

## **Accent, gender, and the elderly listener: Evaluations of NZE and other English accents by rest home residents**

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### **Introduction**

Accent attitudinal evaluations have characteristically been carried out on children and young people in educational institutions or on adults in the 20-60 age range; this has been as much the case in New Zealand as elsewhere. As Bell and Holmes put it in a recent overview, "captive populations of school children, and to a lesser extent university students, have provided most of the samples" (1991:162). Hence there was a challenge to see if the findings which have seemed standard for other age groups apply equally to the elderly retired or whether there are some effects unique to them. It seemed likely to us on an intuitive basis that the elderly might not discriminate so much on the basis of gender as younger speakers. One of us was also interested to discover if worship attendance affected the findings in any significant way.<sup>1</sup>

### **Background**

Very little research to date has been done with elderly people in the domain of accent evaluation. In this discussion there are three areas of interest we wish to look at: ageism; previous studies on sociolinguistics of the elderly; and issues of listener attitude to different accents.

#### **1. Ageism.**

When linguistic research has considered age and human development, this has usually been taken to mean child language development, with interest in the elderly being confined to the effects of "apparent time" in tracing the progress of a linguistic change. This means almost certainly that generalisations will have been made from the results of research with other age groups which under-represent the behaviour, values, and viewpoints of the elderly.

In one of the few discussions of language and the elderly, Coupland and Coupland (1990) suggest that ideological biases dominate

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<sup>1</sup> John Wilson is an Anglican minister, and hence has a professional interest in ascertaining the effects of religious commitment (or at least observance) on such traits as tolerance and acceptance.

much work with the elderly. They distinguish between two key concepts: diachrony (the perspective of change over time); and decrement (progressive decline in health or competence). In particular they argue that the "deficit" tradition is in danger of adopting stereotyped assumptions of decrement as the dominant factor to be considered in aging as a process, as if no other factors were involved. An anti-ageist tradition would resist assumptions about natural declinement with age and focus more heavily on the social context of the individual persons concerned.

It has to be conceded that specific diseases and impairments do occur with greater frequency amongst the elderly, but instead of simply rejecting the stereotype *in toto* a more careful approach would distinguish between those elderly who do suffer impairments which affect their linguistic and communicative ability and those who have no such impairments.

However, the elderly also constitute a particular social group in which change over time will have occurred as a result of social influences. These include factors such as: whether they are still working or retired; their place of residence (with family, alone, or in rest homes); whether they are senior members in the family constellation; and whether they have a level of life-experience which means they will seldom confront entirely new challenges but instead be faced with challenges which are variants on challenges they have previously experienced.

Quite distinct from these factors, there is of course the continuing process of social change, with the result that beliefs, values, customs or attitudes which were part of the "world view" which prevailed when the elderly were growing up may be far removed from the beliefs, values, customs and attitudes which form the prevailing world view of the society of their old age. At the present time this would apply particularly to changes in views of stereotyped sex-roles and political allegiances (e.g., the demise of the USSR as a superpower and communism as an influential political force).

There are thus at least four factors which make the elderly different from other age-groups:

- (1) the increased probability of intellectual impairment;
- (2) a different social environment (non-working, altered domestic environment);
- (3) a greater amount of social experience;
- (4) a greater gap between the mores of society as they are now and as they were when their attitudes and values were first developed.

Obviously all of these factors are relevant for sociolinguistic research as variables which may need to be controlled for whatever the age of the group concerned. In the case of the elderly it is particularly important to ensure that one is actually controlling for these variables and not simply treating the elderly as if partial intellectual impairment was not a variable at all but simply a "normal" part of being aged.

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Coupland and Coupland (1990:454) quote studies (Obler *et al.* 1985, Feier *et al.* 1980, Goodglass *et al.* 1972, Ulatowska *et al.* 1985, Ulatowska *et al.* 1986, Gordon *et al.* 1974) which dealt with a variety of age groups ranging in one study from thirty- to seventy-year-olds, in another study, from 65 to nearly 80. But all studies reported the same pattern: older listeners have lower scores than younger listeners on comprehension tests and information recall.

Bayles and Kaszniak (1987:134) refer to a study by Bayles, Tomoeda and Boone (1985) which investigated the possibility of an age effect on receptive vocabulary. In the test they carried out subjects were required to select the correct visual representation from among four choices of a word presented orally by the examiner. Ten subjects in each decade of life from the third to the eighth, who were group matched for intelligence and years of education, participated in the study. Mean scores for each group were very similar. Subjects in their 50s performed best, but not significantly better in a statistical sense than subjects in any other decade.

It would seem doubtful that these findings can be generalised to all elderly given that the groups were prematched for intelligence. One would expect a close correlation between subjects of similar education given that they were of similar intelligence. Any factor which might lead subjects of similar educational experience to experience diminution in vocabulary level would also, one might expect, cause a diminution in general intelligence level.

And indeed other tests of elderly not preselected for intelligence (Botwinick *et al.* 1974, Feifel 1949, and Ricks 1958) cited by Bayles and Kaszniak (1987:134-135) conclude that aging does affect vocabulary. As a generalisation, deterioration in the quality of responses is observed. However, what the findings of Bayles *et al.* might enable us to infer is that the elderly should not be regarded as a single category. There are no doubt elderly people who have a deterioration in their intelligence and with this a deterioration in vocabulary usage. But there are elderly people whose intelligence has not deteriorated and these subjects show no deterioration in vocabulary either. These studies underline the importance of discrimination between the "normal" elderly and those elderly in whom there is some brain disease.

Bayles and Kaszniak (1987:138) summarise the findings on comprehension research as indicating that the elderly are clearly slower in their ability to perform sentence comprehension tasks. In studies where reaction time was the dependent variable, an age effect is reported, but when the dependent variable was the number correct an age effect was not always reported. They comment further (p. 142) on the results of a study by Cohen (1979) which showed that comprehension of spoken language is harder for the elderly because of a diminished ability to simultaneously perform the tasks of grasping the surface meaning and also carrying out integrative, constructive and organising processes.

They also refer (p. 146) to research by Kogen (1974) which studied age effects on the way in which concepts were classified, using an object sorting task. Elderly subjects formed fewer groups (in the sorting process), which Kogen interpreted as indicative of a weakening imagination and tendency towards literalness. That may be going a little far, but following on from Cohen's findings it would not seem surprising if, as a generalisation, the elderly have a reduced ability to make distinctions with the same rapidity as younger people. And in situations where there are time constraints this may mean that the elderly are able to make fewer distinctions in the time available than are younger people. But again, one should be careful not to simply generalise and lump all elderly into a single category.

Coupland and Coupland (1990) argue that the deficit paradigm of later-life research sustains a confused concept of "normality". In most studies, the "normal" elderly (i.e., those in good general health and without specific sensory problems) are demonstrated to be performing "abnormally" in some linguistic respect of the norm as defined by young adult performance. These studies do not generally consider attitudinal or motivational factors or the social context or real-life implications outside of the test situation. The research is seen to fit the decrement model and therefore legitimises it.

But, Coupland and Coupland suggest (p. 456), where more positively construed elderly sociolinguistic characteristics have been looked for, elderly subjects have sometimes been shown to "outperform" young communicators. They refer to Smith *et al.* (1981) who found elderly women (mean age 71) coped better with the demands of crowded and close communication environments than young women (mean age 20). In this context Peterson (1989:550) notes that Michelangelo began painting the Sistine Chapel when he was 71 and finished when he was 89, and that there are many other such examples. She suggests further that there is other evidence to suggest that life experience is a factor which may cause the elderly to approach decision making with more caution, so that they make fewer mistakes than younger people. The greater the experience a person has, the more issues that person may have to consider before reaching a well thought-out conclusion, but also the greater the likelihood that such a well thought-out conclusion will be a correct or wise conclusion.

Bayles and Kaszniak suggest (p. 153) that the most common age-related changes affecting the ability to communicate are perceptual deficits in hearing and vision and depression (which are more common among the elderly than other population segments and can affect cognitive and communicative functioning).

Deborah Cameron has some points to make about sexism which apply equally well to ageism. The first point is the way in which women were excluded as subjects from sociolinguistic research so the necessary consequence is that the norm for findings of sociolinguistic research are

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male-dominated norms. To take a specific example, it is a finding of sociolinguistics that women generally speak more "correctly" than men. But as Cameron says (1989:7) this is based on a male definition of vernacular speech. The second point is the way stereotyping is done such that the behaviour, personality, etc., are all interpreted as if the stereotype were the sole or dominating criterion for interpretation and "individual differences are at best overlooked and worst denied" (p. 8). Feminist critics of social science have insisted that women cannot just be lumped together wholesale; attention must be paid to the differences between them. Cameron quotes an example (p. 9) from Milroy's well-known Belfast study, where one group of working class women had higher vernacular scores than their male peers. This was explained as a consequence of local patterns of interaction and employment. Her approach, then, was not to discuss sex differences in terms of psychology or "attitudes" (women are more sensitive to norms of correctness; women feel more socially insecure) but instead she concentrated on objective employment opportunities open to the sexes. From an anti-ageist perspective the comment would be that sociolinguistic "norms" are set in terms of young adults so that the elderly are inevitably seen to deviate; the dominant paradigm is a deficit paradigm so that different social factors do not receive the attention they may merit.

As in approaches to combat stereotyping on the basis of gender, class or race, an anti-ageism paradigm has developed which assumes its population is undervalued. Coupland and Coupland refer to a number of studies which indicate that the elderly are undervalued. One such study (cited on p. 458) is that of Barbarto and Feezel (1987) who asked groups of people in three different age categories for their evaluations of the connotative meanings of ten words referring to an older person. They used the scales "active", "strong", "good", "progressive", and "happy", and found that some terms (including "mature", "senior citizen" and "retired person") were positively rated but "aged", "elderly", and nouns using "old" were more negatively evaluated. As a generalisation these results applied across the three age categories. A second cited study (p. 460) by Giles *et al.* (in press) found that elderly vocal guises were associated with incompetence, forgetfulness, and disaffection. As with any outgroup elderly people are prone to assimilate society's devalued appraisals of the elderly age group and so lower their self-esteem. Elderly speakers will often offer some variant on the theme "I'm good for my age". Chronological age thus becomes a token available to be manipulated in the presentation, denial or redefinition of a person's elderliness" (Coupland and Coupland 1990:463).

