to sex than to the user's status within the larger society and how much power the user had within the court system. Thus, they coined the terms "powerful" and "powerless" language.

In Erickson et al.'s (1978) research, powerless language was defined by the presence of particular language
features, primarily hedges (I think, sort of, probably), hesitation forms (uh, um), intensifiers (so, very), polite forms (please, thank you), and deictic phrases (over there). In later research, powerless language was expanded to include tag questions (It's hot, isn't it?) (Bradac & Mulac, 1984; Bradley, 1981; Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979; Rasmussen & Moely, 1986; Warfel, 1984), and compound requests (Won't you please close the door?) (Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979; Warfel, 1984). Powerful language is typically defined by an absence or infrequent use of these features (Erickson, et al., 1978). However, it has been suggested that more attention be paid to possible features whose presence may define powerful language (Scudder, 1988).

The relationship between status and language style has continued to undergo empirical investigation since Erickson, et al.'s (1978) conceptualization. Of three experiments conducted by Crosby and Nyquist (1977), only one revealed a relationship between language style and status, with lower status subjects using more powerless language when speaking with someone of higher status. Rubin and Nelson (1983) found no evidence of language style differences based on subjects' socio-economic status. However, one difficulty with this approach is the variety of possible definitions of status or power. Bradac and Mulac (1984) approached the question more directly. They presented subjects with transcribed messages, each containing one powerless language
feature, and one containing none (i.e., powerful language). Subjects rated each "speaker" on a Likert-type scale of "seems powerful/seems powerless." These ratings resulted in a hierarchy of language feature power. The structure of the obtained hierarchy was as follows, ranging from the least to the most powerless features (features listed after the same number did not differ significantly): 1) no features (powerful) and polite, 2) intensifiers, 3) deictics, 4) hedges and tag questions, 5) hesitation forms. This hierarchy of language feature power has been supported by further research (Hosman, 1989).

Although it is currently conceptualized as "powerful/powerless" language, the relationship between language power and sex or gender remains unresolved. Two types of studies have typically been conducted examining this relationship. The first approach explores actual language use by males and females. The evidence generated by these studies regarding sex differences in language power is mixed (Haas, 1979). For example, Baumann (1976) found no consistent sex differences in use of tag questions or hedges; in two studies Crosby and Nyquist (1977) found that males used more powerful language than females, and in a third study found no sex-related differences. Of sixteen "markers" of powerless language that were specified by Rubin & Nelson (1983), females used only one significantly more often than males; there were no significant differences for
the other fifteen. Hirschman (cited in Haas, 1979) found that males said "I think" (typically considered a hedge) twice as often as females. The second type of study examines whether powerful and powerless language forms are perceived as masculine and feminine, respectively. These findings are somewhat more consistent than actual sex-related use. For example, both Rasmussen & Moely (1986) and Quina, Wingard & Bates (1987) found that subjects rated powerful language as more masculine and powerless language as more feminine. In sum, the relationships between sex or gender and language style, and status and language style are still undergoing empirical exploration.

Much of the research on language power has focused on subjects' perceptions of people who use either powerful or powerless language (Bradac, Hemphill, & Tardy, 1981; Bradac & Mulac, 1984; Bradley, 1981; Hosman & Wright, 1987; Johnson & Vinson, 1987; Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979; O'Barr, 1982; Rasmussen & Moely, 1986; Warfel, 1984; Wright & Hosman, 1983). Within this research, it has been hypothesized that the use of either powerful or powerless language will affect subjects' ratings of the user on a variety of dimensions. The typical procedure consists of presenting subjects with either a transcribed or an audiotaped message containing relatively powerful or powerless language, and then instructing the subjects to rate the speaker on possession of particular traits. The subjects' ratings of the powerful
speaker and the powerless speaker are then analyzed. In conducting these studies, researchers have typically approached the definition of powerless language in one of two ways. Some researchers have defined powerless language by the presence of several powerless features, while others have studied particular features independently. First, the findings of research which utilized powerless features in combination will be presented, then those which examined individual features separately.

In Erickson, et al.'s (1978) original research, which manipulated witness' language in a simulated courtroom transcript, powerless speakers were perceived as significantly less credible and attractive than powerful speakers. Bradley (1981) reported that female speakers who used powerless language when dissenting in a small group discussion were rated as less intelligent and knowledgable than those who used powerful language. Also in 1981, Bradac, et al. found that powerless speakers in simulated courtroom transcripts were perceived as less competent and attractive than powerful speakers. Further research using simulated trial transcripts (O'Barr, 1982) found that powerless speakers were perceived as less convincing, truthful, competent, intelligent, and trustworthy. Bradac and Mulac (1984) studied language style in a crisis intervention setting, finding that the use of powerless language led to lower ratings on dynamism,
socio-intellectual status, attractiveness, and internality than did the use of powerful language. Warfel (1984) found that powerless speakers were rated as lower in dominance, but higher in competence, a finding which contradicts the results of all other studies utilizing competence as a dependent measure. Quina, et al. (1984) reported that powerless speech in response to interview questions generated lower ratings of speaker competence and higher ratings of the speaker's social warmth. Johnson and Vinson (1987) reported that a female speaker requesting funding from a student senate was perceived as lower in competence, character and dynamism when using powerless language. In 1991, Gibbons, Busch and Bradac found that during a persuasive argument, powerless speakers were rated as possessing lower competence/control than powerful speakers.

