SEX AS A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF BIAS IN ADULT JUDGMENTS OF CHILDREN WITH NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDER

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Previous research has shown the tendency for people to assign negative attributes to children with a variety of disabilities including neurodevelopmental disorders. The purpose of this study was to examine potential differences in ratings assigned by participants based on their sexes (Male or Female) and the sex of children (Male or Female) representing different clinical groups (specific language impairment (SLI), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or typically developing (TD)). In this study, 80 participants (40 male and 40 female) rated brief, transcribed narratives produced by matched child speakers with SLI, ADHD, and TD. After reading each sample, participants provided ratings in response to 15 questions about the narrative, the speaker attributes, and their family attributes. Participants also filled out a 9-item demographic questionnaire. Based on previous studies, it was predicted that male raters would provide more pejorative ratings to the female speakers. It was also predicted that the ADHD speaker and the SLI speaker would be assigned more pejorative ratings.

A 2 X 2 X 3 ANOVA was run in Linear Mixed Models, which revealed significant clinical group main effects (SLI, ADHD, TD). Analyses revealed that ratings for the TD speaker were significantly higher (i.e. more favorable) than the SLI and ADHD speaker ratings such that ADHD = SLI < TD for questions related to academic, behavioral, and family attributes. For questions related to narrative and social attributes, ratings for the TD speaker were significantly higher than the SLI and ADHD speaker ratings such that ADHD < SLI < TD. Speaker sex main effects were found to be significant only in questions related to the child speaker's behavior. Analyses revealed that male speakers were rated lower (i.e. worse) than female speakers such that M < F. No significant main effects were found for rater sex. No significant interaction effects were found between group variables, rater sex variables, or speaker sex variables. However, a non-significant trend between rater sex and speaker sex was found in questions related to behavior. This revealed that to a modest degree, male raters rated female speakers more favorably than male speakers.

This study replicated the results of Ludlow (2013) and revealed that transcribed speech can be used in place of audio samples. The non-significant trend of behavioral attributes for male raters to more pejoratively rate female speakers was a surprising outcome for this study based on previous research that has indicated a bias among male raters to have more negative reactions to females with disabilities. Another surprising outcome was the tendency for male speakers to be more negatively rated than female speakers in relation to behavioral attributes. It appears that the mention of a male name may have been sufficient to induce biases in the participants (especially among the male raters). Results of the speaker's clinical status revealed that raters still attribute more negative characteristics for children with disorders (SLI, ADHD) in areas that would not be directly impacted by their disabilities.