In a series of studies by Caporael *et al.* (1981, 1983 and 1986) cited by Coupland and Coupland (p. 459), what they call "secondary baby talk" has been found to be frequent in caregivers' talk to institutionalised residents (up to 20% of such talk); when this is filtered for content it is indistinguishable from talk actually administered to children (e.g. a set of speech configurations including high and variable pitch). As Giles and Coupland say when discussing the same study,

"These nurses use a blanket speech register which linguistically depersonalizes those in their care; some institutionalized people, not surprisingly, find this distasteful" (1991:162). On the other hand, dependent elderly people were more likely to hear such "baby talk" as nurturing and encouraging.

Improved sociolinguistic knowledge and understanding has very practical implications for the elderly: their capacity to communicate to health professionals their state of health relative to their chronological age has an effect on their capacity to negotiate their life-situation, e.g. the timing or necessity for institutionalisation, and the appropriate kind of institutionalisation.

## 2. Previous studies on sociolinguistics of the elderly.

So far as we can discover, only one study has been carried out which specifically sought to determine attitudes of elderly listeners to accent varieties; this is Paltridge and Giles' 1984 study, which was aimed primarily at testing the status of the Paris accent (Paris-based bourgeoisie) of French as the standard variety in France. It compared accents of speakers from Paris, Provence, Brittany and Alsace. Subjects from each of these four regions were asked to evaluate the accents. Each regional jury contained three age sub-groups: first year, secondary pupils ( $\bar{x} = 12$  years), young adults ( $\bar{x} = 30$  years), and retired people ( $\bar{x} = 72$  years). Both sexes were equally represented in these twelve listener sub-groups (minimal cell = 10). The matched guise technique could not be used since no person capable of assuming realistic guises could be found. Instead "verbal guises" were adopted. Male primary teacher trainees from the four regions made multiple recordings of a neutral passage of standard French prose. Eight recordings, two per regional accent, were chosen for stimulus guises in the experiment. Selection took into account tone of voice, pitch level and range, reading rate and pause length, and expressive equivalence. The intention was to ensure that as far as possible the only variable was the accent.<sup>2</sup>

A prior pilot study derived 20 variables from a survey of students' views of traits associated with speakers of the four accents; these were used in the main study. In line with other research findings many of the traits so evoked could be categorised as representing either status or solidarity. The 20 variables were rated for each of the four regional accents. Paltridge and Giles carried out a sophisticated analysis of the results, including a factor analysis from which five factors were generated which accounted for 59% of the variance. The grouped factors were: (i)

<sup>2</sup> The choice of male speakers only underlines the feminist complaint that sociolinguistic norms are male-dominated precisely because the research data is obtained primarily from male speakers (Coates 1986). It would be interesting to know if the listeners in this study would have rated provincial accents differently for female speakers than they did for the male speakers.

"professional appeal" (ambitious, hardworking, likeable); (ii) "social appeal" (likeable, pleasant voice); (iii) "steadiness" (trustworthy, hardworking); (iv) "power" (ambitious, superior); and (v) "accentedness". Finally, the individual factor scores for each of the five factors were subjected to ANOVA analyses.

Paltridge and Giles found, as they had expected, a hierarchy of accents, with Parisian the acrolect, then Provence and Brittany, with Alsace (a part of France which has in the past been part of Germany several times) at the bottom of the scale. Their other findings were as follows:

(i) Elderly listeners rated speakers more favourably than young listeners, although adolescents were less harsh on the professional appeal factor. Most importantly, the elderly did not differentiate among the non-standard varieties in terms of professional appeal.

(ii) Listener gender had few effects in this study.

(iii) Listeners' age, however, emerged as a very potent factor, and they note (1984:80) that their findings support Labov's (1970) and Clyne's (1971) claims that in the production sphere the elderly appear less concerned than younger speakers with the status connotations of language usage. Paltridge and Giles point out a need for future studies to pay greater attention to the middle-aged, to different categories of the elderly (e.g. retired vs. non-retired), and to specify their linguistic characteristics and social histories more precisely. At the same time they note the need for future studies to attend not only to chronological age, but to explore the salience of subjective age in language attitude studies.

Indeed, Rubin and Rubin argue that "contextual age provides a more valid approach to explain communication behaviour than does the number of years a person has lived." (1982:241). Paltridge and Giles comment on the Rubins' advocacy of contextual age to suggest that elderly listeners who are say 72, but who are not retired, are non-institutionalised, and have a low contextual age (i.e. the degree to which they perceive themselves as "elderly"), might well exhibit more evaluatively different judgemental patterns between the non-standard regional accented speakers than the elderly group in this study showed.

Chambers and Trudgill (1980:91-92) refer to an age-related linguistic variable. In their study of speakers in Norwich it was found that elderly speakers deviate significantly more than middle-aged speakers from the standard accent in their (ng) scores. Holmes *et al.* report the same finding in New Zealand (1991:52). Chambers and Trudgill suggest two possible reasons for this phenomenon:

(i) social pressures to use standard language in order to succeed will be less for older people: they have already achieved (or failed to achieve) whatever they aspired to careerwise; and

(ii) their social networks may be narrower.

Although this work tested the speech behaviour of elderly people rather than the listener behaviour of these subjects, it may be possible that

there is a correlation between the speech behaviour of subjects and their evaluation of listeners.

If, then, these factors apply also to the listener behaviour of these subjects, this would fit well with the findings of Paltridge and Giles that elderly subjects were more generous in their ratings of non-standard accents than were other subjects.

### 3. Listener attitudes to speaker accents.

In a paper summarising research on language attitudes, Giles *et al.* (1987) note that since 1960 there has been an explosion of research in different parts of the world showing that people express definite attitudes towards speakers representing different speech styles. The basis of such evaluations can have three possibilities: (i) intrinsic linguistic superiorities/inferiorities; (ii) intrinsic aesthetic differences; or (iii) social convention and preference. It is unlikely that language varieties can be described as "better/worse" or "correct/incorrect" when the primary function of language is communication, and it is clear enough that speakers using stigmatised language varieties are able to communicate with ease (Edwards 1979, cited by Giles *et al.* 1987:585). Similarly, aesthetic judgements do not seem to be based on qualities of beauty which are unconnected with the social norms of the language community concerned. Giles *et al.* also refer to a series of studies in which it has been shown that listeners rating totally unfamiliar language varieties could not discriminate between these on grounds of aesthetic or status difference, although these listeners discriminated readily these qualities within their own speech communities. The generally accepted conclusion is that differing evaluations of language varieties do not reflect either linguistic or aesthetic qualities so much as the social conventions within speech communities concerning the status associated with the speakers of the language varieties.

Research across the world shows a consistent pattern of results: people evaluate standard and non-standard speakers differently. The standard variety is that most often associated with status, education, and higher socioeconomic class. Giles *et al.* point out profound implications which flow from such findings, e.g. they refer (1987:586) to a study by Bourhis and Giles (1976), which found that more people complied with a request made over the public address system when the announcers' accent was RP rather than other local, non-standard varieties.

It does not follow that because there is an acrolect there will be a status hierarchy amongst non-standard dialects. A status hierarchy exists in Great Britain and France but not, for example, in Costa Rica (Berkor and Seligman, 1984, cited by Giles *et al.* 1987:586). Bayard's results are ambivalent on this point. He notes (1991a:41) that the female cultivated NZE speaker was rated poorly, but that this is in contrast with previous research by Abell (Gordon and Abell 1990) whose work would suggest support for a status hierarchy. This may have been due to the paralinguistic features of the cultivated NZE speaker in Bayard's series. Of



similar importance to these findings relating to status/power variables is the finding that standard speakers are downgraded on traits relating to solidarity, in relation to their non-standard counterparts. Giles *et al.* (1987:587) refer to studies by Lambert (1967) and by Giles *et al.* (1980) indicating that this evaluative pattern can be modified on some occasions by speaker gender. As well as accent there are other linguistic variables which may very significantly alter listener evaluations of speakers. Bradac (1990:392) refers to a study by Bradac and Wisegarver (1984) which indicated that increased lexical diversity by speakers leads listeners to assign them higher ratings for social status. This is supported by an earlier study which goes so far as to assign a rank for importance of the linguistic variables. Giles and Powesland (1975:5) refer to a study by d'Anglejan and Tucker (1973) in which a group of French Canadians rated linguistic cues in order of importance as accent, vocabulary, and lastly grammar.

Paralinguistic variables are obviously also important. Williams (1974; see also Gordon and Deveson 1989:90-1) carried out some research demonstrating the importance of visual cues. Three children, one White, one Black, and one Mexican-American, were videotaped side-on so viewers could not lip-read what they were saying. The sound-tracks of the video were dubbed with standard American English speech and student teachers were asked to evaluate the speech of these children. The White child was evaluated as having more standard speech than the Black child, and the Mexican child's speech was rated as less confident. Of more relevance for accent evaluation studies, using the listener evaluation paradigm in a way which avoids the paralinguistic variable of visual cues, are some studies quoted by Giles and Powesland (1975:4) carried out by Brown *et al.* (1973, 1974, and 1975) which found that speech rate is a better predictor of personality ratings than pitch and intonation. Increasing the speech rate of a speaker caused judges to mark him less favourably on benevolence traits but more favourably on competence traits. Decreased speech rates were found to decrease competence ratings but also to decrease benevolence ratings. The highest benevolence ratings coincided with middle values of rate. Giles and Powesland also refer (1975:5) to a number of studies showing that speakers who are hesitant, or who exhibit repetitions or vocalised pauses, are perceived less favourably than more fluent speakers. These findings are of particular relevance for the present study since the female speaker with the broad NZE accent was a hesitant and slow reader. Of particular interest for our study are findings relating to the importance of speaker gender on listener evaluation. Bradac (1990:400) refers to studies by Erickson *et al.* (1978) and Bradac and Mulac (1984) which found that when powerful and powerless styles were exhibited by male and female speakers, listeners gave ratings to speakers in the following descending order: male/high power, female/high power,

male/low power, female/low power.<sup>3</sup> Bayard (1991a:45; 1991b:36) found that speaker gender was of greater importance than speaker accent as a factor in listener evaluations of his 8-speaker stimulus tape. He found also (1991a:47) that listeners rated the accents of the RP, NAM, and AusE speakers more highly than the NZE speakers in almost all of the personality variables.