Newcombe and Arnkoff (1979) conducted the first research which examined the independent impact of various powerless features on subjects' perceptions. In two separate studies, hedges were perceived as less assertive than powerful speech, and compound requests were perceived as less assertive, more polite, and warmer. Wright and Hosman (1983) reported that a speaker using a relatively high number of hedges is perceived as less attractive than one using few hedges. In 1986, Rasmussen and Moely found that a speaker using a relatively high number of hedges was rated as possessing low instrumentality, while a speaker
using polite language was seen as high in social positiveness. Hosman and Wright (1987) reported that using hesitation forms resulted in ratings of lower character, while using no hesitation forms or hedges yielded ratings of higher attractiveness and authoritativeness than any other combination of hedges and hesitations. In 1989, Hosman found that a high level of hedges and a high level of hesitation forms, both independently and in combination, resulted in lower ratings of authoritativeness, and that a high level of hedges was perceived as less trustworthy. Clearly, research examining powerful and powerless language has demonstrated that the relative power of language significantly impacts subjects' perceptions of the speaker.

The present study represents an attempt to merge the two lines of research described above, that is, research on the influence of language power on person perception, and research on the influence of behavior on self-perception. The question to be examined is whether using powerful language influences a person's perception of themselves. Specifically, an attempt will be made to train subjects in the use of powerful language, engage them in an interview task to facilitate their use of powerful language, and measure the influence of this use on their self-perception.

Powerless language has been defined in a variety of ways in previous studies, through the inclusion of one or more of the specific features hypothesized to be part of
powerless language. As described above, some research has examined particular features independently (Hosman, 1989; Hosman & Wright, 1987; Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979; Rasmussen & Moely, 1986; Wright & Hosman, 1983), while other research has employed varying combinations of several features (Bradac, et al., 1981; Bradac & Mulac, 1984; Bradley, 1981; Erickson, et al., 1978; Gibbons, et al., 1991; Johnson & Vinson, 1987; O'Barr, 1982; Quina, et al., 1987; Warfel, 1984). This variety in the definition of powerless language makes it difficult to gather a cohesive body of significant findings.

Further compounding this difficulty, researchers have examined the impact of language power on many different dependent measures. Frequently used dependent variables are ratings of the language user's attractiveness (Bradac, et al., 1981; Erickson, et al., 1978; Wright & Hosman, 1983; Warfel, 1984), assertiveness (Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979), competence (Bradac, et al., 1981; Gibbons, et al., 1991; Johnson & Vinson; 1980; O'Barr, 1982; Quina, et al., 1987; Warfel, 1984), intelligence (Bradac & Mulac, 1984; Bradley, 1981; O'Barr, 1982), dynamism (Bradac & Mulac, 1984; Bradley, 1981; Johnson & Vinson, 1987), and warmth (Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979; Quina, et al., 1987). This variety of dependent variables is intended to further our knowledge of the influence of language power. However, the inconsistency in defining powerless language makes an integration of the
findings nearly impossible.

Although it would be ideal to train experimental subjects in the present study to reduce their use of all hypothesized features of powerless language, the use of an interview makes this less crucial. Rubin and Nelson (1983) reported that tag questions occurred infrequently in an interview setting. Similarly, given the interview questions to be utilized in the present research, one would expect an extremely low occurrence of deictic phrases, compound requests, and polite forms. In several recent studies, the use of intensifiers has been linked to more powerful language, so their inclusion as a powerless feature is contraindicated (Bradac & Mulac, 1984; Hosman, 1989; Hosman & Siltanen, in press; Hosman, Siltanen, Herod, Brandau, Barnett, 1993). Previous research does indicate several reasons for the inclusion of both hedges and hesitation forms, the remaining powerless features. First, hedges and hesitation forms occurred with the greatest frequency in Erickson, et al.'s (1978) original research. Second, hesitation forms were found to be the most powerless language feature in Bradac and Mulac's hierarchy, and hedges the second most powerless (tied with tag questions). This finding of the powerlessness of hedges and hesitation forms was supported by Hosman (1989). Additional empirical findings support the use of hesitation forms and hedges. Through an examination of past research, it was determined
that the presence or absence of hedges consistently influences subjects' ratings of the user's assertiveness (Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979) and that the presence or absence of hedges and hesitation forms consistently influences ratings of the user's competence (Bradac, et al., 1981; Gibbons, et al., 1981; Johnson & Vinson, 1987; O'Barr, 1982; Warfel, 1984), and attractiveness (Bradac, et al., 1981; Bradac & Mulac, 1984; Erickson, et al., 1978; Hosman & Wright, 1987). The utilization of these consistent relationships in the present research minimizes the problems introduced by the variety of definitions and dependent variables in previous research.

These relationships highlight the potentially negative interpersonal outcomes of using relatively powerless language, that is, decreased perceptions of the user's assertiveness, attractiveness, and competence. However, the use of powerless language has also been shown to increase perceptions of the speaker's warmth (Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979; Quina, et al., 1987). Both the possible detriments and the possible benefits of using powerless language require examination. Therefore, subjects' use of hedges and hesitation forms will define relative power of speech for the present study, and self-ratings of assertiveness, attractiveness, competence, and warmth will be used as the dependent variables.

It is hypothesized that subjects who are trained to
reduce their use of hedges and hesitation forms, i.e., to speak more powerfully, will subsequently rate themselves as less warm, but more competent, assertive, and attractive than they did prior to using the more powerful language. Additionally, it is hypothesized that females who are trained to speak powerfully will show a greater increase on the self-ratings of assertiveness and competence than males. This hypothesis is based on research which has found that the sex of the speaker interacts with language power in influencing subjects' perceptions of the speaker. Wright and Hosman (1983) found that females using a high level of hedges were perceived as less competent than males using a high level of hedges. Similarly, Bradley (1981) found that females using hedges were seen as less intelligent and knowledgeable than males using hedges. Based on these findings, Bradley (1981) suggests that males using hedges may be seen as polite, while females using hedges are seen as unassertive or uncertain. This is supported by Newcombe and Arnkoff's (1979) finding that male speakers are perceived as more assertive than females regardless of the amount of hedges used. If this is the case, it follows that females' self-perception may be more negatively affected by chronic use of powerless language than males' self-perception. Thus, prior to their training, males who use relatively powerless language may already see themselves as more competent and assertive than female powerless
speakers. While it is still expected that training in the use of powerful language will increase both males' and females' self-ratings of competence and assertiveness, females are expected to show a greater increase than males.

