We All Deserve to Find Our Voice and Be Heard: The Implications of Vocal Identity for Individuals with Complex Communication Needs (CCNs)

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Introduction

- Individuals with complex communication needs (CCN) requiring a speech-generating device (SGD) utilize an alternate means of communication.
- The ability to communicate, particularly through voice output, plays a significant role in an individual's daily life.
- However, there is a limited personalized vocal repertoire for individuals with CCN to choose from at this point.
- The focus of the current work is to summarize key impressions and concerns of AAC users with CCN.

Method

- A literature review was completed via PubMed, PsycInfo, and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) website to investigate the value of vocal identity for individuals with CCN who benefit from or need AAC.
- Nine out of 91 reviewed articles are discussed in the current work.

Results/Discussion

- Collaboration
  - The development of synthesized voices requires a team approach to ensure that the AAC devices are personalized, intelligible, accessible, appropriate, and functional for the user.

- AAC Users’ Values and Priorities
  - AAC users did not express absolute satisfaction with their SGDs/VOCAs largely due to their unreliability, unnatural speech output, reduced vocal variety, and perceived constraints on efficient and enjoyable sociability.

- Current Technology and Complications
  - Continued progress needs to be made regarding the natural emotion and suprasegmental features associated with the human voice, especially for individuals with severely limited speech output.

References: Judge & Townend (2013); Martin & Newell (2013); Mills, Bunnell, & Patel (2014); Nathanson (2017); Pullin & Hennig (2015); Pullin, Treviranus, Patel, & Higginbotham (2017); Ripat, Verdonck, Gacek, & McNicol (2018); Shepherd, Campbell, Renzoni, & Sloan (2009); Wickenden (2011)