The Care of the Transgender Voice

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Disclosures

• Non-financial: None

• Financial:
  • Employee of Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center (CCHMC)
  • Conference registration paid for by WVMEA
Background

• Graduate of Princeton Senior High School (2007)
• Member of The Madrigal Singers (2005-2007)
• Attended WV GSA (2005)
• Participant in All-State Chorus (2007)
• B.S. (2011) and M.S. (2013) in Communication Disorders from Marshall University
• Living and working in Cincinnati since 2013
• Evaluate and treat voice disorders
• Established Transgender Voice Clinic in 2017
Objectives

• Identify transgender, gender spectrum terminology
• Discuss transgender speaking voice
• Discuss transgender singing voice
Terminology

- Sex
  - Intersex
- Gender identity
- Gender expression
- Cisgender
- Transgender
  - Transwoman; transman
- Gender queer, non-binary
- Gender nonconforming
- Gender Dysphoria
# Gender Grammar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Correction</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“transgendered” (adjective)</td>
<td>transgender</td>
<td>Only adjectives that are derived from nouns and/or verbs (unlike transgender) end in “ed.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“intersexed”</td>
<td>intersex</td>
<td>Only adjectives that are derived from nouns and/or verbs (unlike intersex) end in “ed.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“transgendered” (verb)</td>
<td>transition</td>
<td>Only verbs can have “ed” added onto the end of the word to become a participle. Transgender is an adjective, not a verb. One does not “transgender,” they transition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“a transgender,” “transgenders”</td>
<td>a transgender person, transgender people</td>
<td>Transgender is not a noun. &quot;Jake is a transgender&quot; is not only grammatically incorrect, but can be offensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;sex change,&quot; &quot;sex reassignment surgery,&quot; &quot;gender reassignment surgery&quot;</td>
<td>gender affirming surgery, genital reconstruction surgery, genital reassignment surgery</td>
<td>Surgery does not change one's sex or gender, only genitalia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information, go to transstudent.org/graphics

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Design by Landyn Pan
The Gender Unicorn

Gender Identity
- Female/Woman/Girl
- Male/Men/Boy
- Other Gender(s)

Gender Expression
- Feminine
- Masculine
- Other

Sex Assigned at Birth
- Female
- Male
- Other/Intersex

Physically Attracted to
- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)

Emotionally Attracted to
- Women
- Men
- Other Gender(s)

To learn more, go to: www.transstudent.org/gender

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore
Why Support for Trans Youth Matters

Based on a 2012 study of 433 individuals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trans Youth with Supportive Parents</th>
<th>Trans Youth with Unsupportive Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reported Life Satisfaction</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reported High Self-Esteem</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Described Mental Health As “Very Good” or “Excellent”</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faced Housing Problems</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suffered Depression</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attempted Suicide</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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Infographic Design by Londyn Pan Illustrations by Ethan Lopez
Question:

What are some ways to make your classroom a safe space?
Ask about...

Pronouns
Question:

Why is it important to think about voice with this population?
Your voice is your identity. If you don't use it, your halfway to Asphodel already.

Rick Riordan - The Blood of Olympus
Transfemale Voice

- Male puberty
- Laryngeal changes
  - Larynx enlarged
  - Vocal folds become thicker and longer
  - Voice deepens
- Hormone therapy has \textit{no} effect on voice pitch
- Voice therapy can raise pitch and be highly satisfactory
- Phonosurgery is an option to raise pitch
- \textit{Fundamental frequency: 180Hz-250Hz}
Transmale Voice

• Female puberty – no change in laryngeal area
• Testosterone *can* have effect on pitch
• Testosterone has irreversible effects on larynx which deepens the pitch range – both speaking and singing
• Gradual change in voice
• Larynx lowers; vocal folds thicken and lengthen
• Voice therapy can help in lowering pitch for those who are not taking testosterone

*Fundamental frequency: 100Hz-150Hz*
Purpose of Voice and Communication Training

“To help clients adapt their voice and communication in a way that is both safe and authentic, resulting in communication patterns that clients feel are congruent with their gender identity and that reflect their sense of self.” (SOC-7, 2011)

World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH)
Training Targets

- Pitch
- Resonance
- Intonation and Stress
- Loudness
- Articulation
- Rate of Speech
- Semantics
- Non-Verbal Communication
Evaluation

- Outpatient
- Medical history
- Perceptual assessment
  - Scope only if dysphonia is present
- Measures of fundamental frequency (pre- and post-training)
- QoL scale (pre- and post-training)
  - *Transgender Voice Questionnaire [MtF] (TVQ)*, (2012, Dacakis and Davies)
- Patient goals
- Patient satisfaction (during and after training)
What does Transgender Voice and Communication Training look like?

• Similarities between traditional and transgender voice training
  • Indirect therapy techniques
    • Education, counseling
  • Direct therapy techniques
    • Resonant Voice Therapy
    • Semi-occluded Vocal Tract Exercises
    • Vocal Function Exercises
• Holistic view of the client
• Client-driven goals
Transgender Singing Voice

• Easy, efficient voice production is paramount
• Using voice in non-habitual way, so training is imperative
• Monitor singing technique in the same way:
  • Strain
  • Voice quality clear and easy
  • Speaking voice post-singing
Transwomen Singing Voice

- Benefit from gentle, gradual stretching of upper range
- Semi-occluded vocal tract exercises (lip buzz, vocalizing through straw) in a comfortable pitch range
- Using mixed or head voice
- Slight breathiness can be useful depending on repertoire
- Practical expectations of signing voice
How Trans Opera Singer Breanna Sinclaire Found Her Voice
Transmen Singing Voice

• Ask the question: are they taking testosterone?
  • How long?
  • Is voice stable?
• Goal is to reduce strain if voice is still changing
• Teaching student how to use new voice is key
• If student is not on testosterone, resonant voice training is helpful
• Strong, front focus resonance, non-breathy voice
• Singing too low can be harmful
• Practical expectations of signing voice
The Trans Opera Singer Who Went From Soprano to Tenor
Practice
Books

- *The Singing Teacher’s Guide to Transgender Voices*
  - Liz Jackson Hearms
  - Brian Kremer
  - $129
  - (Amazon.com, 2019)

- *Voice and Communication Therapy for the Transgender/Gender Diverse Client: A Comprehensive Clinical Guide*
  - Richard K. Adler
  - Sandy Hirsch
  - Jack Pickering
  - $105
Questions
Thank you!
References

• ASHA: Providing Transgender Voice Services (n.d.) Retrieved October 8, 2019 from: https://www.asha.org/Practice/multicultural/Providing-Transgender-Transsexual-Voice-Services/
• Transtudent.org, 2019. Retrieved from: transstudent.org