Pilot Study

Raters were trained to record subjects' hedges, hesitation forms, and the total time subjects spent speaking during an interview. An interrater reliability score was determined for the raters' calculations of each subject's language-power ratio (total time speaking divided by total hedges and hesitation forms).

Method

Subjects

Twelve male and twelve female students enrolled in the introductory psychology course were recruited to participate in an interview. These students received partial credit toward their psychology course for participating. Subjects were primarily Caucasian and ranged in age from 18 to 25.

Procedures

Subjects signed up to participate in an experiment entitled "Practice Interview." The sign-up sheet instructed them regarding the time, day, and location of the experiment. The interviews were conducted in a small room containing a table, two chairs, a tape recorder, and the necessary paperwork. Three female and three male experimenters were utilized; subjects were randomly assigned
Subjects arrived individually at the designated time and were greeted by an experimenter who presented a set of instructions (Appendix A), and then asked if the subject had any questions. Subjects were then asked a series of general interview questions developed by the author (Appendix B). This interview was designed to last approximately 20 minutes. Each interview was audiotape recorded. After the interview was completed and the subject had left, the experimenter listened to the audiotape to record the amount of time the subject spoke and the number of hedges and hesitation forms used. The scoring protocol which the experimenters used to record the time, hedges, and hesitations is presented in Appendix C. The list of hedges on the scoring protocol was compiled in two ways. First, words and phrases included as hedges in at least two previous studies were included (Bradac, et al., 1981; Crosby & Nyquist, 1977; Erickson, et al., 1978; Hosman, 1989; Hosman & Siltanen, in press; Johnson & Vinson, 1987; Newcombe & Arnkoff, 1979; O'Barr, 1982; Warfel, 1987). Second, other words and phrases judged to be functionally equivalent to one or more of those hedges by the primary investigator and a majority of the research assistants were also included. Hesitation forms were operationalized using O'Barr's (1982) definition. After each experimenter had conducted four interviews and generated a language-power
ratio for those four subjects, they then listened to the tape recordings of sixteen interviews they did not conduct, and used the scoring protocol to determine the language-power ratio for each of these sixteen subjects. Thus, each experimenter determined a language-power ratio for twenty of the twenty-four interviews, so that each subject received a language-power ratio from five of the six experimenters.

Since the same interview format was used during the primary research, the interviews conducted during the pilot work also served the purpose of practice interviews for the experimenters. To insure that the experimenters were correctly following the standardized procedures, a subset of these interviews was chosen randomly for observation by the primary investigator.

Results

A Pearson-r correlation with incomplete blocking was conducted on the language-power ratios generated by the raters, which yielded an interrater reliability score of $r = .80$. During the interviews, subjects spoke for an average of 9 minutes and 12 seconds. As this was considerably less than the 20 minutes which was anticipated, the interview questions were modified for use in the primary experiment to yield a longer average speech time (Appendix I).
Experiment

Method

Subjects

Approximately 400 male and female students enrolled in the introductory psychology course participated in an initial screening. During this initial screening, subjects gathered in a large lecture hall where they completed questionnaires from a variety of experiments being conducted. From this pool, 50 male and 50 female subjects were selected randomly and recruited for further participation. Nine of these subjects could not be included in the analyses because they had responded incompletely to the initial questionnaire (Form A, described below). The data from three subjects were then randomly removed to leave 22 males and 22 females in each of the two experimental conditions. The final 88 subjects were primarily Caucasian and ranged in age from 18 to 46.

Procedures

Two different questionnaires were used, each of which contained the same four critical items. On these four critical items, the subjects rated themselves on their possession of the traits of assertiveness, competence, attractiveness, and warmth using a seven-point Likert-type scale. Each questionnaire contained different distractor items. These questionnaires are presented in Appendix D, and will hereafter be referred to as Form A and Form B.
During the initial screening, subjects were given Form A of the questionnaire on which they self-rated their assertiveness, competence, attractiveness, and warmth. Subjects were selected randomly from this pool, and between two and six weeks after the initial screening were contacted by telephone and asked to participate in an interview. When the subject arrived at the arranged time and place for the interview, the following procedure was initiated, which is similar to the procedure used by Jones, Rhodewalt, Berglas, and Skelton (1981) and Rhodewalt and Agustsdottir (1986).

Each subject was given a set of instructions which informed them that their participation served two purposes. First, they would be assisting in conducting a class exercise for a course in interviewing. They could assist in this exercise by playing the role of an applicant who is being interviewed for a research assistant position. They were told that an audiotape recording would be made of the interview that would be listened to and analyzed by students in the interviewing course. The instructions further stated that the students who would be listening to the interview believed that the subject was actually applying for such a position. Second, the instructions stated that the interview would be used to examine the impact of various linguistic features on the students' evaluation of the subject's qualifications for the position. (Full instructions are presented in Appendix E.)
In line with the research described earlier concerning how best to produce a carryover effect (Jones, Berglas, Rhodewalt & Skelton, 1981; Rhodewalt & Agustsdottir, 1986), subjects' responses to the interview were self-referenced, and they were given a sense of choice over their involvement. The authors cited above found that if the self-presentational behavior was within the subject's latitude of acceptance, whether the behavior was self-referenced determined whether there was a change in self-concept. On the other hand, if the behavior was within the subject's latitude of rejection, whether they were given a choice over participating determined whether there was a change in self-concept. Since the goal of the present research was to effect a change in self-concept, and it was unknown whether powerful language was within any given subject's latitude of acceptance or rejection, this research incorporated both modes of action. Subjects' interviews were self-referenced in that they were instructed to answer the questions truthfully about themselves and not attempt to make any particular impression (Appendix E). The sense of choice was instilled using the same procedure as has been used in previous research to produce a "high choice" condition. After the subject received the instructions, the experimenter said, "Some people might not like deceiving other people this way. You really don't mind doing this for me, do you?" After the subject committed himself or
herself, the experimenter said, "Thanks, but it's really up to you; you don't have to play the role if you don't want to." (Jones, et al., 1981; Rhodewalt & Agustsdottir, 1986). All subjects agreed to participate.

