Variation in the signal:
Social correlation in a completed sound change

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This study examines perceived masculinity associated with palatal devoicing in Buenos Aires Spanish (see 1). Perceived masculinity is defined as how listeners perceive speech and assign speaker masculinity. Two populations of L1 Spanish speakers, Buenos Aires Spanish and peninsular Spanish, completed two perception tasks: 1) AXB discrimination and 2) matched-guise in which participants ranked the variant along a masculinity scale. For the stimuli, three variants were utilized: [ʃ], [ʒ], and an acoustically synthesized variant between the two.

Results show that the listener groups did not significantly differ on the AXB discrimination task. Concerning the social task, differences between groups suggest that even a completed sound change may demonstrate social stratification. Finally, these results show the importance of expanding binary [+/- voiced] variants for a more fine-grained acoustic analysis. With such methodology, this work looks to contribute to acoustic approaches to sociophonetics and variationist sociolinguistics.

1. lei[ʒ]ure to leaʃ]es
   “leisure” “leashes”