

Author's final pre-publication version. Aaron Devor (2019). "Foreword." In Richard Adler, Sandy Hirsch & Jack Pickering (eds.), *Voice and Communication Therapy for the Transgender/Transsexual Client: A Comprehensive Guide*, Third Edition (ix-x), San Diego, CA: Plural Publishing.

Foreword

More than thirty years ago, when gender was still very binary and I was still in graduate school, I had my first practical lesson in voice therapy. I had made friends with a doctoral student named Alan. Although as a graduate student he was less athletic than he had once been, Alan had been an elite gymnast who had competed at the highest levels of sport. His background in sport showed in his broad shoulders, and in his heavily-muscled upper body and arms. Alan was short in stature but, other than that, everything about his physical appearance was resolutely masculine and cisgender. However, Alan had an unusually high-pitched voice for a man and one day he complained to me that he was routinely mistaken for "Ellen" on the phone. I had no training as a voice therapist, but I had been studying gender for some years already, so I ventured to make a suggestion. "Alan," I said. "You're just too nice. Try being more rude on the phone." Sure enough, a couple of weeks later he came back to me to tell me that it had worked like a charm. When he stopped being so nice, the gender binary and sexism still being extremely strong, people on the phone recognized him as Alan, and the plague of being mistaken for "Ellen" was gone from his life.

Alan's story gave me just a very small glimpse into how much more goes into making a correct auditory gender impression. Most members of the general public, trans as well as cis, seem to assume that the most important, indeed the only element, that truly conveys gender is the pitch of one's voice. Although this is certainly important, as Alan's story and those of countless "whiskey-voiced" women illustrate, pitch alone may not be the deciding factor tipping the scales toward, or away from, an individual being correctly gendered. As noted throughout this volume, voice generally remains a larger challenge for adult trans women than for trans men due to the powerful effects of testosterone on voice. As also noted throughout this book, such challenges for both transfeminine and transmasculine people are far from insurmountable with good training, much hard work, and patience.

In the decades since graduate school, I have devoted most of my career to working in trans and, more recently, non-binary communities, and with people who research and provide services to trans and non-binary folks. Despite the fact that voice is such a significant factor in attaining gender congruence, remarkably little professional attention had been given to voice until the inclusion of a section on voice and communication in the 2011 Version 7 of the World Professional Association's Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender-nonconforming People. Prior to 2011, other than speech and communications specialists, most professionals working in the field were heavily focused on hormone therapy and surgery as the requisite treatments for trans people. Speech and voice weren't considered core to a successful transition. As a member of the WPATH Standards of Care committee for versions 6 and 7, I witnessed the efforts of Richard Adler and his colleagues as they argued hard to convince the Standards of Care committee that we needed to include a small section on Voice and Communication Therapy in version 7. Thankfully, this is now an established part of the Standards of Care, which I have been assisting in having translated from English into an additional seventeen languages. Voice and communications therapy are now recognized as essential to offer to people transitioning around the world.

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I also know from numerous private one-to-one conversations with a great many trans and non-binary people that many people feel insecure about the sound of their voice. Despite this, there is relatively little public conversation among trans and non-binary folks about voice and speech training, especially among trans masculine people. I suspect that this is, in part, due to a certain degree of self-consciousness and reluctance to call attention to one's voice when one feels that it may be less persuasive than they wish it to be. I also suspect that some of the relative silence on this issue is born of the mistaken belief that there is little that can be done other than to live with the effects of testosterone--mostly happily for those on the transmasculine spectrum, not so for those on the transfeminine spectrum, and in complex ways for non-binary people. Certainly, the authors and consumers of this edited collection know that this is far from true, and one especially welcome addition in this 3rd edition of now *Voice and Communication Therapy for the Transgender/Gender Diverse Client* is a significant chapter addressing the previously underserved voice and communication needs of transmasculine individuals.

My positions as the world's only Chair in Transgender Studies, and as the Founder and Academic Director of the world's largest Transgender Archives (part of the University of Victoria Libraries in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada) provide me with a unique perspective on the historic position of the *Voice and Communication Therapy for the Transgender/Gender Diverse Client*. There is simply nothing else like these books, now or in the past. The first two editions filled a void and have already made huge contributions to improving the lives of transgender people around the globe.

This third volume has the potential to make an even more valuable contribution to "training the trainers" by building on the work of the first two editions and by so doing, providing a larger and better informed cadre of speech language professionals with specialized skills of benefit to trans and non-binary people. It is my hope that the knowledge transmitted by this volume will encourage more trans and non-binary people to feel confident that, should they seek out professional help to reach their voice goals, they will be met with effective and compassionate assistance.

It has been an honour to be a part of this important project.

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