UC Santa Barbara

UC Santa Barbara Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

r/TransVoice: Emotions and Community-Based Voice Training

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4c26h4x6

Author

English, Brooke Elizabeth

Publication Date

2022

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

r/TransVoice: Emotions and Community-Based Voice Training

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in Linguistics

by

Brooke Elizabeth English

Committee in charge:

Professor Lal Zimman, Chair

Professor Matthew Gordon

Professor Lynn Hou

September 2022

The thesis of Brooke Elizabeth English is approved.

_____

Matthew Gordon

_____

Lynn Hou

_____

Lal Zimman, Committee Chair

July 2022

ABSTRACT

r/TransVoice: Emotions and Community-Based Voice Training

by

Brooke Elizabeth English

Trans people often undergo a process of voice training for many reasons, including alleviating gender dysphoria and improving their mental health. While professional options are available, many trans people utilize online resources either as a supplement to or replacement for professional training. One such place where trans people gather to discuss voice training is r/TransVoice, a community on the social media website Reddit. r/TransVoice is dedicated to gathering and disseminating resources for voice training as well as sharing voice recordings for feedback from the community. This thesis examines popular posts, comments, and media from r/TransVoice to analyze an aspect of voice training that is often overlooked in voice training research: emotions.

Using the 25 most popular posts of all time and of the past month, as well as the comments on those posts, this project analyzes the emotions that are expressed and negotiated in the process of voice training and how they are talked about by members of the community in interactions, videos, and memes. Many of the top 25 posts of all time are memes that encapsulate some aspect of the voice training experience, whether it is a common exercise that people use or making a reference to a popular voice coach in the community. These memes are analyzed in a sense of communicating and perpetuating norms, as their

popularity relies on their relatability and further reinforces that these experiences are common. In addition to the analysis of memes and videos, comments and comment threads are analyzed to show how community members respond to the discussions of emotion in interactional contexts.

Expressions of affect are present throughout posts and comments on r/TransVoice. Users attend to more formal voice coaches, even as these coaches gloss over or dismiss "bad feelings" as individual problems that can be resolved with individual actions. The bad feelings come not only from dysphoria, but from feelings of discomfort that stem from comparing one's progress against popular success stories. Through processes of authorization, these success stories in turn get to define what successful voice training is. Members of r/TransVoice address these emotions by building an "affective trans commons" (Malatino 2022) in comment sections as users connect with each other and recognize each other's emotions. However, when that recognition is not present, connection fails and the bad feelings persist in ways that can undermine voice training practices. Through this analysis, I make a case for the importance of emotions and community-based collaboration in the research and execution of voice training.

Introduction

Trans people often undergo processes of voice training, or the intentional non-surgical modification of the voice through behavioral changes, which typically involve increasing awareness and control of the voice through vocal exercises. Voice training can alleviate gender dysphoria[1] and improve mental health by bringing a trans person's gender expression into greater alignment with their self-image. Voice training can also reduce negative experiences with other people, such as being misgendered, since the voice plays a role in how one's gender is perceived (Zimman 2018, Hardy et al. 2020). Having a voice that is perceived as out of alignment with one's visual gender presentation can result in being "clocked," or recognized as transgender, potentially leading to verbal and/or physical violence. While not every trans person trains their voice, voice training remains a well-known and potentially beneficial part of transition, even in cases where Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) changes the voice (Azul, Arnold & Neuschaefer-Rube 2018; Zimman 2017). Voice training is not always easy, however, as it typically involves acquiring awareness and control over the muscles of the vocal tract and components of the larynx. This process takes time and can evoke negative feelings, such as dysphoria and frustration, when it is not (quickly) effective in producing the desired voice.
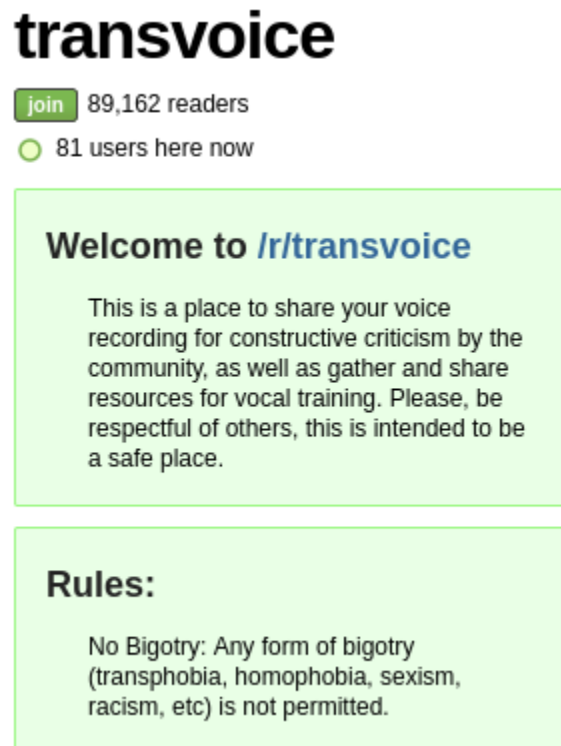
Online communities dedicated to voice training offer places for trans people to share their emotions and talk about their experiences with shifting the gendered characteristics of their voices. One such place where trans people gather to discuss voice training is r/TransVoice, a community (or *subreddit*) on the social media website Reddit. Reddit is an aggregating website that is composed of subcommunities known as "subreddits." Subreddits

---

[1] Gender dysphoria is the experience of discomfort caused by a normative "mismatch" in a person's gender identity and the body they inhabit and/or how that body is gendered by others.

are communities focused around one particular topic. Popular subreddits include r/funny, for sharing humorous content, and r/worldnews, for sharing news about world events. On r/TransVoice, members come together to share resources in the form of videos, pictures, and text posts, ask questions about voice training, and request feedback on their progress by uploading audio clips of their own voice. The format consists of posts that other users can respond to via comments, which have their own nested replies. The community aspect of the data collected from the subreddit allows for the examination of broader trends among members, even in comment threads with very few participants, due to the "score" feature that Reddit uses. Reddit users vote on posts using "upvotes" and "downvotes." The more net upvotes (known as a post's "score") a post gets, the higher it is ranked relative to other posts.

Figure 1: r/TransVoice's community description

transvoice

join 89,162 readers

○ 81 users here now

Welcome to /r/transvoice

This is a place to share your voice recording for constructive criticism by the community, as well as gather and share resources for vocal training. Please, be respectful of others, this is intended to be a safe place.

Rules:

No Bigotry: Any form of bigotry (transphobia, homophobia, sexism, racism, etc) is not permitted.

In addition, emotions are commonly expressed in the dataset, even though the community does not explicitly center emotion in its official description (see Figure 1). The prevalence of emotion in the data allows for analysis of how trans people doing voice training talk about emotions and how emotions shape conversations about voice training. This is important because strong emotions can hinder progress in voice training, as shown in examples from the dataset. Addressing the role that emotions play in voice training can result in more effective voice training pedagogy.

Using the most popular posts on r/TransVoice, as well as the comments on those posts, this thesis analyzes the emotions expressed in memes, videos, and comments by users of r/TransVoice. Particular attention was paid to the representation of emotions evoked in the process of voice training and how they are responded to by members of the community in comments. This analysis is used to better understand the role that emotions play in voice training and whether the inclusion of emotions in both discussions around and in the process of voice training help or hurt the people doing it. The thesis begins with looking at how two popular contributors to r/TransVoice, TransVoiceLessons and UndeadVoice, handle emotions in their content before analyzing two typical memes from community members that show common voice training experiences and the emotions tied to them. Finally, two examples – one success story and one story characterized by suffering and anger – are analyzed in the context of transnormative discourses (e.g., Johnson 2016, Jones 2019) and how those discourses shape discussion of emotion. These examples demonstrate how the individuation of bad feelings cannot completely resolve them and that working towards a trans affective commons allows for deeper engagement with voice training.