Subjects had been randomly assigned to either the powerful condition or the control condition prior to being recruited for the study. After being given the choice regarding "playing the role," subjects in the powerful condition were told that since the impact of various linguistic features on the students' evaluation of the subject was being studied, they would learn to control their use of two of these features by listening to a training tape. The content of the training tape is presented in Appendix F. The length of this tape, including the subjects' responses to the exercises contained on it, averaged approximately ten minutes.

Subjects in the control condition were told that the interviewer was not yet ready to conduct the interview. They were told that, while they were waiting, they would be listening to and evaluating a tape on language acquisition which was being developed for use in a psychology class. The content of the tape is presented in Appendix G. This tape is approximately eight minutes in length. In order to increase the plausibility of this procedure, control subjects were then be asked to rate how useful they thought the tape would be and how highly they would recommend it on
two ten-point Likert-type scales (Appendix H).

After listening to their respective audiotape, both sets of subjects were introduced to a second experimenter who was blind to subject condition. This experimenter asked the subjects the revised version of the interview questions utilized in the pilot study (Appendix I); this interview was audiotape recorded. The subject's responses during the interview were subjected to the scoring protocol and a language-power ratio was determined for each subject for use as a manipulation check.

After the subject had completed the interview, the experimenter asked the subject to fill out Form B of the questionnaire, on which they rated their assertiveness, attractiveness, competence, and warmth. A group debriefing session was held after the data collection had been completed.

Results

The revised interview format yielded an average speaking time of eleven minutes and 35 seconds for the powerful subjects, and eleven minutes and 55 seconds for control subjects. Thus, both the powerful subjects and control subjects generated a similar average speaking time. Although subjects' speaking time was still less than the intended twenty minutes, it was somewhat longer than the average speaking time for subjects in the pilot study (nine minutes and 12 seconds).
A 2 (Powerful/Control) X 2 (Female/Male) ANOVA was conducted on subjects' language-power ratios. A main effect for condition was found, $F(1, 84) = 28.64, p < .0005$, such that subjects in the powerful condition had significantly higher language-power ratios than subjects in the control condition (powerful $M = 35.97$; control $M = 14.44$). This indicates that the training which was designed to teach powerful subjects to reduce their use of hedges and hesitation forms (i.e., to increase their language power) was effective. No significant main effect was found for sex, $F(1, 84) = .18, p > .65$; nor was there a significant interaction of Sex X Condition, $F(1, 84) = .18, p > .65$.

A 2 (Powerful/Control) X 2 (Female/Male) X 2 (Pre-measure/Post-measure) repeated measures ANOVA was conducted for each of the four dependent variables: assertiveness, competence, attractiveness, and warmth.

**Assertiveness**

The primary hypothesis was not supported; no significant Condition X Measure interaction was found, $F(1, 84) = 2.66, p < .11$. Thus, subjects in the powerful condition did not show an increase on their self-ratings of assertiveness from pre-measure to post-measure. No other interactions or main effects were found to be significant (all $ps > .08$).

**Competence**

Powerful subjects' self-ratings on competence did not
significantly increase after being trained to speak more powerfully, $F(1, 84) = .32, p < .57$. No other significant main effects or interactions were found for the competence variable (all $p$s > .09).

**Attractiveness**

The hypothesized effects were not found for attractiveness; subjects who engaged in the powerful language training did not rate themselves as higher in attractiveness than they did before the training, $F(1, 84) = .61, p < .44$. No other interactions or main effects were found to be significant for the attractiveness variable (all $p$s > .23).

**Warmth**

A significant main effect for sex was found on self-ratings of warmth; females rated themselves as significantly more warm ($M = 5.71$) than males did ($M = 5.09$), $F(1, 84) = 11.69, p < .001$. A significant interaction between sex and condition was also found, $F(1, 84) = 7.83, p < .006$. This effect was not hypothesized; it simply reflects that, incorporating both the pre- and post-measures, the difference between males' and females' self-ratings of warmth were significantly greater for subjects in the control condition (male $M = 5.08$; female $M = 6.05$) than for subjects in the powerful condition (male $M = 5.25$, female $M = 5.36$). No other significant main effects or interactions were found.
Discussion

Subjects in the powerful condition were effectively trained to increase the power of their speech. Following their training, subjects who had listened to the training tape and completed the exercises used significantly fewer hedges and hesitation forms during an interview than did subjects who had not listened to the tape. This has not been attempted in previous research, and suggests that subjects can be taught to alter significantly the power of their speech (at least temporarily) in a relatively short training period.

The absence of significant main effects for sex on three of the four dependent variables is informative; this suggests that females and males rate themselves very similarly on the traits of assertiveness, competence and attractiveness. On the final dependent variable, warmth, a main effect for sex was found. On average, females rate themselves significantly higher in warmth than males do.

None of the primary hypotheses of this study were supported by the results; subjects who were trained to use more powerful language did not increase their self-ratings of assertiveness, competence or attractiveness, or decrease their self-ratings of warmth. Several methodological factors may have contributed to this lack of significant findings. First, it would be worthwhile to
replicate this research employing a longer interview. Previous research demonstrating a carryover effect utilized a twenty-minute interview; the powerful subjects in the present research had a mean speaking time of only eleven minutes and 35 seconds. Given the subtlety of the verbal behavior being manipulated in the present study, it is possible that eleven minutes is not enough time for subjects' language use to impact their self-concept.