## Method

### 1. The Speakers

The stimulus materials used are described in detail by Bayard (1990, 1991a, b). The material consisted of eight speakers (four male, four female) reading the same 170-word passage. The characteristics of the speakers were, in order of recording on the tape:

- (1) younger female, lower middle class "innovative" general NZE accent;
- (2) younger female, lower class "innovative" broad NZE accent;
- (3) older female, upper middle class, RP accent;
- (4) middle-aged male, middle class, Canadian NAM accent;
- (5) older female, upper middle class, cultivated NZE accent;
- (6) middle-aged male, middle class, general AusE accent;
- (7) older male, middle class, "conservative" general NZE accent;
- (8) middle-aged male, upper middle class (lower-class background) "conservative" broad NZE accent.

We obviously did not employ the "matched guise" technique, in which a single speaker would simulate the different accents in order to control for paralinguistic variables. Such a technique in which one appears to have rigorous scientific experimental "controls" might seem a prerequisite if one wants valid data. But in our view many research topics in the social sciences cannot be investigated adequately in this rather artificial, almost clinical way. It is well known, for example, that any act of measurement actually alters the experimental situation. When one is dealing with the complexities of human behaviour, artificial attempts to control variables inevitably introduce as a side-effect other complicating variables into the experimental situation. In the case of the matched guise technique it is highly improbable that any one actor can successfully, without distortion or parody, reproduce with equal accuracy an appropriate range of several different accents (Bayard 1990:76). And where there is artificiality or parody the attempt to introduce a "control" turns out to have introduced a new variable which is uncontrolled to an unknown extent.

As noted above Paltridge and Giles opted for "verbal guises". A very thorough attempt to control speaker variables was utilised by using

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<sup>3</sup> "Power" was defined as a counsellor/client relationship, with the counsellor having high power. Cf. also Kramer (1982) on "women's speech" and female speaker accommodation.

males of 21-23 years of age with voices finally selected which were matched as closely as possible for tone of voice, pitch level and range, reading rate and pause length, and expressive equivalence. This attempt to control for paralinguistic variables does increase the level of "scientific" accuracy of their findings in terms of the effects of accent. However, it also means that their study necessarily excluded from its scope other very important variables which may affect the way listeners evaluate accents, in particular the variables of speaker gender and speaker age.

We believe that at least two approaches are warranted in the social scientific assessment of human behaviour and interaction. One approach is that characteristic of the social psychology of language as typified by Paltridge and Giles, which focuses in a "rigorous" way on a narrowly defined area, investigating the effect of only one or two variables. This certainly generates conclusions which are methodologically rigorous and scientifically valid, but which are not necessarily applicable beyond the specific hypothesis being studied. That is, the simultaneous interaction between a number of variables—speaker accent, gender, age, reading speed, etc.—cannot be dealt with in such a rigorous fashion.

Another approach is that followed in the present study, in which one seeks to identify and acknowledge a wide range of important variables which are not rigorously controlled for but which cover a broad area. Obviously the results of such studies have to be suggestive rather than definitive, and there are admittedly important problems involved in the use of the sample of voices employed here.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, it is also obvious that everyday speaker-listener interaction does not take place under laboratory conditions limited to only one or two variables, but rather is affected by the simultaneous interaction of many factors. Such broad-focus studies may thus explore areas of expected or unexpected variation from previously understood or assumed norms, and so establish possible areas for more specific and detailed research. We suggest that both kinds of

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<sup>4</sup> A referee has commented that the four female voices span a wider range of age and socioeconomic class than the male ones; moreover, both the RP and hesitant broad voices were female. This might therefore lead listeners to react negatively to the female voices as a group, since the male speakers form a more uniform middle-class, middle-aged group. We certainly acknowledge that the composition of the stimulus tape is far from ideal, and employ it here only because it allowed direct comparability of our results with Bayard's earlier studies using the same voices. Nevertheless, in the present study all speakers were identified as middle class by a majority of the subjects, and none of the older subjects had obvious signs of age in their voices; only the teen-aged Speaker No. 2 stood out as discretely younger. Despite his upper-middle-class status, Speaker No. 8's accent was actually slightly broader than No. 2's. But it is obvious that what is needed for future studies are more rigorously controlled experiments, with stimulus tapes carefully balanced by age, gender, paralinguistic features, and accent, and pre-tested and screened for suitability by groups not participating in the main experiment.

study—the present kind and the specialised kind which utilise a "guise" technique—are necessary for a complete and detailed understanding of human speech behaviour.

## 2. The Listeners, the Interview, and the Interviewer.

The subjects employed were residents of rest homes. In the case of both rest homes the person charged with the care of the residents was kind enough to indicate to me residents who, for health reasons, would be unsuitable for this research. Otherwise Wilson interviewed all residents who were willing to respond to the questionnaire. There were more than twice as many females interviewed (30) as males (11). This was an accurate reflection of the population of these rest homes. Three of the respondents were aged less than 70, but the majority of the residents were in their 70s, 80s, or 90s (mean age 81.4; s.d. 9.8). Ten of these respondents were born and had spent significant portions of their lives (over three years) in Great Britain, with rather a higher proportion of people of Scottish and Irish origin compared to English origin than if the same study had been conducted in some other part of New Zealand. This factor may have affected their ability to correctly identify the nationalities of the speakers.

There was very considerable variation in the attention span and the hearing of the respondents. In the first trial Wilson attempted to interview two respondents together, but one proved faster than the other. The other pondered aloud her answers and was met with a snort of derision from the faster respondent. After this episode it seemed most practical for interviews to be conducted with one respondent at a time. These factors of attention span and hearing also necessitated some variety in the method of administration of the questionnaire. Some respondents were very brisk in making responses and were ready and wanting to make responses after listening to about 15 seconds of the tape. They would then answer three questions and ask to hear more of the tape before continuing with the questionnaire. Other respondents were slower and more careful, asking to hear several repeats of the tape; they would sometimes answer only one question before needing to hear more of the tape. Interviews thus ranged from 40 minutes to one hour and 40 minutes. But this allowed each respondent to answer each question to his/her own satisfaction, with no pressures from time limitations or peers.

At the beginning of the interview, many respondents indicated anxiety about whether or not they were giving the "right" answers. Not only did Wilson stress before the interview that it was their opinion which was being sought and that their opinion was the right answer, but each respondent indicated an answer for the first few questions Wilson made affirmations—e.g. "good"—designed to dispel any anxiety. This seemed to prove effective and did not need to be continued beyond the first few questions in all but a very few cases.

The interviewer was a minister of religion who had taken services of worship which some of the respondents had attended. There was no way of testing whether this affected the answers given, but it was the subjective impression of the interviewer that the respondents accepted that their opinion was the "right" answer, and that their opinion was given. And the question on worship attendance, where one might have anticipated that some respondents might feel constrained to answer in a way designed to please the interviewer (who incidentally was in street dress), was the last question in the questionnaire. By the time respondents came to answer this question they had become quite accustomed to offering their opinions without any inhibitions. It is the impression of the interviewer that this last question was answered in an uninhibited way also.

### **3. The Questionnaire**

Listeners were asked to evaluate the eight speakers on a standard five point scale for the following variables (with the abbreviations used in the tables in brackets)<sup>5</sup>: pleasantness of accent (PLEASA); leadership (LDRSHP); estimated income (INCOME); ambition (AMBIT); likeability (LIKEAB); reliability (RELIAB); intelligence (INTELL); perceived socioeconomic class (CLASS); self-confidence (SELF-C); educational level (EDUCAT); personal acceptability to the listener (ACCEPT); sense of humour (HUMOUR) and nationality. In addition they were invited to indicate on a five point scale the frequency of their attendance at worship services.

## **Results**

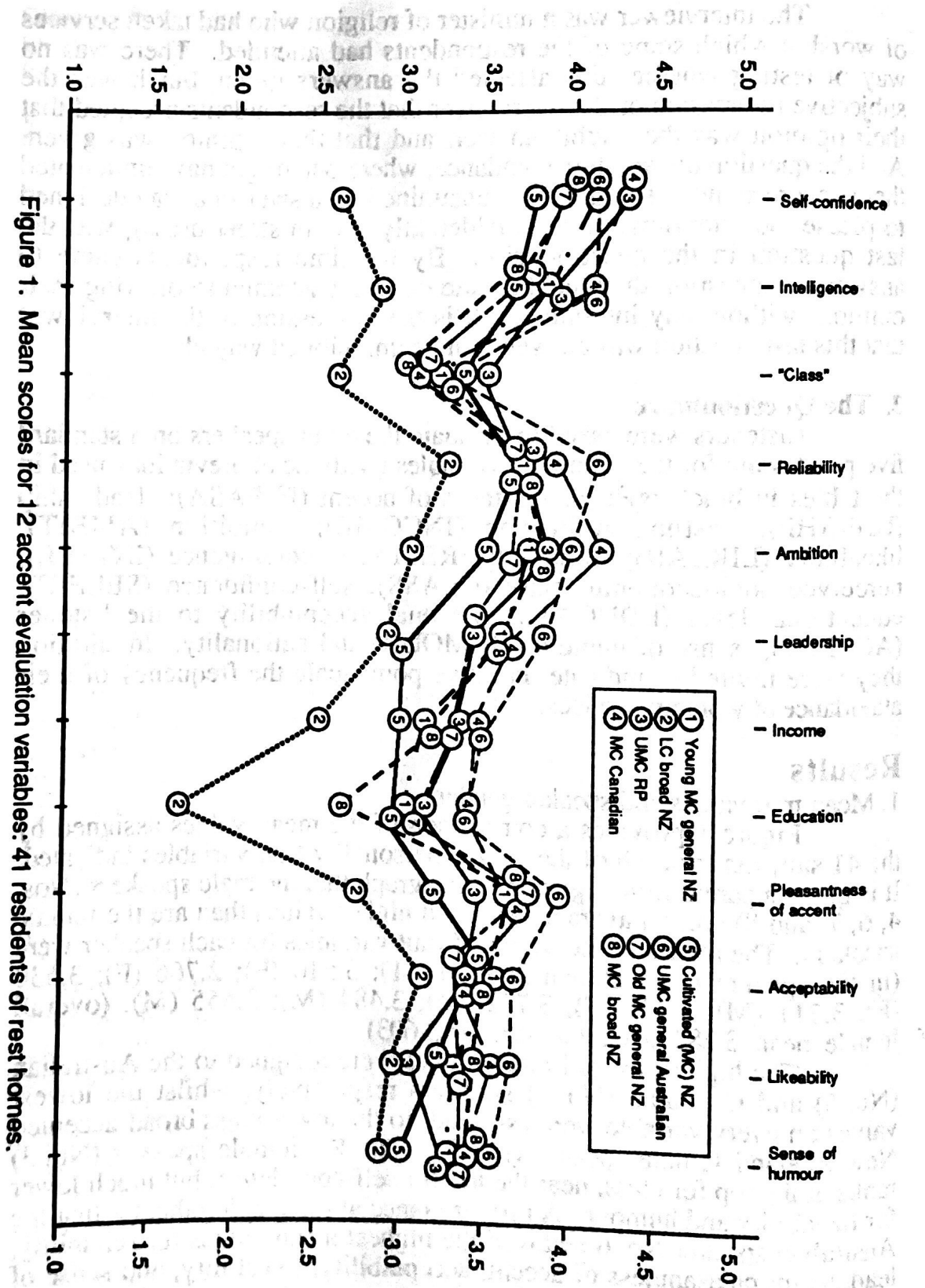
### **1. Mean trait values and speaker gender**