Literature Review

This literature review examines past work on three major areas: performativity, affect studies, and memes. These pieces serve to lay out the theoretical groundwork for the analysis of data from the r/TransVoice community. In this community, members share their experiences of voice training, often centering the emotions that they experience in the process. This sharing occurs in posts, comments, and interactions between community members.

Starting with identity, this literature review looks at ways in which identity is performatively enacted before considering recent developments in the study of sociolinguistic performativity. As other sociocultural linguists have theorized, affect and embodiment are key elements of performativity (Milani 2019, Bucholtz & Hall 2016, Eckert 2009), which together allow for a nuanced understanding of identity by accounting for ways that people construct identity in a variety of semiotically-meaningful manners. This approach also accounts for ways in which r/TransVoice users position themselves with respect to locally relevant identities, such as formal/informal coaches and learners.

The second portion of the literature review examines trans affect and its relation to transnormativity. Drawing primarily from Malatino (2022), this section looks at how "bad" feelings, such as fatigue, envy, and rage, manifest in trans communities and what they do in terms of social organization and relations. This subsection also examines the concept of *transnormativity*, which refers to the ways in which transgender experience is structured around the differential access trans people have to discourses and structures that legitimate their identities (Johnson 2016, Jones 2019). For r/TransVoice, this means that there are

certain ways of doing voice training that are constructed as more legitimate than others (see also Bucholtz & Hall 2004: p. 386).

The final section focuses on memes. Memes have been shown to organize queer communities and provide ways for queer people to express their identities (Gal, Shifman, & Kampf 2016, Anderson 2019). This is particularly relevant for r/TransVoice, as memes make up a significant portion of the dataset and are also frequently used to share emotions in the community.

Identity and Affect in Sociocultural Linguistics

Identity has been a central focus of sociolinguistics and other adjacent fields for decades (e.g., Bucholtz & Hall 2004, 2005; Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985). As researchers study how people use language to communicate identity, theoretical frameworks have emerged to better account for the vastly different ways that identity and language are related. Bucholtz and Hall (2004) lay out principles of identity they describe as "tactics of intersubjectivity," highlighting the ways in which relationality affect the expression of identity. Recently, researchers have focused on the ways that embodiment, materiality, and affect act as components of performativity (Milani 2019, Bucholtz & Hall 2016, Zimman & Hall 2009). These new frameworks detail the ways in which embodiment, materiality, and especially affect can act as components of performativity.

These topics relate to the community in this thesis as community members navigate their own identities, both local and macro-level categories, through sharing emotional experiences in their posts and comments. These posts and comments prompt other users to engage with them, generating sites for identity development and reiteration.

Identity in Interaction

Bucholtz and Hall present a framework for identity analysis that emphasizes the local identity categories of interaction over the idea of a "stable structure" that is located either in the individual or in broader, fixed identity categories (Bucholtz and Hall 2005, p. 586). Their framework is composed of five principles: the emergent principle, the positionality principle, the indexicality principle, the relationality principle, and the partialness principle. The relationality principle is the one most relevant to this study. Bucholtz and Hall lay out this principle as "identities are intersubjectively constructed through several, often overlapping, complementary relations, including similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy" (Bucholtz and Hall 2005, p. 598). Each of these relation pairs are "tactics of intersubjectivity" and call to attention the different ways in which relationality itself manifests linguistically (Bucholtz and Hall 2004).

r/TransVoice members use different components of these relation pairs to share how they understand voice training. For example, many users claim to have succeeded at voice training through claims of genuineness as they demonstrate the physical characteristics of their voice and what exercises and voice training resources they used. One voice coach who will be discussed below, TransVoiceLessons, is seen as an especially genuine resource, as members comment on how her status as a trans woman has increased their confidence in her ability. Users also engage in appeals to similarity and difference in instances like discussing voice feminization and voice masculinization. In some cases, the trans community is similar enough to be treated as a whole, like in general discussion of the purpose of the community, even as most of the top posts and comments revolve around voice feminization. In other cases, the differences between people seeking voice feminization and voice masculinization

are significant enough to be drawn out into different groups, like in the aforementioned thread about contested community ideologies.

This framework draws from the concept of performativity, especially in the sense that identity is not presupposed by any sort of internal identity but is instead produced and maintained through actions that people take. Recent work on sociolinguistic usages of performativity has pushed for the inclusion of embodiment and affect in addition to traditional linguistic conceptualizations of performativity.

Performativity

Kira Hall (1999) outlines the ways in which performativity has affected linguistic anthropology and other related fields. She outlines the beginnings of performativity and J.L. Austin's (1962) argument that not only can utterances be overtly performative in the sense that they use a verb that names the performative action (e.g. "*I promise to be there.*"), but that *all* utterances are performatives and must be viewed as actions. Hall's review came amidst the "second generation of the performative" (Hall 1999:186) as linguists took Judith Butler's theorization of gender performativity – in which gender is made real through socially meaningful action – and sought to ground it in local, ethnographic descriptions of language in communities. Utilizing this understanding of performativity, the ways in which members of r/TransVoice talk about themselves and their experiences of voice training create the locally relevant identities and positionalities that each member occupies.

Although language and voice are highlighted in r/TransVoice, the process of identity construction goes beyond just linguistic aspects of the voice. Community members talk about the ways in which emotions and embodiment are a part of their experiences with shifting their vocal self-presentation. Tommaso Milani (2019) advocates for the inclusion of

7

materiality, affect, and embodiment in the sociolinguistic research of performativity. Utilizing examples from protests at Tel Aviv Pride and drawing on Sara Ahmed's (2004) work on emotion, Milani discusses the ways in which emotions are a "social glue" for communities (Milani 2019, p. 11). Milani details the ways in which people unsettle typical emotions associated with pride parades – happiness and sexual pride – to critique the Israeli government's policies towards queer communities and Palestinians. Like the pride parades Milani describes, the emotions of r/TransVoice are a mix of positive and negative. Users experience and talk about *gender euphoria* – the opposite of gender dysphoria – as part of making progress in their voice training, but more commonly, users recount their negative emotions and turn to r/TransVoice for community and support.

Trans Affect

The kinds of negative emotions that are seen in r/TransVoice are not only seen in the trans voice training community, but also more broadly in trans experience as a whole. Hil Malatino (2022) directly engages with the affective experiences associated with transness, developing a description of a "trans affective commons" (Malatino 2022, p. 9). Malatino deploys the term *affective commons* through Eric Stanley's borrowing of the term from Lauren Berlant. For Stanley, an affective commons "structures relation" and, specifically, captures "how negative affect … produce[s] psychic bonds and collective energies" (Stanley 2018). r/TransVoice exemplifies this trans affective commons in the sense that emotions are a binding force in the community. While positive emotions are present in the community, more posts, comments, and interactions are structured around negative emotions, such as dysphoria and anger. Finding camaraderie in these negative emotions creates a stronger community for its members.

One central idea in Malatino's account of the trans affective commons is *collective naming*. Malatino describes collective naming as "the way that feelings become public, which is to say that it is the way that feelings come to have transformative force" (p. 12). In this sense, the sharing and identification of emotions not only exert a binding force for trans people, but also hold the potential to transform the way they experience those feelings. In a hegemonic U.S. context, the expression of negative emotions like the ones Malatino discusses may be frowned upon and thought of as individual issues. However, in the context of the communities like r/TransVoice, there is space for people to share these emotions and find connection with other people like them. The collective naming itself performatively creates community and connection. Sharing experiences with affective dimensions of voice training and in turn having those experiences recognized create a trans affective commons on r/TransVoice.