A second factor that may have influenced the results regards the manipulation used to instill a sense of choice in the subjects. Jones, et al. (1981) and Rhodewalt and Agustsdottir (1986) found that a sense of choice over engaging in the manipulated self-presentation was necessary for some subjects to demonstrate a carryover effect. In the present study, this choice was presented to subjects after they had been told that they would be playing a role, but before they were taught to alter their language use. Thus, subjects may not have felt a clear sense of choice over their use of powerful language. Attention should be paid in future research to giving subjects a choice after they have been introduced to the manipulation, and to having the choice directly refer to engaging in the self-presentation.

Recent research (Tice, 1992) has also suggested that a carryover effect is more likely when subjects expect that they will be involved in future interactions with the audience. This expectation is believed to increase the
salience of subjects' public commitment to the self-presentation. Future research utilizing the present design could incorporate a manipulation whereby subjects are led to believe that they may be interacting with the interviewer again at some point.

Another factor that may have contributed to the results of the present study regards the amount of powerless features that may be present within "powerful" language. Research on language power and person perception has typically used simulated messages in which the amount of powerless features could be controlled precisely. Only one such study has specifically defined the number of powerless features contained in these messages and examined their effect at different levels. Bell, Zahn, and Hopper (1984) found that when four to six hedges were included within a conversation of approximately 150 words, this message generated lower ratings of the speaker's competence, character, and certainty. However, when only one hedge was included in the same conversation, no effect was found. This research suggests that there may be definite, identifiable levels of powerless features that define the boundaries between powerful and powerless speech. Although subjects in the present study significantly reduced their use of hedges and hesitation forms, it may be that their speech still contained too many powerless features to function as simulated powerful messages have in previous
research. If the boundaries between functionally powerful and functionally powerless language could be delineated, then these could be used as guidelines for researchers attempting to train subjects to increase the power of their language.

Finally, recent research by Hosman and Siltanen (in press) suggests that a high level of one powerless feature in a person's speech may be sufficient to produce the impression of powerlessness. Although the present study accounted for the powerless features that are most likely to occur in an interview setting (hedges and hesitation forms), the possibility that other features influenced subjects' self-perceptions was not completely ruled out. Post-hoc, a subset of the powerful subjects' interviews was examined for instances of powerless feature use other than hedges and hesitation forms. No instances of tag questions, deictic phrases, or compound requests occurred within this subset. Intensifiers occurred infrequently, but as these have recently been linked to more powerful speech (Bradac & Mulac, 1984; Hosman, 1989; Hosman & Siltanen, in press; Hosman, et al., 1993), their impact as a powerless feature is probably negligible. Thus, this post-hoc investigation suggests that subjects' self-perceptions were probably not influenced by the presence of other powerless features. However, in order to provide a more valid test of this possibility, future research in this area could incorporate
a measure of subjects' use of all powerless features, or could employ a more comprehensive training which included all of the powerless features.

Of course, the nonsignificant findings of the present study may not be due to methodology; they may accurately reflect an inability to influence self-perception by varying language power. It may be that language power is too subtle a part of our speech for variations to affect self-perception. However, extensive research, described in the introduction, has demonstrated that language power is not too subtle to influence our perception of others. Thus, the attributional process in evaluating language power may be different for others versus ourselves. The fundamental attribution error (Ross, 1977) suggests that we often attribute others' behavior to internal factors, and our own to external factors. Therefore, while we attribute others' use of powerless language to a lack of control over themselves or others (Hosman & Siltanen, in press; Hosman, Siltanen, Herod, Brandau & Barnett, 1983), we might attribute our own use of powerless language to an external factor, such as learning. An external attribution may be especially likely in a laboratory setting, where the behavior is essentially externally motivated. In a natural setting where the choice to alter one's language power is made freely, an internal attribution for the language power may be more likely and may lead to changes in self-
perception. Future research conducted within a laboratory setting could examine to what subjects attribute the power of their own language.

Although the primary hypotheses of this study were not supported, the finding that subjects can be trained to speak more powerfully holds important implications in and of itself. If one wishes to be perceived by others as more assertive, competent, attractive, etc., one can learn to alter the power of one's language to facilitate the desired effect. This strategic self-presentation may be especially useful in particular situations, such as job interviews or in positions of leadership. An additional implication involves research which has examined the process known as interpersonal construction, or behavioral confirmation. This research has demonstrated that when one individual has expectations regarding another, the individual may behave in such a way as to elicit confirmatory behavior from the other (Snyder & Swann, 1978; Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid, 1977, Skrypnek & Snyder, 1982). Applied to the present research, these findings suggest that using powerful language may ultimately impact subjects through this interpersonal process. That is, if a person uses powerful language, and is thus perceived as more assertive, competent, etc., the person perceiving them in this way will expect them to behave assertively and competently, and will elicit behaviors from them that confirm this expectation. As the
subject responds to this interpersonal encouragement and behaves more assertively and competently, this behavior may then influence their self-concept. For the present, this is a hypothetical line of reasoning, but one that could be explored empirically.

