

The deep voice of alpha male

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Men with a deep, masculine voice are seen as more dominant by other men but a man's own dominance - perceived or actual - does not affect how attentive he is to his rivals' voices. His own dominance does however influence how he rates his competitors' dominance: the more dominant he thinks he is, the less dominant he rates his rival's voice. These findings by Sarah Wolff and David Puts, from the Department of Anthropology at Pennsylvania State University in the US, are published online in Springer's journal *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*.

This is the first study to look at why men differ in the way they perceive indicators of dominance in others and what causes the variation in the degree to which a man's masculinity affects judgments of his dominance. Specifically, the authors investigated for the first time whether men's own dominance affects their attentiveness to vocal masculinity, a dominance signal, when they assess their competitors. They carried out two studies asking men to rate male vocal recordings which differed in level of masculinity i.e. from low, more masculine voices to higher, less masculine voices.

The first study looked at how participating men rated others' dominance in relation to their self-rated physical dominance in a dating game scenario, based on their competitor's voice recordings. As predicted, more masculine voices were perceived as more dominant. On the whole, men who rated themselves higher in fighting ability, i.e. more dominant, rated other men lower on dominance and reported more sexual partners in the past year. However, men's self-rated physical dominance was not linked to how attentive they were to vocal masculinity when assessing

other men's dominance.

The second study examined how objective measures of men's physical dominance including size, strength, testosterone levels and physical aggressiveness influenced dominance ratings. Of these, only testosterone had an effect. Men with either high or low levels perceived other men as more dominant, based on their voice recordings, whereas men with intermediate [testosterone](#) levels rated other men lower in dominance.

The authors conclude: "Our findings show that vocal masculinity has large effects on the appearance of dominance that are not modulated by the dominance of the perceiver. Variables related to a man's own dominance predict his assessments of other men's dominance, even though they do not predict his attentiveness to vocal masculinity when making these assessments. Future research should examine whether dominance influences assessment of other potential [dominance](#) cues, such as facial hair, facial [masculinity](#), muscularity, and stature."

More information: Wolff SE & Puts DA (2010). Vocal masculinity is a robust dominance signal in men. *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*; [DOI 10.1007/s00265-010-0981-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/s00265-010-0981-5)

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