Throughout the book, Malatino describes five "bad feelings": fatigue, numbness, envy, rage, and burnout, then concludes with a chapter on trans healing. This literature review will focus on the chapters on fatigue and rage as feelings present throughout the data from r/TransVoice.

Fatigue

In the chapter "Future fatigues: Trans intimacies and trans presents (or how to survive the interregnum)," Malatino presents a conceptualization of affective temporalities as they relate to transition. "Hormone time," the tracking of time based on when a trans person begins taking hormones, is a concept used in trans studies to describe how trans people experience time differently (Horak 2014). Malatino develops on this idea by connecting hormone time to the emotional experience of fatigue that comes as a result of "the promise of

a moment [of alignment]" and the good feelings that come as a result (Malatino 2022: p. 28).

To do so, he uses the conceptual idea of "lag," a position of having a future deferred and a

force that shapes and structures the experience of transition. Lag, as Malatino conceptualizes,

produces fatigue, as trans people find themselves stuck waiting, whether for appointments,

prescriptions, or for promised effects to take place. The fatigue stems from the

misrecognitions and "forms of transphobic hostility operative at both macro and micro

levels" that occur during lag (p. 28). Malatino turns to work on transmasculine vloggers on

YouTube to demonstrate the ways in which trans people can become stuck in lag. Malatino

introduces work done by Tobias Raun, who characterizes the wealth of resources available on

YouTube as "redundant" (p. 23), as the majority of videos reify a specific way of

transitioning. While vlogs on experiences of race and racism or nonbinary transition do exist,

the majority of popular vlogs reinforce a sense of transnormativity, as Malatino describes it.

Malatino elaborates the connection between vlogs and transnormativity by identifying the

ways in which these vlogs present specific ways of transitioning and become *the* way of

transitioning through the repeated stating of testosterone dosages, effects, and especially

timelines. While vlogs that demonstrate alternate experiences with transition are possible to

find, the most popular vlogs "reiterate, rather than destabilize" these dominant narratives,

creating an environment in which differing ways of transitioning are minimized or erased

altogether (p. 24). A similar process is salient in the focus on timelines in r/TransVoice.

When people share celebratory videos or audio clips of their progress, a common response is

asking about their experience voice training, in particular asking how long they have been

voice training. Sometimes this question is even predicted as users put how long they have

been training in the post title or mention it in the video or clip. The focus on the temporal

aspect emphasizes the ways in which trans people compare their progress to that of others and the anxiety this can lead to.

Fatigue in this context comes from the experience of waiting, of being stuck in the discomfort of dysphoria and having little recourse but to wait for hormones to affect the body. And yet, if hormones are not working fast enough or well enough, misalignments with the established blueprint shared by "successful" members further the fatigue that Malatino identifies, especially in the context of timelines for vocal transition.

Rage

Malatino critiques the individuation and problematization of rage in popular psychology, in which anger is seen as "a negative, deleterious emotion that is best worked through and then discarded" (2022: 106). In this critique, Malatino turns to feminist philosophy – especially women of color feminist philosophers – and trans artists and activists for ways to reframe and make a case for the importance of anger and rage to survival for minoritized populations.

In this case, rage is "an orienting affect" and "helps us become unstuck" (p. 107-108). What this means is that rage protects us and moves us. It creates space to find safety and can be a way to protect oneself. When we find ourselves up against a transphobic person or demand to be gendered correctly by our family or in any sort of situation where bad feelings stick, rage can help make an exit. Malatino discusses the times when people reach breaking points, moments that reshape bonds and relationships. Drawing on Judith Butler's work on Spinoza's *conatus* (Butler 2015), Malatino introduces conatus as a way of explaining why people break: "the desire to persist or persevere in one's being" or, put another way, "the desire to keep on living" (p. 109). Butler develops this idea with the argument that "selfhood

is never self-contained" and that "self-preservation… is always a more-than-individual matter" (Butler 2015, cited in Malatino, ibid.). Malatino connects this to the sense of rage that comes as a result of reminders of how networks that can be necessary for survival – such as transphobic communities of origin in the absence of alternate communities – can ironically hinder that same survival. Discriminatory institutions and political powers instill a sense of rage as trans people are forced to participate in the systems that hate them.

Malatino calls for an "infrapolitical ethics of care" as a response to this rage. *Infrapolitics* is a concept developed by James C. Scott (1992), and refers to, as Malatino restates, "forms of resistance enacted by subordinate groups that don't tend to register on the radar of oppressors," (p. 118) such as providing housing for someone who has been kicked out or cooking a meal for someone who can't provide food for themselves. Malatino blends this concept with care ethics, "embodied person-to-person practices of assistance that foster … personal and communal flourishing" (2022: 119), to further emphasize the importance of survival as a collective action. In Malatino's conceptualization, trans people must rely on each other when the institutions of power will not.

Rage is often expressed in r/TransVoice in the form of frustration and disappointment with the process or results of voice training. However, these moments are often treated with an individuated, pathologized understanding of anger, as people responding to the expression of these feelings try to address the anger by telling their interlocutor that their rage is a problem that can be solved by following the template of voice training more closely or for longer, regardless of what they may or may not have already tried. This is a way in which the expression of negative feelings appears to do nothing but produce more "bad" feelings. However, in practice, the lack of anchoring described by Malatino is a reification of the

typical handling of these negative emotions. When anger is expressed towards the process of

voice training, members tend to appeal to the process itself, assuring the angry individual that

these feelings are normal and if they just keep doing voice training, then they'll eventually

experience success.

Memes

Memes make up half of the most popular 25 posts of all time on r/TransVoice, despite

the fact that community moderators typically discourage meme posts in the subreddit. This

fact attests to the usefulness of memes as a way for users to connect with each other over

similar experiences. Limor Shifman (2013) resists the definition of a meme as "a single

cultural unit that has propagated successfully" and instead offers this definition for an

Internet meme:

> (a) a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form,
>
> and/or stance; (b) that were created with awareness of each other; and (c) were
>
> circulated, imitated, and/or transformed via the Internet by many users.

Memes on r/TransVoice typically consist of an image or series of images with text

representing the perspective of a subject within the meme as well as the meme's

creators and/or consumers, and specifically relate to voice training in content. They

are often edited forms of other memes, rather than original creations themselves.

These memes, much like the transmasculine vlogs on YouTube from Raun's (2015)

work, often represent a normative view of how voice training is supposed to unfold.

However, they frequently also voice resistance to those norms through the expression

of feelings like frustration, resentment, and fatigue. The popularity of these memes

among r/TransVoice users attests to the commonality of these experiences and thereby

13

normalizes these feelings. A possible reason for the popularity of memes on r/TransVoice is their role in emotional regulation. In a study on COVID-19 memes, people with anxiety found memes about COVID-19 to be more humorous, relatable, and shareable than people without anxiety (Akram et al. 2021).

Previous research on queer memes have shown that the genre plays an important role in norm formation by representing those norms, even as they are iterated and thus commented upon (Shifman 2014). Noam Gal, Limor Shifman, and Zohar Kampf explore this in relation to the "It Gets Better" videos of the early 2010s (Gal et al. 2016). "It Gets Better" began in 2010 when cisgender gay author Dan Savage and his husband, Terry Miller, uploaded a video recounting their experiences with homophobic bullying and telling LGBTQ youth that things got better for them. This video came as a response to several widely publicized suicides of gay youth in the United States who were – or were perceived to be – gay (Gal et al. 2016, p. 1698). The meme spawned several thousand similar self-recorded video narratives and resulted in a national "movement" as celebrities and politicians contributed to the message. Taking all of the videos as a "corpus of digital items based on imitation," Gal, Shifman, and Kampf identify patterns of both conformity and subversion to the original meme as the style of video spreads within communities. They also connect the meme to the construction of queer identity and community in part through a focus on the performative act of sharing life narratives. The authors argue that people in the "It Gets Better" videos to create a sense of collective identity through the repeated performative act of recounting common experiences.