Figure 1 provides a comparison of the mean values assigned by the 41 subjects for each of the twelve personality trait variables indicated. It is quite apparent from a glance at this graph that the male speakers (Nos. 4, 6, 7, and 8) are, on average, assigned higher values than are the female speakers. The means of the scores of trait variables for each speaker were (in the speaker order shown in Figure 1): 3.510 (F); 2.766 (F); 3.530 (F); 3.711 (M); 3.321 (F); 3.762 (M); 3.484 (M); 3.455 (M); (overall female mean: 3.282. overall male mean 3.603).

The highest overall mean values were assigned to the Australian (No. 6) and Canadian (No. 4) speakers respectively, whilst the lowest values on every variable were assigned to the lower class broad-accented New Zealand female speaker (No. 2). The RP female speaker (No. 3) ranks at the top for class, near the top for self-confidence, but much lower for likeability and humour. A further glance at the graph indicates that the Australian speaker No. 6 received the highest mean values for reliability, leadership, pleasantness of accent, acceptability, likeability, and sense of

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<sup>5</sup> For the sake of clarity, these have been further abbreviated in Figs.2-4.



humour. The last four of these variables relate to the solidarity dimension.<sup>6</sup> For the Australian and Canadian speakers, respondents typically made comments such as "He sounds as if he knows what he is doing" in an approving tone of voice and then proceeded to rate the speaker well on virtually every trait. It was as if a single judgement had been made and was being applied as a total description of the speaker, and that judgement seemed to be one primarily of solidarity. Further to this we might note that listeners discriminated less amongst speakers on the solidarity variables of acceptability, likeability and sense of humour than they did for other speaker variables. We will return to this point about solidarity later.

As a generalisation listeners rated the cultivated New Zealand female speaker poorly. Respondents made comments such as "She likes herself, doesn't she". As with the RP speaker, this speaker was ranked second for "class", but low in "likeability" and "humour". With both this speaker and the RP speaker there is an inverse relationship between the traits "class" and "likeability". This inverse relationship is in line with previous research findings about the relationship between power and solidarity variables (see above).

However, a different picture emerges with speaker No. 2, the lower class young female speaker. She was assigned the lowest values for both class and solidarity. These low ratings are probably due in large degree to the "poor" paralinguistic characteristics of this person's speech. Table 6 (below) indicates the large number of hesitations (22) and the long time taken by this speaker to read the set passage (68.5" vs. 44.6" for the Canadian speaker). This table does not convey the possible impact of a misreading of a very simple word "cure" as "core". These findings are in line with the previous research by Brown *et al.* discussed above that decreased speech rates cause speakers to decrease in power as well as solidarity ratings.

It needs to be recognised that the very poor ratings for every trait assigned by listeners to this speaker has the obvious effect of lowering the overall female means. However, the mean for the other three female speakers is 3.454, still well below the male mean.

Of some interest in view of the poor overall female mean in contrast with the male mean are the mean trait scores for speakers 1 and 7. Speaker 1 was the younger, LMC general NZE female speaker. Speaker 7 was the older, MC general NZE male speaker. Speaker 1's mean score was 3.510, a little higher than Speaker 7's 3.484. When one analyses the results for these two speakers more closely some interesting discrepancies are found.

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<sup>6</sup> For a description and discussion of the solidarity, power, and charisma dimensions employed here, see the earlier studies by Bayard (1990, 1991a, b).

The differences in the mean values for each trait for these two speakers was (in order of magnitude of the  $F\bar{x} - M\bar{x}$ : acceptability (.268), self-confidence (.244), leadership (.122), ambition (.098), intelligence (.073), class (.024), reliability (.000), likeability (-.051), humour (-.073), education (-.074), income (-.195), pleasant accent (-.195).

The positive values rating the female higher than the male may seem mildly surprising. Quite apart from our results indicating that listeners rate male speakers more highly than female speakers (in agreement with other research findings), there is also the fact that the particular male speaker in question is MC whilst the female speaker was LMC. One might expect that if socioeconomic class has any impact on linguistic and paralinguistic features of speech, e.g. ease of lexical recognition and fluency of speech, this would lead listeners to assign higher values for power variables to the higher class speaker (although it should of course be noted that the difference between LMC and MC is a small one in the rather arbitrary socioeconomic index employed here). Such was the case for the traits education and income, but not for class. The solidarity variables were divided, with the female speaker having a higher value for acceptability, and the male speaker higher values for likeability and pleasantness of accent. What stands out is that the scores for most of the traits one might term charisma (Bayard 1991a:43) are higher for the female than for the male speaker.

Indeed some of the listeners' comments on these two speakers were to the effect that the female speaker sounded "bright" whilst the male speaker was very "ordinary". The higher rating of the female speaker on what we are calling charisma variables could be accounted for a possible ageist effect operating here. This would certainly be in line with the findings of Coupland and Coupland (1990) and Giles *et al.* (1987).

It is interesting to note that the two broad NZE speakers were rated bottom and second to bottom for education and social class. The male speaker was ranked fifth for income; this was the lowest rating assigned to any male speaker, however. So the broad speakers were, in the main, rated lowest on the power variables. However, a more mixed picture emerges for solidarity variables. The female broad speaker was assigned the lowest ratings of all speakers for solidarity variables, whereas the male broad speaker rates third for solidarity variables. This was actually the highest rating for any of the NZE speakers. The two speakers who were rated higher on solidarity variables were the Australian and Canadian speakers. The general NZE female speaker was rated more highly than the other female speakers on solidarity variables. One might speculate whether listeners evaluate solidarity in male speakers on a different basis from that for female speakers—i.e., perhaps more solidarity is felt for a broad speaking "sporty" male but for a general speaking "good average but not uppity" female. As indicated above the female mean ratings for all speaker traits are lower than the male mean ratings. Table 1 below sets out



**TABLE 1**  
**SPEAKER SEX MEANS (4 FEMALE, 4 MALE) FOR**  
**41 RETIREMENT HOMES RESIDENTS**  
 (in order of greatest FX/MX difference)

	ALL SUBJS. (N=41)		FEMALES (N=30)		MALES (N=11)		MALE diff	
	F X	M X	F X	M X	F X	M X	-FEM. diff	MALE diff
PLEASEA	3.226	3.732	3.167	3.767	3.386	3.636	-0.250	+0.350
ACCEPT	3.390	3.463	3.350	3.492	3.500	3.386	+0.114	+0.256
HUMOUR	3.110	3.439	3.083	3.475	3.182	3.341	-0.159	+0.233
AMBIT	3.524	3.896	3.550	3.975	3.455	3.682	-0.227	+0.198
EDUCAT	2.732	3.134	2.783	3.208	2.591	2.932	-0.341	+0.084
LDRSHP	3.244	3.616	3.242	3.617	3.250	3.614	-0.364	+0.011
LIKEAB	3.159	3.512	3.083	3.433	3.364	3.727	-0.364	-0.014
INTELL	3.524	3.878	3.592	3.933	3.341	3.727	-0.386	-0.044
SELF-C	3.701	4.098	3.833	4.208	3.341	3.796	-0.455	-0.080
INCOME	3.012	3.366	3.067	3.392	2.864	3.296	-0.432	-0.107
RELIAB	3.591	3.878	3.675	3.908	3.364	3.796	-0.432	-0.199
CLASS	3.128	3.226	3.167	3.208	3.023	3.273	-0.250	-0.208
MEAN M/F DIFFS=							-0.296	-0.208
s.d.=							.144	.152

these means for the listeners' evaluations of the eight speakers according to speaker gender, and for each speaker trait.

These results indicate that as a generalisation male speakers are evaluated more favourably than female speakers by all respondents. The one result contravening this pattern is that male listeners are slightly more likely to prefer a closer level of friendship (i.e. ACCEPT) with a female than with a male speaker. This result should not be regarded as too startling!

When these data were subjected to ANOVA testing to see if there were statistically significant differences between male and female respondents' evaluations of speaker variables according to listener gender, the only statistically significant difference was for the self-confidence trait. Male listeners rated female speakers as having much less self-confidence than did female listeners ( $p = .001$ ). However, although all of the remaining variables proved not to be significantly different, this may be due to the smallness of the male sample size ( $N = 11$ ).

Therefore while the following observations are not statistically significant they may be viewed as suggestive for future research with larger respondent populations. One may look at the differences between the means for male and female speakers according to listener gender set out in the fourth column of Table 1. In the upper group of speaker traits the female listeners rate female speakers more poorly in comparison to male speakers than do male listeners. This may be interpreted alternatively as male listeners rating female speakers less poorly in comparison to male speakers than do female listeners.