In summary, the findings of the present research clearly demonstrated that college students can be trained to increase the power of their speech. This study was designed to examine the impact that increased language power might have on subjects' self-concepts; unfortunately, this question remains unresolved. Many opportunities exist for adding to our growing knowledge base on powerful and powerless language styles.
References


Appendix A

Pilot Instructions

Thank you for participating in this experiment. You will be engaging in an interview, which is designed to help your interviewer and five other experimenters practice tallying certain language features that occur in people’s natural speech. This interview will be audiotape recorded so that the six experimenters can practice this tallying while listening to the tape recording of the interview. Your responses on this tape are confidential; only the six experimenters involved will listen to it, and only your interviewer will be able to connect your identity with the responses on the audiotape.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary. If at any time you do not wish to continue, you may leave. Thank you again.
Appendix B

Pilot Interview Questions

1. What year are you in school?
2. What is your major?
3. What types of research have you been involved in doing?
4. Describe your writing skills.
5. Describe any term papers you've written in high school or college; for example, what class was it for, what was it about, etc.
6. Would you describe your past work experiences?
7. What did you enjoy the most about your past work experiences?
8. What did you enjoy the least?
9. Describe any experiences you've had working on a team.
10. Tell me about any experiences you've had working with the public.
11. What experience have you had in public speaking?
12. How good are you at public speaking?
13. In your opinion, what are the most important factors that influence success in college?
14. What would you say are the most important factors that influence success in interpersonal relationships?
15. Would you describe any extra-curricular activities you've been involved in during high school or college?
16. Describe any honors or awards of any kind that you’ve received.
17. Do you work better independently, or with other people?
18. In your opinion, what is the hardest part of working with different types of people?
19. Compared to other people your age, how good are your organizational skills?
20. What has been your favorite college course thus far?
21. Why?
22. What has been your least favorite course thus far?
23. What makes you say that?
24. If you could design your ideal college course, what would it be like? For example, what would the requirements be, what types of things would you want to learn, etc?
25. If you could change anything about your work habits in school, what would you change?
26. What makes you say that?
27. If you had to describe yourself in one paragraph to someone who had never met you, how would you describe yourself?
28. What accomplishments have you been the most proud of in your life so far?
29. In general, what are some of your strengths?
Appendix C

Scoring Protocol

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<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Subject condition</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Interviewer</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

POWERLESS FEATURES

Hedges:
I believe/I don't believe
I think/I don't think
I guess/I don't guess
I suppose/I don't suppose
Sort of/sorta
Kind of/kinda
Pretty
Fairly
Maybe
Hopefully

Probably
Might
Seems to be
Looks as if
About
Around
Almost
Like
You know

Hesitation forms:
Uh, Um, Ah, Er, Eh, Hm

# of POWERLESS FEATURES

TOTAL FEATURES: _____

TOTAL TIME: _____ sec.

LANGUAGE-POWER RATIO
(time divided by features): _____
Appendix D
Questionnaire Form A

Self-Perception Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to measure how you perceive yourself on a variety of traits. Each characteristic has a rating scale of 1 through 7. A rating of 1 means that you believe that you are relatively low in your possession of that trait, and a rating of 7 means that you are relatively high in your possession of that trait. On each of the following items, please circle the number which best describes you.

1. Honest

Low

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

High

2. Fearful

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. Ambitious

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. Creative

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. Cautious

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. Outgoing

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. Private

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. Loyal

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. Assertive

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. Romantic

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
11. Competent

12. Patient

13. Intellectual

14. Calm

15. Practical

16. Self-centered

17. Imaginative

18. Warm

19. Musical

20. Attractive

21. Adventurous

22. Organized

23. Self-assured
Appendix D

Questionnaire, Form A

Please rate yourself on the following nine traits. For each item, circle the number that best describes you. Respond to every item. Thank you.

1) RELIGIOUS

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
not religious

very religious

2) HUMOROUS

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
not humorous

very humorous

3) COMPETENT

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
incompetent

very competent

4) SENSITIVE

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
not sensitive

very sensitive

5) ATTRACTIVE

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
unattractive

very attractive

6) WARM

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
not warm

very warm

7) ASSERTIVE

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
unassertive

very assertive

8) ATHLETIC

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
unathletic

very athletic

9) STRONG-WILLED

1  2  3  4  5  6  7
not strong-willed

very strong-willed
Thank you for participating in this experiment. The purpose of this study is to supply material that is needed in an Interviewing course. You will be helping to create a tape which will be used in a class exercise. For this exercise, you will be playing the role of a person who is interviewing for a job as a research assistant. A tape recording will be made of this interview, and it will be listened to by students in the Interviewing course. The instructor of this course has led these students to believe that you are actually applying for a research assistant position. Although you know that you are playing a role, it is important that the interview be as natural as possible; therefore, please answer all questions truthfully about yourself, and don't try to make any particular impression during the interview.

In addition, your interview will be used to examine the relationship between language features that you use and the students' opinions about your qualifications as a research assistant. None of the students will know your identity. Remember, you don't need to try to describe yourself in any particular way for the role play. Simply answer the questions about yourself as you typically would.

Thank you for your participation.
Appendix F

Content of "powerful" tape

The purpose of this tape is to help you learn to reduce your use of two different features of your speech. Being able to change one's speech is a skill. Therefore, it is important that you make your best effort while participating in these exercises. After you go through these exercises and learn to alter your speech, you'll be participating in an interview in which you will apply what you have learned. If you have any questions about the exercises, ask the researcher to stop the tape, and he or she will answer your question.

First, I'll describe one of the language features we'll be focusing on, then we'll go through some exercises designed to help you reduce your use of that feature. Then I'll describe the second language feature, and we'll go through exercises to reduce your use of it. Finally, we'll go through a last set of exercises during which you will practice not using either language feature.

The first language feature we would like you to learn to reduce is called hesitation forms. Hesitation forms are the little words we use to fill pauses while we're talking, including, um, uh, er, eh, ah, oh, and hm. Most people use hesitation forms in their natural speech. In this first exercise, I will say a sentence containing hesitation forms,
then I'll say the same sentence without hesitation forms.

You're, um, late for work./You're late for work.

Uh, I'd like to live in Washington./I'd like to live in Washington.