Similar processes are seen in the memes that are shared on r/TransVoice in which community members take common meme formats and adapt them for their own uses. By elaborating on existing memes, the popular memes of r/TransVoice invoke an existing set of associations while also connecting elements of the meme to experiences particular to users on r/TransVoice or trans people more generally. The memes are no doubt popular precisely because they relay common emotions and other experiences that members of the community go through. In this way, memes create a cyclical effect of both representing and simultaneously reinforcing the norms of the community itself.

Methods

The multimodal data for this thesis come from r/TransVoice, the most popular subreddit for trans people to discuss voice training on the social media website Reddit. Posts and comments were collected between February 9th and 11th, 2022, by taking the subreddit's top 25 posts of all time and the top 25 posts of the last month prior to data collection, as well as the comments on each post. Top posts were identified using Reddit's "top" tab, a built-in feature that allows users to filter out all except the most popular posts. The top tab shows all posts from a subreddit ordered by score for a given time period. All data from the top 25 posts of the previous month were collected on a single day to avoid inconsistencies in which posts would fall within the "past month" time frame. Data collection involved documenting the content of each post and its post title, the date it was posted, its score, and the post's flair,[2]

---

[2] r/TransVoice requires a "flair" for each post, which refers to the category the post author assigns to their post. Users are able to filter posts by flair. The currently available flair are: Discussion, Question, Audio/Video, General Resource, Event, Criticism Wanted, Trans-Masc Resource, and Trans-Femme Resource. However, not all posts have flair as the requirement was put into place after some popular posts.

if any (see Appendices A and B for raw data). A video from one of the prominent voice coaches in the community, "QUICK TRICK to Alleviate Voice Dysphoria," that was posted after initial data collection is also included due to its relevance to the scope of the project. All usernames used are anonymized, aside from the voice coaches Zheanna Erose, also known as TransVoiceLessons, and Nicole Gress, also known as UndeadVoice. In addition to documenting a direct link to the content, Zotero was used to take a "snapshot" of the post and its comments in case of deletion.

To prepare for analysis, I tagged each post with common categories like Meme, Resource, and Feminization or Masculinization to help draw connections within and across categories. I then summarized the post's content, describing its content and themes that emerged throughout the analytic process. I used the same process with the comments of each post, paying particular attention to comments with higher scores as indications of greater consensus among community members. The post and comment summaries were key in identifying the themes for deeper analysis. In the data analysis section, I focus on content and interactions that include the navigation of the affective dimensions of voice training, attending closely to the way interlocutors oriented to one another's affective displays. The examples presented here illustrate recurring themes throughout the data.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Performing Authority

Members of r/TransVoice fulfill multiple roles across different contexts in the community. Most users typically act as learners, but sometimes adopt a role of informal coach as other users ask for guidance and they provide advice or feedback based on their own

experience and knowledge gained from the community. Some users, however, consistently take an authoritative role as a voice coach and are recognized as such by others. This kind of formal coaching is associated with behaviors like regular uploads of instructional material and offering one-on-one coaching beyond what can be taught in a comment thread.

r/TransVoice has two prominent figures of authority when it comes to formal voice coaching. Zheanna Erose, known professionally as TransVoiceLessons, is a white, 30 year old trans woman voice coach from Portland, Oregon. She is also a musician and a voice actor. She has many in-depth videos that cover voice training topics such as resonance, larynx control, and information about surgical procedures. TransVoiceLesson's voice training content is primarily hosted on YouTube, however she is also active on the community on Reddit, posting her videos there and occasionally engaging in conversations in the comments. She also holds individual and group voice training sessions for a fee. Her content is largely targeted at trans people looking for vocal feminization, although some of her videos are applicable to both vocal feminization and masculinization in that they discuss general strategies for voice training, like resonance control.

TransVoiceLessons appears in several manners in r/TransVoice. She appears – directly or indirectly – in memes, posts of her own content, user recountings of their own voice training process, and consolidated resource guides. Users orient primarily to how she and her resources have helped them throughout their own voice training, but she is also frequently invoked indirectly through a phrase that she recommends as a form of "calibration" for voice training. This phrase, which has become a sort of in-group reference on r/TransVoice, is "Heat from fire, fire from heat." TransVoiceLessons uses this phrase as an example of an utterance that is helpful for voice feminization. She originally used the phrase

as a part of a poem reading that she was hired to do in which she was told to transition from a feminine voice to a masculine voice over the course of the poem (TransVoiceLessons 2022). She found that whenever she read the line "heat from fire, fire from heat," her voice consistently came out more feminine than she had intended. From there, she started using it as her "mantra phrase" or "reset phrase," something to repeat and to keep in mind as a goal as she practiced. After including it in her videos, online trans communities, including the r/TransVoice community, have taken up this phrase for use in memes and as a way to have an "in-phrase." However, her content is not without critique, as users on r/TransVoice sometimes complain about the complexity of her videos and that they can be overwhelming or confusing to get through, especially when they just want exercises or recommendations for how to go about training their voices.

The other prominent figure of authority on r/TransVoice is the user UndeadVoice, or Nicole Gress. Based on the biography on the Undead Voice website (Gress n.d.), Gress is white, genderfluid, and was assigned female at birth. Her website biography lists her pronouns as (she/they), but does not mention her gender identity or assigned sex. Information about this was gleaned from a comment she made on a specific thread. She is a voice coach from California. Unlike TransVoiceLessons, UndeadVoice holds a Masters in Speech Language Pathology from the University of the Pacific and a Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech Language Pathology. Her primary contribution to r/TransVoice is weekly "Quick Tip" and "How To" videos, with each targeting a specific element of the voice. She is a relative newcomer to the community, with her oldest post being only nine months old[3] as of the time of data collection. While her posts are not as popular as TransVoiceLessons's and there are no memes about her in the dataset, she has regularly been

---

[3] For comparison, r/TransVoice was created over 10 years ago.

making posts that appear in the top 25 of the past month. Her "Quick Tip" and "How To"

videos differ both in content and format from TransVoiceLessons's videos.

TransVoiceLessons's videos range from 10 to 25 minutes on average, whereas UndeadVoice

has videos in the 2 to 3 minute range. The latter seems to have incorporated solutions for

some of the critiques that TransVoiceLessons has received, which are discussed in greater

depth below, and this has worked well for UndeadVoice in terms of user engagement. In her

videos, UndeadVoice often invites viewers to comment on the post with a certain word to get

more resources. This practice results in hundreds of comments asking for more resources

from her.

       Members of r/TransVoice attend to TransVoiceLessons and UndeadVoice in particular

as they are frequent contributors to the overall knowledge base of the community.

TransVoiceLessons has been creating content for years and has influenced not only people

who go directly to her content, but people who come into contact with her work through

resource guides that draw on her materials or through users posting testimonials and

endorsements of her videos. UndeadVoice has videos that address the desire for short videos

on relatively simple exercises that target one aspect of voice training at a time. Her videos are

regular and consistent in form, allowing her "brand" to build quickly in her relatively short

time on Reddit. These posts differ from most other users' posts in their consistency. Whereas

many of the most popular posts of all time are one-off memes or videos, with the most sense

of consistency being update videos that users post after a popular video, TransVoiceLessons

shows up multiple times in the top 25 posts of all times, either through her own posts or in

memes, and UndeadVoice has multiple posts in the top 25 posts of the last month. These

coaches consistently create content either for YouTube or Reddit and establish themselves as

a recurring source of information and exercises for voice training, and the popularity of their posts indicates that many members of r/TransVoice are listening.