Conversely, in the lower group of speaker traits the female listeners rate female speakers less poorly in comparison to male speakers than do male listeners. The alternative interpretation here is that male listeners are rating female speakers more poorly in comparison to male speakers than do female listeners.

The interest of this lies in the fact that the upper set of four speaker traits may be seen as solidarity variables and the lower as power. The female respondents thus downgrade their own sex more on the solidarity variables than they do on the power ones, while the male respondents downgrade females less on solidarity variables than they do on power.

Although listener gender difference was not statistically significant, speaker gender was, as shown by pairs T-Tests of female and male trait mean scores. As Table 2 shows, the differences between the way all 41 listeners evaluated female speakers in contrast to males is highly significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) for all traits except "acceptability" and "class".

The results when the 30 female subjects are considered by themselves are very similar to Table 2; male speakers are rated significantly more highly than females ( $p = 0.000$  to  $0.014$ ) for all traits except "class", "acceptability", and "reliability". This is perhaps not surprising since the 30 females constitute 73% of the total number of

**TABLE 2**  
**T-TEST RESULTS OF LISTENERS' EVALUATIONS OF SPEAKER ACCENTS**  
**N=41 (Male and Female)**

	F.Sp.Mn.	M.Sp.Mn.	Diff.	2-tail prob.
PLEASEA	3.2256	3.7317	-.5061	.000
RELIAB	3.5915	3.8780	-.2866	.009
AMBIT	3.5244	3.8963	-.3720	.005
HUMOUR	3.1098	3.4390	-.3293	.009
LDRSHP	3.2439	3.6159	-.3720	.000
INCOME	3.0122	3.3659	-.3537	.000
EDUCAT	2.7317	3.1341	-.4024	.000
SELF-C	3.7012	4.0976	-.3963	.000
INTELL	3.5244	3.8780	-.3537	.000
LIKEAB	3.1585	3.5122	-.3537	.004
ACCEPT	3.3902	3.4634	-.0732	.518
CLASS	3.1280	3.2256	-.0976	.277

respondents, and their results can be expected to predominate over the results of the 11 males when the male and female results are combined. Significant differences for male listeners were limited to "income", "self-confidence", "intelligence", "leadership", "education", and "reliability", with male speakers of course scoring higher.

Table 3 below shows the Spearman correlation coefficients for the variable of listener attendance at worship (self-rated on a five point scale: "never", "rarely", "sometimes", "most times", "always") against the mean listener evaluations of the 12 speaker traits listed.

TABLE 3  
SPEARMAN CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS FOR  
MEAN LISTENER EVALUATIONS OF SPEAKER ACCENTS  
VS. LISTENER WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

	Spearman Corr. Coeff.	Significance
LIKEAB	.3509	.012
PLEASA	.3166	.022
HUMOUR	.3083	.025
ACCEPT	.2694	.044
LDRSHP	.2554	.054
INCOME	.2134	.090
EDUCAT	.2003	.105
RELIAB	.1921	.114
AMBIT	.1840	.125
CLASS	.1625	.155
INTELL	.1440	.184
SELF-C	.0682	.336

Self-attributed worship attendance is significantly associated with an increased listener attribution of higher values for speaker likeability, accent pleasantness, good humour and acceptability. These traits obviously comprise the solidarity dimension.

## 2. Factor analyses

Although the ratio of the number of subjects to the twelve trait variables is too small to be anything other than suggestive,<sup>7</sup> the data included in the foregoing results were subjected to factor analysis to determine how the variables related to each other; how speaker gender

<sup>7</sup> A ratio of ten subjects or cases to each variable to be factored is considered ideal in such research, although a 5:1 ratio may be satisfactory for exploratory studies such as that undertaken here. With a ratio of only 3.42:1, the analysis discussed here must be considered as suggestive only. This proviso is of course even more applicable with the analysis which follows using the 24 female and male speaker trait means.

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modified these relationships; and how listener worship attendance modified them.

*Firstly*, to determine how these variables related to each other, mean scores for the twelve traits were analysed. Three factors were generated with eigenvalues greater than 0.8:

**factor 1:** (accounted for 65.6% of the variance) acceptability, likeability, and pleasantness of accent; interpreted here as solidarity variables.

**factor 2:** (7.7% of the variance) educational level, socioeconomic level, intelligence, income; interpreted here as power variables.

**factor 3:** (6.8%) ambition, humour, self-confidence, leadership, reliability; interpreted here as charisma variables.

Figure 2 gives the results of a factor analysis based on the overall mean scores assigned by the 41 listeners to the twelve traits, plotting factor 1 (solidarity) against factor 2 (power).

These results indicate the presence of three relatively discrete groupings rather than two, and seem to confirm that charisma variables emerge as an important and relatively distinct dimension in some listener evaluations of speaker accents (cf. Bayard 1991a:44, 1991b:24).

*Secondly*, to determine how the variables related to each other and to speaker gender, a factor analysis of the mean scores for the accent traits of the speakers by speaker gender (i.e. 24 variables) was carried out. The four factors generated with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were:

**factor 1:** (accounted for 53.0% of the variance) male likeability, male acceptability, female acceptability, male pleasantness of accent, female likeability, and male income. Male income is an anomaly in this group which otherwise could be characterised as a solidarity dimension for speakers of both genders, although the female solidarity trait loadings on this factor are much lower than their male counterparts;

**factor 2:** (7.6%) male ambition, male education, male leadership, male humour, male intelligence, male reliability, male self-confidence, female intelligence, male socioeconomic class. Female intelligence is an anomaly in this group, which otherwise could be characterised as comprising male power/charisma, a group into which male income from factor 1 could readily fit;

**factor 3:** (6.4%) female humour, female ambition, female leadership, female pleasantness of accent, female reliability, female self-confidence. This group seems clearly characterised as female charisma traits ;

**factor 4:** (5.3%) female education, and female income, here interpreted as female power traits.

Figure 3 gives the results of this analysis of speaker traits by speaker gender, plotting factor 1 (solidarity) against factor 2 (male power/charisma).

Perhaps the most conspicuous conclusion one might draw from this plot is indicated by the dotted line which separates all of the female speaker accent traits from the male speaker traits. All female traits belong to the inner, "lower" part of the graph; in other words, all of the female

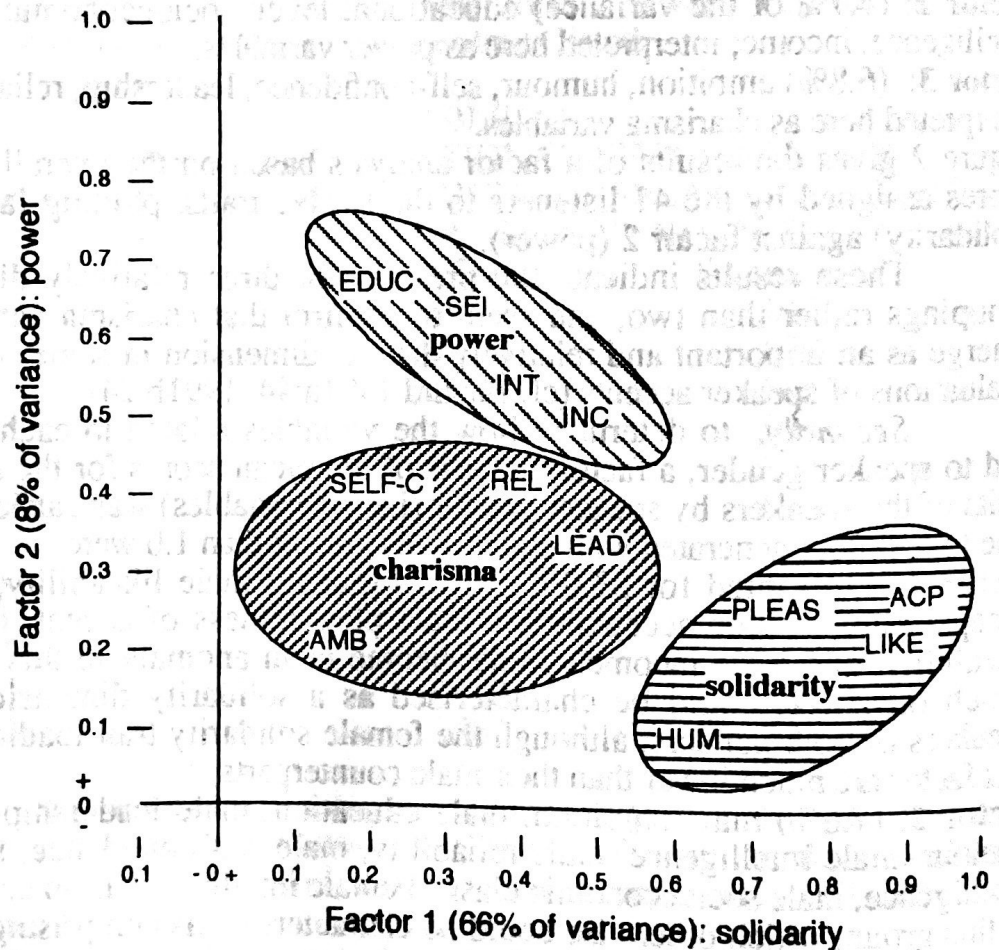


Figure 2. 12-variable rotated factor analysis of overall trait means for 8 speakers. N = 41.

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and means have lower loadings on both solidarity and power dimensions than their male counterparts. This indicates that overall listeners of both genders consistently rate female speakers as having less power, charisma, and a higher than male speakers. Female traits do not form a separate factor (compare with the male traits as in Bayard's earlier research (1991). Instead, the female traits are subordinate, male only superordinate, in both factors. Speaker gender is obviously a very important factor affecting listener evaluations for these two dimensions. (One might note also that the number of female speakers used is only 10.)