Um, I'm good at, er, skiing./I'm good at (pause) skiing.

Oh, I don't know, um, blue is my favorite./I don't know (pause) Blue is my favorite.

Could I, ah, leave now?/Could I leave now?

Now we will go through an exercise designed to give you practice speaking without using hesitation forms. You can still pause while you're thinking, but try not to fill that pause by using any of the hesitation forms discussed earlier. Please answer the following questions without using hesitation forms.

1) Describe your hometown to the researcher.

2) Talk about your favorite hobby or activity.

3) Describe the place where you currently live, i.e., your house, apartment, or dormitory.

The second language feature you'll be learning to reduce is called qualifiers. I'll list each of these, and use each in a sentence. Please listen carefully to each of them.

I think/I don't think. I don't think it's cold in here.

I guess/I don't guess. I guess I'm finished.
I believe/I don't believe. I don't believe I'll go today.

I suppose/I don't suppose. I suppose it's good enough.

Sort of/Sorta. It's sorta nice outside.

Kind of/Kinda. He's kind of tall.

Maybe. I'll be there in maybe half an hour.

Hopefully. I'll hopefully be leaving soon.

Probably. She's probably the best tennis player I know.

Pretty. I'm pretty good.

Fairly. I'm fairly sure you're right.

Might. He might be the smartest person in the room.

Seems to be. It seems to be ready.

Looks as if. It looks as if we're not done yet.

About. I'm about five feet tall.

Around. We'll go around seven o'clock.

Almost. I almost think you should start over.

A little. She's a little shy.

Like. We shouldn't, like, do that.

You know. He's going to, y'know, come over.

Now I'll say some sentences containing qualifiers, and after each, I'll say the same sentence without qualifiers.

I don't think it will bother him./It won't bother him.

You're a little behind./You're behind.

She talks sorta loudly./She talks loudly.

It's, like, freezing in here./It's freezing in here.
I guess I'll go with you./I'll go with you.
He'll probably be back soon./He'll be back soon.
I kinda wish I could go with you, y'know?/I wish I could go with you.
I might be finished around four o'clock./I'll be finished by four o'clock.

Next, I'll say a series of sentences that contain qualifiers. After I say each sentence, you say the same sentence but without any qualifiers. For example, if I say "The sky's kinda blue," you'll say, "The sky's blue." If you use qualifiers in your answer, the researcher will stop the tape and indicate which qualifiers you used, and you can re-state the sentence without qualifiers. Let's begin.

She's pretty short.
I think I'm going to graduate this spring.
I sort of don't like liver.
You're probably right about that.
He's a little strange, y'know?
I guess I won't, like, go with you.
I don't believe that's accurate.
It seems to be a fairly good class.
I'm kind of, y'know, a loner.

Now you've practiced speaking without using hesitation forms, and you've practiced speaking without using qualifiers. For the final exercise, we'll practice both of these skills at once. I'll ask a series of questions, and
you can practice answering them without using hesitation forms or qualifiers. After each answer, the researcher will pause the tape, and tell you whether you used any hesitation forms or qualifiers. If you did, you can re-state your answer without using any.

1) Describe what you like to do on your favorite holiday, and why it's your favorite.

2) What do you enjoy the most about being a college student, and why?

3) Describe one of the funnest experiences you've ever had.

4) Describe the plot and characters in one of the best movies you've ever seen.

For the next part of this experiment, you'll participate in an interview in which you will use what you learned from these exercises, and not use hesitation forms and qualifiers. To maintain the validity of the experiment, you'll be interviewed by a different researcher who cannot know that you are altering your language style. Therefore it is very important that you do not do anything that will reveal to the researcher that you are trying not to use qualifiers and hesitation forms. Thank you for your participation.
Language acquisition, or how children learn to use language, is a fascinating topic. The following is a brief review of this process.

Long before a baby says its first words, it's already begun the task of acquiring language. Before they are able to speak, babies must first make progress in four different areas. The first is physical maturation. This refers to a child's physical readiness to talk. Young babies couldn't speak even if they had the intelligence to know what they wanted to say. This is because the babies' vocal tract is shaped in such a way that they aren't physically able to produce the sounds of speech. In fact, a baby's vocal tract is shaped more like that of an adult chimpanzee than an adult human. During the first year of his or her life, the baby's vocal tract changes in shape and structure so that it becomes able to make speech sounds. However, this isn't the only physical change that is necessary. Maturation of the brain is also necessary to give the baby greater control over the muscles we use to speak.

The second area of progress a baby must make to acquire language is in speech perception and speech production. By six weeks old, babies can make fine distinctions between speech sounds, such as telling the difference between "bad"
and "bag." Very soon, differences in adult speech patterns can affect a baby's emotional state and behavior. Based on the rate, volume, and melody of speech, they can sense whether an adult is angry or playful, whether the adult is trying to begin or end an interaction, and so on. Between birth and approximately eighteen months of age, babies go through a series of stages during which they progress from simply crying to producing babbling that sounds a lot like regular speech. Cooing, or sounds of joy, first appear at about eight weeks. Around nine months, when they enter the last stage, they begin to use expressive jargon, which is babbling with the intonation and pitch of adult speech.

The third area involves social interaction. When most people talk to small infants, they use what we call "baby talk;" that is, their pitch is higher, they exaggerate their intonation, they use only a few words at a time, and they repeat words and phrases. Baby talk is common in societies around the world, and exposure to it may play an important role in a baby's acquisition of language. Babies also seem to learn some basic rules of conversation during early social interaction, such as taking turns.