Even as users respond positively to both TransVoiceLessons and UndeadVoice's content, there is a dimension that is frequently absent in these videos. An aspect of voice training that is frequently discussed amongst r/TransVoice users is the emotions that are evoked in voice training. These affective expressions range from euphoria and pride at attaining a voice that the speaker is happy with to dysphoria and frustration at the process and their inability to attain the results they want. Discussion of these emotions is nearly completely absent from both TransVoiceLessons and UndeadVoice's videos. TransVoiceLessons's "Voice Feminization for ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS" video is one of the most popular posts of all time on r/TransVoice, however the 25 minute video focuses on building a "foundation" from a purely technical perspective without acknowledging the emotions that can arise as a part of the process. Example 1 list the labels of each of the segments of the video.

Example 1: "Voice Training for ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS" Chapters

00:00 Intro
00:36 The Beginning
00:57 Key 1: Pitch
01:58 Key 2: Weight
03:32 Taking Action
04:08 Basic Pitch Mimicry
04:48 Basic Weight Mimicry
06:17 Exercise 1
08:03 Exercise 2
09:25 Exercise 3
11:17 Exercise 4
12:49 Reflection
14:37 The Foundation
15:45 Avoiding Breathiness

One exception to this gap in the dataset appears in a post from UndeadVoice titled

"QUICK TRICK to Alleviate Voice Dysphoria." in which she has an "anxiety expert" (line 3)

describe a "brain hack" (line 66) to lessen dysphoria, anxiety, and self-doubt when speaking

and training. Putting aside the validity of the technique, which involves passing an object,

such as a pen, back and forth between your hands to "rebalance" (line 93) the brain, Example

2 shows how the purpose of the video is to alleviate dysphoria and anxiety as feelings that

stand in the way of voice training success.

Example 2: "Quick trick to alleviate voice dysphoria" (0:00)

```
01  UndeadVoice:   Let's talk about a quick trick to battle voice dysphoria
02                 when you're practicing.
03                 For this,
04                 I'm gonna hand it over to the anxiety expert,
05                 hypno voice coach,
06                 Katie Crooks.
07  Katie Crooks:  Hi.
08                 So in this video I'm going to show you a very, very easy
                   tool,
09                 to stop,
10                 the anxiety in its tracks.
11                 So any moment that you may have felt,
12                 uh,
13                 that old anxiety,
14                 the old negative self talk trying to creep in.
15                 [video cut]
16                 For example,
17                 if you speak on the phone to someone,
18                 or get ready to speak on the phone to someone,
19                 and fear starts to kick in,
20                 or you start thinking "Oh, I sound really stupid" or "I
                   don't sound like me yet",
21                 or whatever the unhelpful thoughts are.
22                 Anything that's done with repetition,
23                 [video cut]
```

```
24              thinking with repetition,
25              doing with repetition,
26              feeling with repetition,
27              [video cut]
28              is a habitual pattern in your brain.
29              [video cut]
30              This technique helps you to stop your brain going down
                that old path,
31              and change the anxiety and stress to redivert your brain
                to a new pattern.
32              And every time you choose to put up this roadblock,
33              [video cut]
34              you're creating new neural networks in your brain.
35              That's the science of it.
36              Those neurological pathways start to,
37              new ones start to form,
38              that serve you far better,
39              than the old ones.

[52 lines omitted in which Crooks demonstrates the technique]

92  Katie Crooks: And at a certain point,
93              it feels like a rebalance,
94              [video cut]
95              right now,
96              I feel more balanced,
97              I feel,
98              calmer.
99              ((deep breath)) I feel like I can breathe. ((exhales))
100             And of course you know that when you breathe easily,
101             your voice can flow more easily and effortlessly.
102             I don't know what you're noticing,
103             but,
104             I,
105             definitely like the feeling more,
106             than those old pathways.
```

This hack comes from a longer voice dysphoria workshop which has a recording available for free on the UndeadVoice website. Notable in this handling of emotions is that UndeadVoice presents negative feelings as something to be alleviated or "battle[d]" (line 1), and which Crooks advises viewers to learn to "stop […] in its tracks" (line 10). This perspective is appreciated and affirmed by commenters who say the technique works for them. Crooks goes further in her description of the effects of the method, describing herself as "more balanced" and "calmer" (lines 96-98). She connects the effects of this hack and the good feelings associated with it with improved ability to do voice training, saying it feels like

she "can breathe" (line 99) and that being able to breathe easily means her voice can flow more effortlessly.

Example 2: "Quick trick to alleviate voice dysphoria" (3:01)

```
01  Katie Crooks: So,
02                yeah!
03                that rebalances the brain,
04                then stop.
05                Notice how you feel now.
06                Notice what that number has come down to.
07                And you know,
08                even if that number's come down one,
09                great,
10                you're in charge of that,
11                you have the ability to train yourself,
12                to bring those levels down and down and down.
13                The more you do this,
14                the more of an expert you become,
15                at rediverting those neural pathways.
16                [video cut]
17                I'm fully expecting there to be a moment where you go,
18                "Oh, I'm feeling that again, great, this is my
                  opportunity."
19                Pick up the object,
20                do the exercise again.
21                The more you do it,
22                the more you train your brain,
23                to redivert itself,
24                to feelings of calm,
25                balance,
26                in control,
27                and security.
```

Katie Crooks does not actively discourage negative emotions in the first place, and even encourages viewers to intentionally "crank up" their anxiety level so they can practice the technique to bring it back down. However, the approach to emotions is highly individuated, where the person experiencing the feeling can choose to reconfigure their brains because "you're in charge of that" (line 10) and "you have the ability to train yourself to bring those levels down and down and down" (lines 11-12). Individual agency is presented as the solution to bad feelings and the societal environment in which those feelings arise is ignored. The technique does not involve communicating about these emotions with others,

23

for example, but is rather an action an individual can undertake alone; it builds no trans affective commons. The replacement of negative feelings with positive ones is a noble goal, but the sharing of negative emotions on r/TransVoice is an important way in which people in this community connect with each other. As Malatino (2022) notes, it is the sharing and recognition of bad feelings that form a trans affective commons, making the feelings themselves more bearable.

Expressing Emotions Through Memes

Members of r/TransVoice connect with each other through videos, audio clips, resource guides, and, as in many internet-based communities, memes. Memes are undeniably a part of r/TransVoice, but they do not have designated flair and moderators in the community have left comments on popular memes saying that they will not delete the post but also asking users to try to stick to "constructive content™"[4] within the community. Despite the lack of structural support for memes, almost half of the top 25 posts of all time consist of memes, indicating that the genre is appreciated by users. Each of these memes represents some aspect of voice training, whether it is frustration with the process, commonly relatable experiences, or engagement with a certain voice coach or way of voice training, and in this way they function to reflect shared experiences among members. Further, these memes frequently express affective dimensions of voice training, even when the focus of the meme is not emotional in nature. The sharing and promotion of these memes builds a sense of community in r/TransVoice as reflected by the higher engagement on these posts both in terms of score and number of comments. Memes allow users to see themselves and their experiences represented through humor, which act as a kind of coping mechanism, even as

---

[4] The use of "™" is used in a playful way in some online spaces and here implies that the commenter is referring to prototypical examples of "constructive content."

the memes themselves represent heavy, complex feelings, much like the COVID-19 memes discussed by Akram et al. (2021).