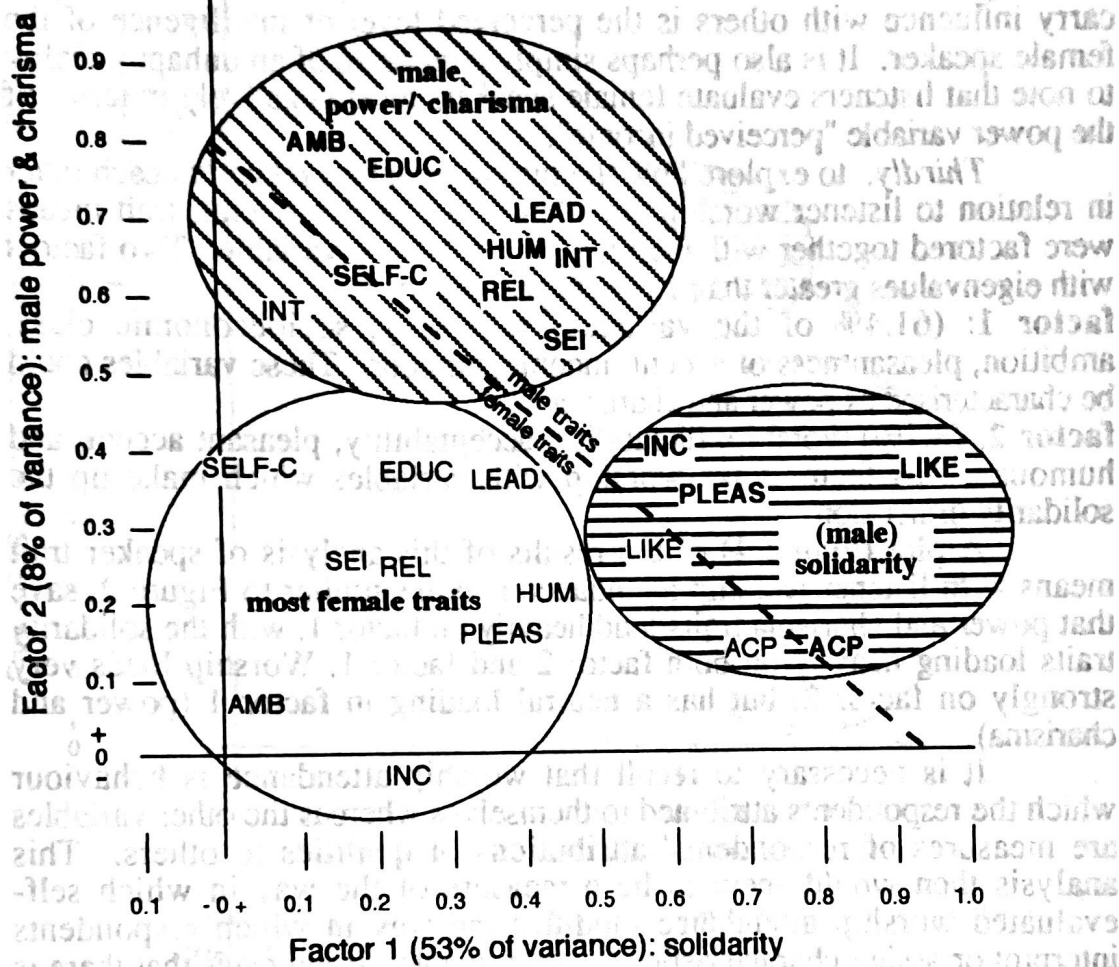


Figure 3. 24-variable rotated factor analysis of female and male trait means for 8 speakers. Male means shown in boldface. N = 41.

What seems particularly evident from the three factor analyses given above is the predominant impact of solidarity variables. For Figure 2, solidarity variables accounted for 62% of the variance. On Figure 3, solidarity variables account for 23% of the variance. This does not appear between listener worship attendance and speech or solidarity variables. results in Table 3 show a significant positive correlation to the solidarity dimension. These results appear in and add detail to the credibility, flexibility, warmth and pleasantness of accent, i.e. with appears to be a significant positive correlation between listener worship attendance and speech or solidarity variables.

trait means have lower loadings on both solidarity and power dimensions than their male counterparts. This indicates that overall listeners of both genders consistently rate female speakers as having less power, charisma, and solidarity than male speakers. Female traits do not form a separate factor coordinate with the male traits, as in Bayard's earlier research (1991a, b); instead, the female traits are subordinate, male ones superordinate, in both factors. Speaker gender is obviously a very important factor affecting listener evaluations for these rest home residents. One might note also that the attribute of female speakers most likely to carry influence with others is the perceived level of intelligence of the female speaker. It is also perhaps simply a measure of an unhappy reality to note that listeners evaluate female speakers most negatively in terms of the power variable "perceived income".

*Thirdly*, to explore how the twelve variables related to each other in relation to listener worship attendance, the twelve overall trait means were factored together with the worship attendance variable. Two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were generated:  
**factor 1:** (61.4% of the variance) reliability, socioeconomic class, ambition, pleasantness of accent, income, humour. These variables could be characterised as power and charisma.  
**factor 2:** (8.4%) worship, likeability, acceptability, pleasant accent, and humour. This factor links worship with variables which make up the solidarity dimension.

A plot (Figure 4) of the results of this analysis of speaker trait means with listener worship attendance is quite similar to Figure 2, save that power and charisma traits load heavily on factor 1, with the solidarity traits loading heavily on both factor 2 and factor 1. Worship loads very strongly on factor 2, but has a neutral loading in factor 1 (power and charisma).

It is necessary to recall that worship attendance is behaviour which the respondents attributed to themselves whereas the other variables are measures of respondents' attributions of qualities to others. This analysis then would seem to be a measure of the way in which self-evaluated worship attendance modifies the way in which respondents interpret or assign characteristics to other people. It indicates that there is something associated with worship attendance which contrasts with factor 1—i.e. with power/charisma variables. Conversely, worship attendance appears to have a much closer association with the variables of speaker acceptability, likeability, humour and pleasantness of accent, i.e. with the solidarity dimension. These results support and add detail to the results in Table 3 above, which show a significant positive correlation between listener worship attendance and speaker solidarity variables.

What seems particularly evident from the three factor analyses given above is the preponderant impact of solidarity variables. For Figure 2, solidarity variables accounted for 65.6% of the variance. For Figure 3, solidarity variables account for 53% of the variance. This does not appear



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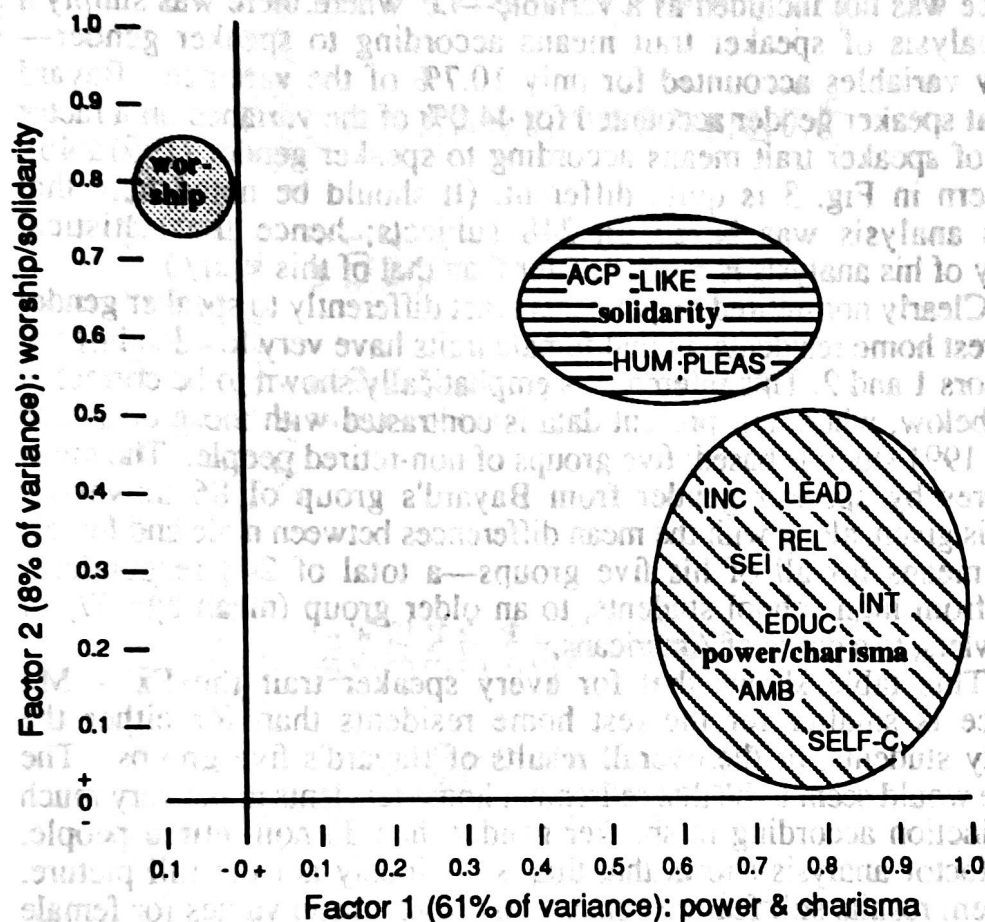


Figure 4. 13-variable rotated factor analysis of 12 overall trait means for 8 speakers plus listeners' worship attendance.  $N = 41$ .

to be the case in the third factor analysis shown in Figure 4, where worship and solidarity variables accounted for only 8.4% of the variance. However, as noted earlier, worship is a self-evaluated characteristic and its inclusion here means that factor 2 in this third analysis is not the same as factors 1 in Figures 2 and 3.

Even so, these results are in marked contrast with results from younger, non-retired subjects. In Bayard's 1991a study where worship attendance was not included as a variable—i.e. where there was simply a factor analysis of speaker trait means according to speaker gender—solidarity variables accounted for only 10.7% of the variance. Bayard found that speaker gender accounted for 44.0% of the variance on a factor analysis of speaker trait means according to speaker gender (1991a:46). The pattern in Fig. 3 is quite different. (It should be noted here that Bayard's analysis was based on 248 subjects; hence the statistical reliability of his analysis is much greater than that of this study.)

