

INVESTIGATING VOICE PERCEPTION BASED ON IMAGES ACROSS GENDER IDENTITIES



**ASHA CE
APPROVED PROVIDER**

Pennsylvania
Speech-Language-Hearing
Association

Introductory Level
.05 DEI ASHA CEUs

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Learning Objectives:

- Identify the role of speech-language pathologists (SLPs) in gender-affirming voice care (GAVC)
- Describe the perceptual differences in voice quality as perceived across gender identities, including cisgender, transgender, and gender non-conforming individuals based on participants ratings of pitch, loudness, breathiness, roughness, and brightness
- Evaluate the current gaps and limitations in gender-affirming voice research, particularly regarding standardized voice assessment metrics for nonbinary



Course Abstract

Speech-language pathologists play a crucial role in providing services to the transgender community through gender-affirming voice care (GAVC) (ASHA, n.d; Leyns et al, 2021; Smith, 2020). Gender can be defined as gender identity, gender expression, and gender experience (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020). An individual who does identify with their sex assigned at birth (SAB) is called cisgender. A person who has a trans experience does not believe their gender identity aligns with their SAB (Richards et al., 2016; Roselli, 2018; Thorne et al., 2019). Transgender experiences often result in gender dysphoria, a condition related to distress caused by a discrepancy between gender identity and SAB (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). A person's voice can contribute to gender dysphoria because voice is a personal and identifying characteristic (Dhejne et al, 2016).ASHA defines GAVC as services targeting voice and/or other aspects of communication congruent with an individual's gender/gender expression (Adler et al, n.d.). This includes voice therapy, communication strategies, and counseling support (Lorimer & Rutter, 2025; Vastine & Butcher, 2024). The field shifted from "transgender voice therapy" to GAVC to include those beyond the gender binary (McBrinn et al., 2024; Vastine & Butcher, 2024). Although GAVC has evolved, there remains no standardized metric for assessing voice quality of nonbinary individuals. There is a gap regarding biases people have of voices when given an image of a person's face (González-Álvarez, 2017; Hester et al, 2021).This study investigated perceptions of voice quality based on images of cisgender, transgender, and gender non-conforming individuals. Participants (n=120) rated pitch, loudness, breathiness, roughness, and brightness on a 5-point Likert scale. Results showed significant perceptual differences ($p>.001$). Researchers plan continued analysis to inform guidelines for SLPs working with clients beyond the gender binary.

Speaker Bios

Cari Tellis, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, a professor in the Speech-Language Pathology Department at Misericordia University, has presented at state, national, and international conferences. Dr. Tellis has received grants for research in voice science and has published in peer-reviewed journals. She is an editorial reviewer for scholarly publications within her discipline.

Stephanie Maines (she/her) is a former student of Misericordia University. She has completed research studies in the field of voice, motor learning, and gender-affirming care. She has presented at, state, national, and international conferences.

Alexandra Long is a graduate student at Misericordia University. She has participated in research studies involving voice and presented at the state, national, and international level.

Olivia Lidle is a student at Misericordia University. She has participated in research studies involving voice.

Speaker Disclosures

Cari Tellis, Ph.D. is a Full, Tenured Professor in the Speech-Language Pathology Department at Misericordia University.

Stephanie maines has no relevant relationships to disclose.

Alexandra Long is a paid research assistants in the Speech-Language Pathology Department at Misericordia University.

Olivia Lidle is a paid research assistants in the Speech-Language Pathology Department at Misericordia University.