Example 3 is a meme that shows the way voice training exercises are presented as a path to greater happiness or better mental health. The meme consists of a comic strip posted to r/TransVoice on February 4, 2021 with the title "Who else does this?"; as of February 10, 2022, it had received 2,189 net upvotes, ranking it as the top post to date on r/TransVoice. This example is an edited version of a comic originally about misogyny in online video game voice chats, in which a feminine appearing gamer says "um… h-hello? can you hear me?" in panel 1, to which someone responds "BITCH, I WILL IMPREGNATE YOU WITH MY TRIPLETS!" The feminine figure then pauses before smiling and saying, "My mic works!" implying that this type of interaction is ordinary for female/femme gamers. The version posted to r/TransVoice, which appears as Example 3, has maintained the original context of an online voice chat. Here, the feminine figure mutes themself before saying TransVoiceLessons' phrase, "Heat from fire, fire from heat," and then unmuting and saying that they are back.

The most significant changes to the r/TransVoice version of this meme are the ordering of the panels and replacement of the text, which together create a new affective progression through the meme. Panel 1 in Example 3, in which the character pauses, seemingly uncertain about what to say, was originally panel 3, positioned as a response to the misogynistic abuse mentioned above. The panel with that abuse, which was originally panel 2, is absent and has been replaced with the mute icon that indicates the speaker has muted themselves in the chat. Finally, the image in panel 3 was the first panel of the original comic; originally, the gamer depicted was asking if their microphone was on, but is now using the "Heat from fire, fire from heat" phrase; the microphone icon in the corner indicates that they remain muted. The final panel is the same image with the addition of the unmuted microphone icon, which – along with the text – reveals that the person has turned their microphone back on and returned to the audio chat. The most negative panel is gone from the new meme and the affective low point of the original, the character's response after being yelled at, has been

moved to the front. In the absence of sexually violent language, the character's smile and lack of speech in that panel suggests feelings of anxiety before speaking in this new context. This anxious expression shifts into a happier one as the character says "Heat from fire, fire from heat" and happier still when they then unmute their microphone and say "Hey, I'm back!" The use of an exclamation point and the person's increasingly happy expressions demonstrate an affective shift that seems to come as a result of saying this key phrase and the vocal qualities it is thought to encourage. When the comic begins, the subject feels concerned about their voice, but by the end of it is speaking with confidence.
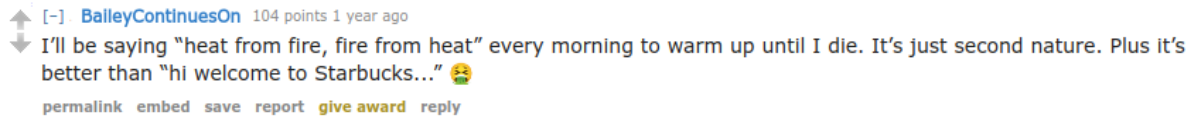
The meme in Example 3 represents an experience of trans people in online spaces commonly discussed on r/TransVoice. In contexts like online voice chat or telephone calls, the voice becomes more salient because it may be the only basis for someone to be gendered. In this meme, the person depicted is shown using TransVoiceLessons' phrase as a way to warm up or recalibrate their voice before they unmute themselves. The person who posted the meme shows how the phrase "Heat from fire, fire from heat" has been something that alleviates dysphoria for them and helps them be more confident, an experience echoed by other users.

The title of this post – "Who else does this?" – is emblematic of the ways in which community members use memes to connect with each other. By asking who else engages in this particular behavior, the author connects members of the community who are familiar with TransVoiceLessons through its unexplained reference to "Heat from fire, fire from heat," and those techniques are validated by the affective expressions the comic depicts. This connection is further developed in the comments on this post, as users recount their own experiences using the phrase not just for online voice chats but for work and other purposes.

One user, in Example 4, recounts their experience repeating "'heat from fire, fire from heat' every morning to warm up," saying that it's become "second nature" and that it's better than "hi welcome to Starbucks."

Example 4: Comment on post in Example 3

[−] **BaileyContinuesOn** 104 points 1 year ago
I'll be saying "heat from fire, fire from heat" every morning to warm up until I die. It's just second nature. Plus it's better than "hi welcome to Starbucks..." 🤮
permalink embed save report give award reply

The comment in Example 4 ends with a vomiting emoji, implying that the thought of warming up their voice by repeating a phrase required by a low-wage employer sickens the author. By contrast "heat from fire, fire from heat" is presented as avoiding that reaction and perhaps providing some sort of alleviation of bad feelings. The comments section on a post like this also offers a space for the dissemination of information about TransVoiceLessons and the tools she offers. This happens as commenters who are out of the loop ask what this phrase is and why this phrase in particular is employed, and other users fill in the background information. The comment with the highest net upvotes within this comment section specifically asks how to "get into TransVoiceLessons," with other users providing information about how they approached her content. This is one way memes perpetuate norms. The meme itself represents a norm – the reliance on TransVoiceLessons' somewhat opaque and seemingly empirically untested claims about voice feminization – and members of the community who are not familiar with the experience represented become aware of it and learn more about it as members of the community more explicitly articulate those norms in the comments.

Example 5: TransVoiceLessons resonance meme
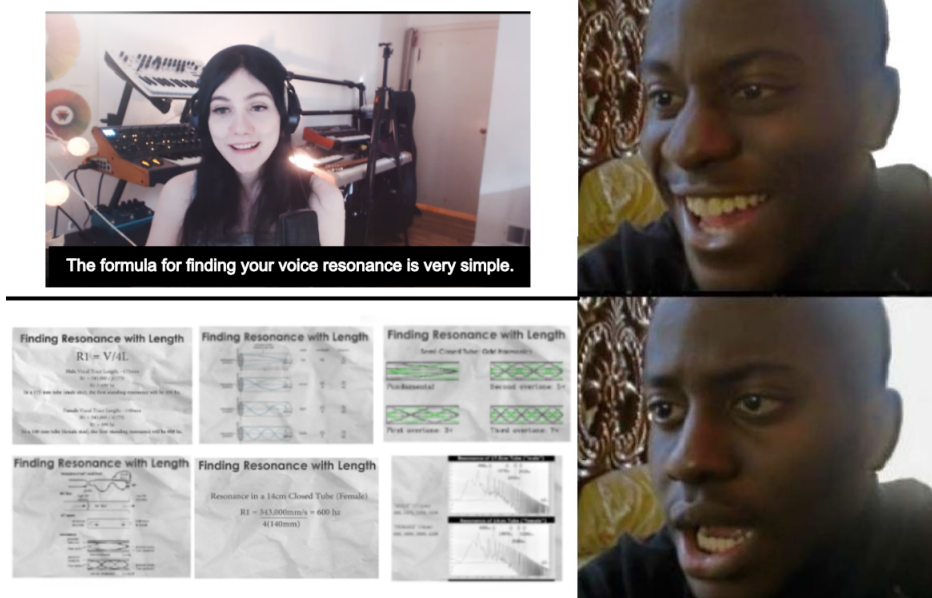
Another meme that illustrates the connection between community and the expression

of emotion – specifically, fatigue – can be seen in Example 5. Example 5 is a "Disappointed

Black Guy" meme posted to r/TransVoice on December 8, 2020 with the title "Me whenever

I open YouTube lately"; it had received 1,890 net upvotes as of February 10, 2022, placing it

as the post with the fourth highest score of all time on r/TransVoice at the time of data

collection. This meme format has four panels, and, as is typical for this meme template, the

first panel shows something that the author of the meme is excited for or anticipating

followed by a picture of an excited Black man who seems to be reacting to the first panel; in

this case, the claim that the formula for finding voice resonance is very simple. The third

panel then shows a development on the first panel which is in some way different and

unexpected from what was initially expected; in this case, several screenshots of complex

appearing diagrams and equations that relate to vocal tract resonance. The final panel

demonstrates the dismay of the author as a result of this development through a picture of the same Black man looking shocked and disappointed. Example 2 uses pictures from a TransVoiceLessons's video, titled "The Art of Voice Feminization | Part 1: Overview, Acoustic Resonance, and A Conceptual Framework." The promise shown in the first panel has enticed the creator of this meme, but the information in the third panel does not meet the author's expectations. The author of the meme thus expresses the critical stance that TransVoiceLessons' content can be more difficult to understand than she presents it.