Clearly non-retired respondents react differently to speaker gender than do rest home residents, in that female traits have very low loadings in both factors 1 and 2. This inference is emphatically shown to be correct in Table 4 below, where our present data is contrasted with those on which Bayard's 1991 study is based: five groups of non-retired people. The mean trait scores by speaker gender from Bayard's group of 86 university students is given, along with the mean differences between male and female speaker means for all of his five groups—a total of 248 respondents ranging from high school students, to an older group (mean age 57) of male bowlers, to a group of Americans.

This table shows that for every speaker trait the  $F\bar{x} - M\bar{x}$  difference is smaller for the rest home residents than for either the university students, or the overall results of Bayard's five groups. The inference would seem to be that retirement home residents make very much less distinction according to speaker gender than do non-retired people. But the factor analysis shows that this is obviously not the full picture. Our present results still feature consistently lower mean values for female speaker traits. The correct inference from Figure 3 would appear to be that women are in every respect "lesser" than men in the view of these respondents (most of whom were of course female). But it should also be noted from Table 4 that in the mean values assigned for virtually every speaker trait the rest home residents give more generous evaluative judgements than did the university students. The most probable explanation of these results may be that the rest home residents did not wish to make much discrimination between speakers. This would be in line with the research findings of Paltridge and Giles, Chambers and Trudgill, and Holmes *et al.* discussed earlier. It also fits with comments made by some of the respondents to Wilson during the course of the interviews. After listening to a portion of the tape of speaker 2 in which the speaker misread a word and hesitated, the respondent commented "You can see she is trying" and then proceeded to rank speaker 2 in a way

**TABLE 4**  
**SPEAKER SEX MEANS (4 FEMALE, 4 MALE)**  
**Rest Home Residents vs. non-retired people**  
**(in order of greatest F $\bar{x}$  / M $\bar{x}$  difference)**

	REST HOME RES. (N=41)		UNIV. STUDENTS (N=86)		5-sample NON-RETIR. (N=248); overall	
	F $\bar{x}$	M $\bar{x}$	F $\bar{x}$	M $\bar{x}$	diff	diff
PLEASA	3.226	3.732	2.39	3.03	-.64	-.79
LDRSHP	3.244	3.616	2.73	3.44	-.71	-.68
INCOME	3.012	3.366	2.67	3.31	-.64	-.67
AMBIT	3.524	3.896	2.77	3.51	-.74	-.58
LIKEAB	3.159	3.512	2.71	3.14	-.43	-.57
RELIAB	3.592	3.878	3.00	3.59	-.59	-.56
INTELL	3.524	3.878	3.06	3.44	-.38	-.55
CLASS	3.128	3.226	3.03	3.36	-.33	-.5
SELF-C	3.701	4.098	3.18	3.78	-.60	-.53
EDUCAT	2.732	3.134	2.76	3.23	-.47	-.48
ACCEPT	3.390	3.463	3.31	3.56	-.25	-.46
HUMOUR	3.110	3.439	2.51	3.11	-.60	-.45
MEAN M/F DIFFS= <sup>8</sup>					-.532	-.565
s.d.=					.125	.209

<sup>8</sup> For views of some older New Zealand women on these attitudes, see Smith 1991:68-70, 76-77.

which seemed, to the interviewer, most generous. In short, at least this group of elderly appear to be much more tolerant of accentual and paralinguistic variation than Bayard's non-retired subject groups. On the other hand, they appear to believe that females are subordinate to males in every one of the twelve personality traits elicited: a sort of "passive sexism" unparalleled in the results from the five younger groups, but understandable in the light of the social attitudes prevalent during the youth of these informants.<sup>8</sup>

### 3. Perceptions of nationality and class.

A further result obtained was the respondents' perceptions of each speaker's nationality and social status. These results are shown in Table 5 below. Several observations are worth noting.

*Firstly*, there is considerable inaccuracy in the assigning of correct nationality. However, even in the greatest inaccuracy—only 17.1% correctly identified speaker 6 as having an Australian accent—this speaker was nevertheless viewed as having an Australian accent by a higher number of respondents than any other speaker except speaker 3. The same point might be made about speaker 4; only 22.0% got his nationality correct, but far more respondents assigned Canadian or American nationality to this speaker than to any other speaker.

*Secondly*, there is a tendency to assign a British nationality to all speakers except the Australian speaker 6 (who was assumed to be a New Zealander by 58.5% of the respondents). This may reflect the British background of ten (24.4%) of the respondents.

*Thirdly*, as Bayard found with his respondents, there is a high proportion (22%) of listeners who identified speaker 2 as Maori, presumably on the basis of her paralinguistic characteristics. Of these nine listeners, however, only four of them identified this speaker as lower class.

This leads to the *fourth* point: there was a marked reluctance for listeners to classify speakers as being other than middle class. Speaker 2 was classified as LC by only 22% of our respondents (cf. a mean of 75.1% for Bayard's respondent groups in the study cited above).

Speaker 3 was classified as UMC or UC by 39% of the respondents. The same speaker was classified UMC or UC by most of Bayard's subjects, whereas 58.5% of our respondents classified this speaker as middle class. Perhaps this reluctance to make class distinctions relates to the results above; i.e., solidarity variables appear to be of primary significance to the rest home residents.

Another possible causal factor could be that those from a British background were impressed with the egalitarian nature of New Zealand in contrast with the degree of class distinction in Britain; this has perhaps inclined them to minimise the distinctions which obviously exist in New

<sup>8</sup> For views of some older New Zealand women on these attitudes, see Smith 1991:68-70, 76-77.

**TABLE 5**  
**REST HOME RESIDENTS'**  
**PERCEPTIONS OF SPEAKERS' NATIONAL ORIGIN AND SOCIAL STATUS**  
**(N=41; 30 female, 11 male)**  
**(majority/plurality for each speaker in boldface)**

	SPKR 1	SPKR 2	SPKR 3	SPKR 4	SPKR 5	SPKR 6	SPKR 7	SPKR 8
	NZE	NZE	CAN	NZE	NZE	Aus	NZE	NZE
	Y gen.	broad	NAM	cult.	cons.	gen.	Ogen.	broad
Maori/PN	2.4	22.0	—	7.3	—	2.4	4.9	—
NZ	56.1	53.7	14.6	39.0	29.3	58.5	65.9	80.5
Australian	12.2	2.4	9.8	7.3	17.1	17.1	4.9	2.4
British	22.0	14.6	43.9	43.9	43.9	4.9	22.0	17.1
Canada/NAM	—	2.4	22.0	—	—	7.3	—	—
American	4.9	4.9	7.3	2.4	2.4	7.3	—	—
Other	2.4	—	2.4	—	4.8	2.4	2.4	—
LC	2.4	22.0	—	4.9	—	2.4	7.3	7.3
ULC/LMC	—	14.6	—	4.9	2.4	4.9	4.9	7.3
MC	73.2	58.5	61.0	56.1	58.5	70.7	63.4	73.2
UMC	14.6	4.9	22.0	17.1	19.5	12.2	9.8	9.8
UC	9.8	—	17.1	17.1	19.5	9.8	14.6	2.4

Zealand society. A further factor might be the view held by many people that New Zealand is a classless society. If our respondents held such views then they would probably base their evaluations of speaker social class within that frame of reference. Clearly these explanations are intuitive rather than objective. However, it should be noted that if one were to lump LC and LMC together, and do the same with the UMC and UC, then the tendency is clearly a marked reluctance to assign lower class status to any speaker (the speaker results would be 2.4%, 36.6%, 2.4%, 0%, 9.8%, 7.3%, 12.2% and 14.6% respectively); speaker 2 is the only partial exception. But there is a much greater willingness to assign upper class status (the speaker results would be 24.4%, 4.9%, 39.0%, 39.1%, 34.2%, 22.0%, 24.4% and 12.2% respectively); again, speaker 2 is the only exception.

#### 4. Paralinguistic effects: reading speed and hesitation.

These conclusions tend to fit in with the findings referred to repeatedly in these results that elderly respondents are more likely than younger respondents to make generous evaluative judgements of speakers' accent traits. As indicated above in discussing listener evaluations of speaker 2, paralinguistic variables of speaker reading speed and hesitations and misreading seemed very probably to be important factors in the poor ratings received by this speaker. However, these paralinguistic variables almost certainly affected listener evaluations of the other seven speakers as well. Table 6 below gives the time in seconds taken by each speaker to read the set passage, and indicates also the number of pauses and restarts made by each speaker during the course of reading the passage.

The column headed "rank" indicates the ranking of speakers according to the length of time taken to read the passage. Table 7 compares the rank of speakers according to the overall mean of the trait values assigned by the listeners to each speaker with the number of pauses the speaker made in reading the passage, and with the time taken in reading the passage.

There seems a very clear relationship here between the rank of the mean scores for each speaker on all twelve traits and the number of speaker pauses. The relationship between mean speaker traits and the rank of speaker time in reading the passage is obviously not quite so close; e.g., the third fastest reader is ranked sixth on speaker traits. If, however, one takes the number of pauses as being the more dominant factor, and uses the speaker time to discriminate only amongst the speakers who exhibited the same number of pauses, then Table 7 below gives an identical ranking with that of the mean of the speaker traits assigned by these listeners. Table 8 below lists the correlations between overall speaker trait means and the paralinguistic variables.

