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*Acoustic and Perceptual Correlates of  
Gender Typicality in Children's  
Connected Speech*

While some of the differences between men and women's speech can be explained by physiological differences between the sexes, there is ample evidence that these differences are in part socially learned behaviors. Children demonstrate sex-specific ways of speaking in advance of the physiological changes that would make such differences inevitable. The present study compared the speech of boys who are identified as having gender nonconforming behavior to gender-conforming boys by examining the acoustic and perceptual characteristics of their speech when telling a story. We performed the perceptual portion of the experiment by having participants listen to the narratives. Participants were asked to give each child a gender rating on a 6-point scale between "definitely a male" and "definitely a female." Gender conforming boys were rated as sounding more boy-like than gender nonconforming boys. In the second part of the experiment, we examined acoustic characteristics of each boy's speech and found that these traits accounted for some differences in gender ratings. The results of this experiment and other ongoing analyses will help us better understand how listeners integrate acoustic and linguistic information when assessing the gender typicality of children's connected speech.



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