This meme, unlike Example 3, initially presents a personal take on an experience with voice training through the title's reference to the author's own experience "whenever [they] open YouTube lately," suggesting that they spend a good deal of time watching TransVoiceLessons's content. Furthermore, the meme format depicts the poster's emotional response to watching this video: first excitement, then confusion or frustration. Through the process of upvoting, other users in the community implicitly share their own recognition of the author's experience, which is further developed in the comments. Users elaborate upon the idea that TransVoiceLessons's videos can be complicated by sharing their own experiences of feeling overwhelmed by her content, even as they acknowledge its helpfulness. Example 6 shows the comment with the highest score on this post, made by PM_ME_YOUR_CATGIRLS, and several who responded to their comment.

<u>Example 6: Comment thread in response to Example 5</u>

        PM_ME_YOUR_CATGIRLS said that they "love Trans Voice Lessons" (line 1) and

that her content is "by far … the most helpful" (line 2), but that her videos "can feel a bit

overwhelming" (line 1). A user who later deleted their account and another user,

tuckandcover, responded to this comment with their own strategies for overcoming the sense

of being overwhelmed, including taking notes and finding someone in real life that they can

practice with. PM_ME_YOUR_CATGIRLS responded positively to these suggestions,

evaluating them as a "good idea" (line 6) and saying that they would "be better"

(line 6) than what they are currently doing or that "maybe [they] should try" (line 9) the

suggestions. In sharing their own ways of dealing with feeling overwhelmed, they implicitly

share that they have also felt that way and thus recognize that emotion in

PM_ME_YOUR_CATGIRLS's comment even as they offer strategies to avoid it.

        Additional emotions such as frustration and dysphoria also come up in the comments

section for the post in Example 5. One user, tony_hawks_pro_gesterone, reports that

watching TransVoiceLessons' videos and attempting to do voice training "usually ends up

31

with [them] being very frustrated and crying then going to bed and giving up for like a month" (lines 1-2). Users in this comment thread, including pinkwhiteblue692, commiserate with tony_hawks_pro_gesterone, initially offering a "more approachable" way of doing voice training (lines 3-4), before directly recognizing and sharing their own experience with frustration (comment 4).

Example 7: Comment thread in response to Example 5

[-] tony_hawks_pro_gesterone 22 points 1 year ago
I watch her videos every once in a while and seriously try to do a girl voice. It usually ends up with me being very frustrated and crying then going to bed and giving up for like a month.
permalink embed save report give award reply

[-] pinkwhiteblue692 4 points 1 year ago
I've found a combination of hers and L's guides to be good for me, start with the intro stuff from L, I found it more approachable
permalink embed save parent report give award reply

5 [-] tony_hawks_pro_gesterone 2 points 1 year ago
Alright. It's just really hard getting over the like self hate and finding the willpower to do it. I will try that though
permalink embed save parent report give award reply

[-] pinkwhiteblue692 4 points 1 year ago
Yeah, voice training is a real slog, I hate it too. But now I'm presenting full time with updated legal docs and such and my voice still sucks! If there's one thing I'd have done better, it'd be better discipline on voice training. If I started earlier, I'd have sounded great by this point. The first month or two of voice training were a big time drag for me, but you gotta push through.

10 Look at the stuff from L' s guide, the larynx related stuff takes a while to train the muscles to do what you want and you don't even really need to make sound to make progress, so maybe it will make you feel less dysphoric.

In a couple months of attempted regular but intermittent practice, I went from barely being able to consciously raise my larynx, to being able to easily do it (it's just not subconscious yet) so even though my voice still blows, I've got tangible progress to encourage me to keep trying. After a couple months, my shitty femme voice makes me less
15 dysphoric than my baseline voice, so that's further encouragement.
permalink embed save parent report give award reply

[-] tony_hawks_pro_gesterone 1 point 1 year ago
Aha, I'm like 18 months HRT and look androgynous. Maybe more fem idk. I present androgynous or male I still have yet to really present in a fem way :x My legal name change/gender change has been in process for like 4 months. (Covidddd) the larynx I think is what I struggle with the most. I feel like if I could do that while speaking I could learn
19 fairly easily idk. That swallow and hold stuff never works.
permalink embed save parent report give award reply

In comment 4, pinkwhiteblue692 describes voice training as "a real slog" (line 6) and says that they "hate it too" (line 6). They go on to describe in greater detail how the recommended resources have been helpful in their transition, and emphasize that time is needed in order to achieve one's goals. After this recognition, the final comment from tony_haws_pro_gesterone is not about emotions but contextualizing their transition timeline

32

and identifying specific struggles with voice training, such as a swallowing-based technique to raise the larynx. The recognition of the emotional aspect of voice training that pinkwhiteblue692 offered allowed for deeper conversations about voice training as they talk about voice training beyond the emotions that impact their ability to train in the first place.

These memes represent a way in which community members share experiences with voice training and connect with each other. The broad identification with these memes is made clear due to the popularity of the posts themselves. As individual users create and share them with the community, the comments section allows for deeper engagement with similar experiences as well as a discussion of emotions that occur with and surrounding voice training. However, the discussion that occurs in these comments sections also contributes to transnormativity surrounding transition practices and interventions.

Transnormativity on r/TransVoice

Transnormativity on r/TransVoice creates an environment that generates the kind of fatigue described by Malatino (2022). However, the ways in which community members respond to the expression of these "bad feelings" can affect the impact they have on voice training. In Example 7, the recognition of emotion was followed by a conversation about voice training techniques. As people discuss and share their own success stories, they create benchmarks and other standards for people to compare themselves against. These standards produce what Malatino describes as "lag" as people transitioning work towards milestones. They voice these feelings, as well as feelings of inspiration, in response to posts sharing users' progress in voice training. This section shows how highly viewed and upvoted success stories shape the understanding of what voice training should look like and how they can contribute to the proliferation of bad feelings unless a trans affective commons is invoked.

That is, what constitutes "successful" vocal training is defined by those who most successfully embody their voices in normative ways.

Several of the posts in the dataset are videos or audio clips of community members celebrating their success with voice training. These posts often prompt several comments from users asking for more information from the original poster (or OP) on how they reached the point that they did. In particular, there is a focus on the length of time that the OP has been voice training as well as the resources and exercises they used. One example of this type of post is transcribed in part in Example 8. The video was posted by iratepear, with the title "Oh my god I think I did it." iratepear includes a video of herself talking about her voice and how she thinks she has "[done] it" (line 1), referring to finding a feminine voice that she can produce consistently.