The final area in which babies must progress to acquire language is cognitive. Until the following cognitive advances occur, a child cannot learn to use language meaningfully. First, a child must develop what is called object permanence. Very young infants only experience the
world through their senses; therefore, if they can’t sense something, it ceases to exist. A child has to develop object permanence, or the notion that objects still exist once they’re outside the child’s realm, before they can learn to consistently apply labels to those objects. Second, children must develop concepts, or categories that organize the world. When children learn a word, they’re actually learning to which concept or category the word refers. Third, children must learn to imitate others’ behavior. If they aren’t able to imitate others, then they can’t imitate the sound patterns that they hear around them. Finally, children must develop intent. This means that they learn to behave purposefully in order to accomplish something. This can be seen in the ten month old who stretches their hand out for a toy that is out of reach, looks at a nearby adult, looks back at the toy, and opens and closes their hand. This baby has shown its intent to communicate in order to accomplish a goal. In the child’s next major advance, at approximately twelve months, the child realizes that an arbitrary symbol can refer to a particular object. For example, the child will realize that the sound “ball” refers to that round object that he or she plays with. With this realization, the child is ready to begin connecting many sounds to many objects; that is, to learn their first words.

At first, babies speak in one-word sentences known as
holophrases. The child may have an entire proposition in mind, but can only convey one part of it at a time through a holophrase. Usually holophrases can only be understood in context. Imagine the parent who has put their child into a highchair and then stepped into another room. Soon they hear the child saying "gone, gone." Until the parent comes into the room and sees the bottle of milk on the floor, the meaning of the word "gone" is hard to decipher. Children use intonation during this stage to help convey their meaning. Whether they sound insistant, questioning, or angry helps adults around them understand the one-word sentence. After learning a word, children may extend its meaning to cover other objects or actions that resemble it in some way. This is called overextension. For example, if a child doesn't have a word for cat, they may call the cat a "bow-wow" so that they can communicate about it. When children discover a gap in their vocabulary, they may deal with it in one of three ways. They may overextend another word to cover it, they may fall back on general purpose words, such as calling an object "that," or they may coin a new word, such as calling a person who works with rats a "ratman."

After the one-word stage, toddlers predictably enter the two-word stage. Two word utterances are called telegraphic speech. These two word sentences do not follow the rules of English grammar; children combine words in
patterns that best convey the meaning to the listener. They produce sentences such as, "Daddy throw," "Daddy ball," and "Throw ball;" they do not say "Throw Daddy," or "Ball throw." Children in this stage have begun to use stress, or vocal emphasis, to express meaning.

Once toddlers leave the two-word stage, they begin to grasp the general rules of grammar, and use these in their speech. This doesn't happen all at once; rules are learned one at a time. Once children have learned a particular rule, they go through a period when the major strategy seems to be "avoid exceptions," and they apply this rule in all cases. This is referred to as overregularization. A good example of this is in the English past tense. Generally, to make a verb into the past tense, we add "ed" to it. Walk becomes walked. However, there are many exceptions to this rule. When children overregularize this rule, they will say things like, "It breaked," and "Mommy goed out."

There are many explanations for how language acquisition occurs. Four major ones are the biological theories, behavioristic theories, social-learning theories, and social-cognitive interaction theories. Biological theories of language acquisition assert that language development is the result of brain maturation. Further, they hold that humans have an innate capacity to learn language structure; that it is laid down in all humans' genes. Behavioristic theories assert that we learn language
the way we learn any other behavior, through reinforcement. As the child makes sounds, and later words and sentences, they are rewarded by those around them. Social-learning theorists agree with the behavioristic theories, but they also state that language is learned through observing and imitating other people. Social-cognitive interaction theorists agree that maturation is important, but assert that nonlinguistic human interaction is equally important, and that language is acquired primarily for its usefulness to the child.

Although we know a considerable amount about language acquisition, exactly how it occurs is still not completely resolved. All of the theories described can probably contribute something useful to our understanding of how this great transformation, called language acquisition, occurs.
Appendix H

Rating scale for Control subjects

Please rate the audiotape you just listened to.

1) How easy was it to understand the information on the audiotape?

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2) Would you recommend the use of this tape as a study aid to students learning about language acquisition?

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Appendix I

Revised Interview Questions

1. What year are you in school?
2. Describe your writing skills for me.
3. Describe your interpersonal skills.
4. Describe any term papers you've written in high school or college; for example, what was it about, what class was it for, how did you gather the information for it, etcetera.
5. Would you describe your past work experiences?
6. What did you enjoy the most about your past work experiences?
7. What did you enjoy the least?
8. Describe a typical day at your favorite job.
9. Describe any experiences you've had working on a team.
10. Tell me about any experiences you've had working with the public.
11. What do you like about working with the public?
12. What do you dislike about working with the public?
13. What experiences have you had in public speaking?
14. How good are you at public speaking?
15. In your opinion, what are the most important factors that influence success in college?
16. What would you say are the most important factors that influence success in interpersonal relationships?
17. Would you describe all of the extra-curricular activities you’ve been involved in during high school and college?

18. Describe any honors or awards of any kind that you’ve received.

19. Do you work better independently, or with other people?

20. Why do you say that?

21. In your opinion, what is the hardest part of working with different types of people?

22. Compared to other people your age, how good are your organizational skills?

23. What has been your favorite college course thus far?

24. Why?

25. What has been your least favorite course thus far?

26. What makes you say that?

27. If you could design your ideal college course, what would it be like? For example, what would the assignments be like, what types of things would you want to learn, what would the instructor be like, etcetera?

28. If you could change anything about your work habits in school, what would you change?

29. What makes you say that?

30. What do you think are the most positive features of the University of Montana?
Appendix I continued

31. What things about the University of Montana would you like to see changed or improved?

32. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?

33. If you had to describe yourself, in several paragraphs, to someone who had never met you, how would you describe yourself?

34. What accomplishments have you been the most proud of in your life so far?

35. What was it about these experiences that made you proud?

36. In general, what are some of your strengths?