

Autism, Language, and Construction of Gender

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This semester, I worked in Dr. Julia Parish-Morris' Social Attention and Language Lab doing transcription work. I also explored the intersection of gender diversity and autism, a personal research interest of mine, with my faculty advisor in the form of a literature review. In the lab, I worked on three studies:

Study 1

Goal: examine similarities and differences between the way children and adolescents with autism speak and the way their peers without autism speak.

Study 2

Goal: investigate behavioral sex differences in those with and without autism while tracking the gender development of those with gender diverse identities.

Study 3

Goal: identify the impact of a social skills workshop intervention on adolescents with autism.

Field Site Tasks

- Transcribed unstructured interviews and conversations between speakers and autistic or non-autistic children and adolescents using Webtrans
- Entered data from questionnaires collected during in-person visits
- Shadowed and assisted in in-person visits



This is a picture of the first audio file I transcribed and segmented as part of my transcription training.

Academic Exploration

I worked on a literature review about the intersection of autism and gender diversity where I explored:

- Legal and social relevance
- Frequency
- Differences from non-autistic gender development and conceptions
- Theories on the causes gleaned from quantitative studies
- Theories on the causes from gender diverse, autistic people themselves
- Measures created specifically to investigate gender diversity and autism

Next Steps

I plan on continuing this position into the summer of 2025 where I will be able to:

- Complete an independent research project
- Attend talks at CHOP
- Network with CAR alumni

Procedure and Protocol

This internship started out with extensive training about transcription guidelines and treating personally identifying information. These lengthy procedures are necessary in respecting our participants and ensuring inter-rater reliability.

Collaboration and Adaptability

Although researchers and other members of the lab are given the same measures and manuals, using these tools in practice can look very different. It is important to collaborate and discuss with other members of the team to share observations and ways to adapt in different situations.

Serving the Population You're Studying

When entering data and transcribing files, it is important to remember that participants exist beyond numbers. By incorporating accessibility into study design and uplifting autistic voices when creating new measures, research transforms into a relevant asset for the community.

In a 2022 study on US autism stakeholders such as autistic adults themselves, their parents, and medical professionals, researchers found that 87% of autistic adults preferred identity-first language (Taboas, Doepeke, and Zimmerman, 2022). Therefore, I am mostly using identity-first language throughout this poster.