**TABLE 6**  
**TIME IN SECONDS AND NUMBER OF PAUSES/RESTARTS**  
**IN EACH OF EIGHT ACCENT SAMPLES**

SPEAKER NUMBER	TIME	RANK	PAUSES
1. younger female general NZE (LMC)	53.2"	5	2
2. younger female broad NZE (LC)	68.5"	8	22
3. older female RP (UMC)	47.4"	4	2
4. middle-aged male Canadian NAM (MC)	44.6"	1	2
5. older female cultivated NZE (UMC)	59.7"	7	4
6. middle-aged male general AusE (MC)	46.7"	2	1
7. older male general NZE (MC)	55.9"	6	3
8. middle-aged male broad (UMC)	46.9"	3	4

TABLE 7  
SPEAKER TRAITS vs. SPEAKER TIME and NUMBER of PAUSES

SPKR NO.	Mn.Sp. TRAITS	RANK in TRAITS	NO. PAUSES	RANK Sp.TIME
6	3.762	1	1	2
4	3.711	2	2	1
3	3.530	3	2	4
1	3.510	4	2	5
7	3.484	5	3	6
8	3.455	6	4	3
5	3.321	7	4	7
2	2.766	8	22	8

TABLE 8  
SPEARMAN CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS  
for Speaker Trait Mean and Speaker Trait Rank vs.  
Speaker Number of Pauses and Speaker Reading Rate Rank  
(N = 8)

	Spearman Corr. Coeff.	Significance
Trait mean vs. no. of pauses	-.9698	.000
Trait rank vs. no. of pauses	.9698	.000
Trait mean vs. rate rank	-.8333	.005
Trait rank vs. rate rank	.8333	.005

These results are highly significant, given that only eight cases are present. It would appear that these paralinguistic features are statistically significant factors affecting listener evaluations of all eight speakers; of these two features, the more significant is apparently the number of speaker pauses.

However, the picture just presented is not as straightforward as it may appear, since the explanation inferred from these results may be only partially correct. There may in fact be a confounding effect here between speaker age and the paralinguistic variables. Table 9 below lists the age for each speaker and the time taken to read the passage. Speaker 2 was excluded from consideration because her large number of pauses and hesitations set her markedly apart from the other speakers.

These results seem most suggestive of an age effect, in line with previous research findings. As discussed above, Giles *et al.* (1987) found that elderly vocal guises were associated with incompetence, forgetfulness and disaffection. The question arises whether some part of the elderly speech stereotype consists of a slowing of speech rate and a more hesitant manner; or whether it is exclusively associated with factors of intonation, such as an increased "quaveriness" in speaking, as can occur with the onset



**TABLE 9**  
**SPEAKER AGE AND TIME TAKEN FOR SAMPLE READING**

Speaker Number	Speaker Age	Reading Time(secs.)
4. NAM male	31	44.6"
6. AusE male	31	46.7"
8. br. NZE male	35	46.9"
3. RP female	71	47.4"
1. gen. NZE female	25	53.2"
7. gen. NZE male	67	55.9"
5. cult. NZE female	66	59.7"

of Parkinson's disease. None of the speakers in the present study exhibited such quaveriness, but Table 9 above illustrates a suggestive (but not statistically significant) effect of ageing on speaker speed. Indeed, Giles *et al.* (in press; cited in Coupland and Coupland 1990:459) found that rate of speech was a more "potent variable" than either accent or age.

### **Conclusions**

A study of this kind which surveys a wide range of speaker variables acting simultaneously on listeners, rather than using a stimulus tape carefully controlled to exclude all except two or three such variables, can only have suggestive rather than definitive results. However, there are a number of such results worth noting.

1. Paltridge and Giles (1984:80) found listener gender had few effects. Bayard, however, found several significant main and interaction effects for listener gender using MANOVA analyses (1991b:26). The tests in the present study revealed no statistically significant differences between listeners' evaluations on the basis of listener gender. However, the results shown in Table 1 indicate male listeners rate female speakers more poorly in comparison to male speakers than do female listeners on power traits, whereas the converse is the case for solidarity variables. These findings are suggestive of some degree of gender difference in listener evaluation.

2. Visual cues were of course excluded as a variable from this study, but there was considerable variation in the paralinguistic variables of reading speed and hesitations. The correlation of these paralinguistic variables with mean overall ratings for speakers appears to be highly significant. This supports findings in other research discussed above, although the present study suggests that speaker hesitation is perhaps a more important factor in listener evaluation than reading speed.

3. Speaker gender was predictably a most significant variable in listener evaluations. The usual findings are for male speakers to be rated more favourably than female speakers, all other things being equal; but if inequalities are introduced, a "high power" female will be rated more highly than a "low power" male. To some extent this was the case in the present study. Listeners identified correctly the higher "class" of the

female speakers with the RP and cultivated NZE accents. But respondents then proceeded to rank two of the male speakers highest in "income" and "education". The female with the cultivated NZE accent was ranked close to the bottom on these two traits.

It has been noted above that the poor ratings assigned by listeners to the LC female speaker has the impact of lowering the overall female means, but this does not account for the downgrading of the RP and cultivated NZE female speakers on power variables. One possible conclusion is that power *per se* (wealth and the education associated with it) are viewed somewhat differently from "class" where females are involved; i.e., females may stereotypically have "class" (presumably through inheritance of upper-class status or affiliation with wealthy or well-educated males!), but not necessarily have wealth and high education themselves. The net impact of all these influences, illustrated in Figure 3, is that women (or at least the four voices employed on the stimulus tape) appear to be viewed less positively than men by this group of elderly. The dominant factors in this analysis relate to male power and charisma, and to solidarity (in which male traits consistently load more strongly than female traits). Most female values have low loadings on both of these dimensions, in what could be interpreted as reflecting a patriarchal world view held by listeners of both genders.

The simplest explanation for this might be that these findings reflect the values and mores which prevailed until recent times in our society. The women's movement has really gained major headway only in the last two decades, to the extent that equality for women is paid at least lip-service by most people of influence in our society. But one group in society which is perhaps likely to remain comparatively untouched by innovative changes in public mores may be the retired elderly. There may be other variables (such as the paralinguistic variables mentioned above<sup>9</sup>) which account for at least some of these findings, but at first glance it seems probable that individuals who developed their value systems and spent all of their working lives in a society governed by sexist mores are likely to continue to reflect those mores in their retirement years. In other words, we appear to have evidence here of an attitudinal parallel to the concept of "apparent time" in sociolinguistic studies. It is difficult to

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<sup>9</sup> It is important to note in this regard that the overall downgrading of female voices was not reflected in a not-yet-published study of the attitudes of 239 Aucklanders to a range of 15 female and male accents carried out by Robert Leek and his students in 1990. In fact, male voices were slightly downgraded overall (by about 0.17). However, this study introduced actual (as opposed to perceived) ethnicity as a variable, and reactions toward two male Maori and Pacific Island voices—clearly perceived as such by listeners—may have significantly influenced the results. As stated in note 4 above, further more rigorous experiments controlling for all variables save gender are obviously necessary.

envisage another explanation to account for the differences between this group of retired elderly and the young and middle-aged groups previously surveyed by Bayard. Although one of us has said in an earlier Labovian survey of NZE that "apparent time" may not be "quite the neat and tidy concept it appeared to be twenty years ago" (Bayard 1987:15), it seems obvious to us that gender attitudes instilled in childhood will prove far more durable than how one pronounces "lieutenant" or "Z". Attitudinal "apparent time" is very probably a far more accurate reflection of the past than its sociolinguistic counterpart.

4. We found that the elderly are evaluatively more generous in their judgements of speaker accents than are younger listeners. This fits with our findings that solidarity factors are much more important than power factors in terms of the overall evaluation these retired listeners made of the speakers. A qualifier here must be that only eleven of the 41 respondents were male, and a somewhat different picture may emerge from a study of a larger number of retired male elderly. There is, for example, a significant body of work referred to by Janet Holmes (1991) to show that women's speech is facilitative and men's speech styles tend to be competitive and combative. Although this refers to speech behaviour, rather than listener evaluation, it is speech behaviour which is of course permitted or acquiesced to by listeners of both sexes, and hence obviously involves listener behaviour as well. This leads us to expect that female listeners would be more inclined to emphasise solidarity factors in evaluation than would men.

One might postulate that it was the preponderance of females in the study group which produced such an emphasis in the results of this study. In response it should be noted that the sample of respondents was an accurate reflection of the population by gender of the rest homes concerned; moreover, there was a marked reluctance by our respondents of both sexes to make class distinctions. If they did assign any status to a speaker other than middle-class, they preferred to assign an upper class status. It is interesting to speculate on the reasons for this generosity of judgement. Chambers and Trudgill (1980:92) suggest that retired people are not subject to the same pressures to conform as the middle-aged, and that their social networks may be narrower. In this case, another factor may be that when the elderly are institutionalised, and thus live in very close proximity to numbers of people from whom it is not easy to escape totally, there may be an increased need for good relationships.

An alternative or complementary explanation is that growing older may be associated with gaining "wisdom" (Peterson 1989). This wisdom may point people in the direction of solidarity rather than competitiveness. A final equally subjective alternative may be that attitudes emphasising solidarity have what could be called a "survival value", in that subjects with such attitudes may be able to handle stress more effectively, and so be less inclined to stress-related pathology, and hence to live longer.

5. As a final point, an unintended discovery was the finding that none of the speakers rated most highly—the AusE speaker, the Canadian speaker, and the British RP speaker—were New Zealanders: This echoes results obtained by Bayard in earlier studies, and raises many questions which Bayard has discussed elsewhere (1990, 1991a, b).

### Summary

The major findings of this study of retired elderly rest home residents can be summarised as follows:

(1) there was relatively little difference in evaluation of speakers by listeners of different gender, although it was found that male listeners downgraded female speakers more than the female listeners did on the power variables;

(2) speaker hesitation and speaker reading rate are very significantly correlated with listener evaluations of speakers, with speaker hesitation being somewhat more significantly related to this than speaker reading rate;

(3) female speakers were rated more poorly overall than male speakers in all twelve personality traits;

(4) these listeners were much more evaluatively generous in their judgements of the speaker traits (including "class") than the younger, non-retired listeners in Bayard's studies who evaluated the same speakers;

(5) rather contrary to our expectations, the NAM and AusE voices ranked as highly on most traits as the RP voice, paralleling in general the results of Bayard's earlier studies. However, this may in some measure be due to the assumption by a majority of subjects (59%) that the AusE speaker was a New Zealander; a plurality (44%) also thought that the NAM speaker was British.

### Acknowledgements

Wilson wishes to acknowledge with gratitude his thanks to the staff of Birchleigh Rest Home and Taieri Court for their cooperation, without which this task would not have been possible, and to the respondents for their cooperation, without which there would have been no study. Bayard is grateful to Robert Leek for giving him access to his unpublished Auckland accent evaluation study. We are both very grateful to Howard Giles for many valuable bibliographical suggestions, and to the perceptive comments of a referee. Obviously responsibility for the conclusions we reach is ours alone.

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