Example 8: Transcript of iratepear video

```
01    iratepear:   Okay guys,
02                 I,
03                 I think I did it.
04                 I,
05                 I was sitting here for a second,
06                 and,
07                 I,
08                 I spoke,
09                 and, [She makes a gesture at the camera.]
10                 I had been struggling with getting it like,
11                 exactly how I wanted it to sound,

[21 lines omitted from transcript]

33                 it's like,
34                 it's this voice is even higher than I was really
                   planning or,
35                 like,
36                 expecting for myself.
37                 And it's almost weird hearing it coming out of my mouth,
38                 Um,
39                 so I just wanted to share this with you guys,
40                 I'm really excited,
41                 I'm very happy,
42                 um,
```

```
43              so please let me know what you think,
44              um,
45              and how I sound.
46              I think it sounds pretty good but I,
47              I always have doubts.
48              So,
49              please let me know.
50              Thank you.
```

iratepear reports that she is "very happy" (line 41) and "really excited" (line 40) at this development, especially after experiences of getting close to a voice that was "exactly how [she] wanted it to sound" (line 11), but not being able to stick to it. The voice for her is unexpected and she says that it is higher than she planned or expected from herself (lines 34-36). She closes the video by asking for feedback and how she sounds as even with her own happiness and positive evaluation of her voice, she "always [has] doubts" (line 47). In the comments of her post, several members of the community asked her about her experience with voice training, focusing on the length that she had been voice training as well as how she did it. She received so many requests for this information that she wrote a summary comment for everyone, which appears as Example 9. Of particular note in this example are her explicitly positioning herself as someone who is not an expert and addressing feelings of being unable to do voice training by talking about her own feelings about her voice.

[−] **Iratepear** [S] 13 points 1 year ago*

1 Hey guys I would love to respond to everyone but I think it might be good to just do this all at once. Hopefully everyone sees this. Also pardon me if I say anything i'll-informed, I am not a vocal expert or anything.

So, I used transvoicelessons on youtube for most of my voice training. However, I found that for
5 me and my short attention span they were a bit wordy and complicated at times. So what I did was generally familiarize myself with the concepts she discussed, and practiced with them by myself. The two main concepts which were most helpful to me were resonance training and vocal thinness excersizes. Once you get a feel for how to adjust those things (vocal thinness you might sound a bit breathy at first), it's only a matter of practicing.

10 I practiced pretty much every day, throughout the day, cause i'm a student and work predominantly online. But I'm sure you can fit it in wherever you have time.
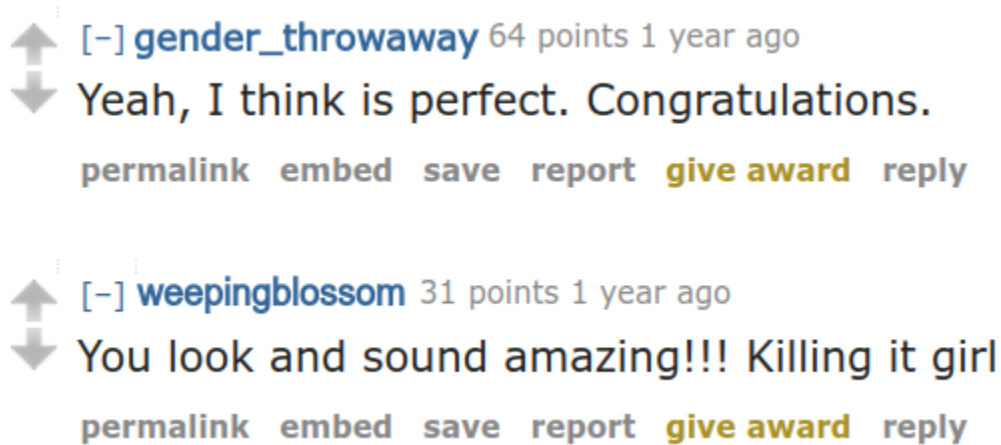
One weird tip which I don't think I mentioned that might help some of you, is to try singing first. Somehow the longer sustained tones in singing helped me get a better feel for it all. Talking is pretty complex and varied. I would "have it" for some words and not others, It felt broken up by
15 voice cadence. Singing feels smoother to me. I practice talking often but singing was really where I have made a lot of my progress.

The main thing to remember is this actually has very little to do with pitch, it's mostly in where you resonate your voice and what vocal folds you're using. Y'all are totally capable of this, my voice was by no means feminine to begin with, it was pretty deep and I hated it. You just gotta
20 practice! But don't overdo it, make sure to give your voice plenty of rest in between. Hopefully this clear up any questions you guys might have!

iratepear begins her comment by explicitly stating that she is "not a vocal expert,"

(lines 2-3) hedging the contents of her comment and positioning herself as a layperson

engaging with this material. In the second paragraph of her comment, iratepear outlines how

she engaged with resources, explicitly mentioning TransVoiceLessons and her YouTube

videos as constituting the majority of her voice training (line 4), even as she echoes critiques

of the videos being "complicated" (line 5). iratepear's comment, in conjunction with the

original video post, acts as a form of informal coaching for members of the community in the

sense that it presents an "endpoint" of voice training that is perceived to be desirable. Both in

the title and the post itself, she says that she has "[done] it" (Example 8, line 2). That "it" is

initially unspecified, but in the video is implicitly defined as not only finding a voice that she

likes but also "staying inside the voice" (Example 8, line 9) over time. Users perceive this as

desirable by agreeing with her self-assessment. They do this by upvoting the post itself and also through comments saying she sounds "perfect" (Example 10) or that she "look[s] and sound[s] amazing" (Example 11); these statements were upvoted enough to become two of the top comments on the post, with a net of 64 points and 31 points, respectively.

Examples 10 and 11: Comments in response to iratepear's post

[−] **gender_throwaway** 64 points 1 year ago

Yeah, I think is perfect. Congratulations.

permalink embed save report **give award** reply

[−] **weepingblossom** 31 points 1 year ago

You look and sound amazing!!! Killing it girl

permalink embed save report **give award** reply

Posts like iratepear's contribute to a set of expectations within the community about how voice training unfolds. As individual members of the community see the progress that people like iratepear have made and compare it to their own journey, especially when specific milestones and achievements are tied to certain lengths of time, it can lead to the expression of lag, fatigue, and frustration. This can be seen in Example 12, where nyabilify asked iratepear how long she had been training her voice for. This question was asked multiple times in the comments section on this post, and is common on other posts like it.

Example 12: Comment from nyabilify on iratepear's post

[-] **nyabilify** 7 points 1 year ago

Holy cow just two months? I've been going for two years and I wish mine was this good. Congrats!

permalink embed save parent report give award reply

[-] **iratepear** [S] 4 points 1 year ago

5

Hey everyone takes their own amount of time! I'm sure it gets frustrating taking longer, but you can do it! Also to be fair I have pretty bad adhd so that hyperfocus energy has really helped me practice lmao

nyabilify's comment shows how questions about how long someone's process took invite self-comparison. Expressing surprise that iratepear made this much progress in "just two months," this user implies a difference between their voice and iratepear's when they say they have been doing voice training for two years and "wish [their voice] was this good." In response, iratepear neutralizes the difference by saying "everyone takes their own amount of time," and attributes the difference between herself and nyabilify as related to "hyperfocus energy." Returning to Example 9, we see that iratepear reports practicing "pretty much every day" (line 10), but also downplays the importance of repeated, daily practice when she expresses confidence that "you can fit it in whenever you have time" (line 11). iratepear ends her comment with some encouraging words to the reader, insisting that those reading "are totally capable of this" (line 18). She assures them that her voice "was by no means feminine to begin with, it was pretty deep and I hated it" (lines 18-19). She aligns with the reader experientially and affectively, and her progress with her voice suggests that they too can overcome the voice dysphoria that she overcame. This encouragement differs from the content of TransVoiceLessons and UndeadVoice, as iratepear has gone through this process

38

as a layperson and has shared her voice for everyone in the community to see the effects of voice training. While TransVoiceLessons has also gone through the process of voice training as well, members of the community sometimes see her voice and looks as unattainable.[5] iratepear's video and comments make the process seem possible to the reader. She has also experienced the emotions that come with voice training and recognizes them in others. She does not offer solutions or "hacks" to stop those emotions, but instead provides encouragement that despite having the feelings, they can still do voice training.

At the same time, iratepear's reassurances contribute to transnormativity, because her reassurances suggest that anyone can achieve the voice they want if they just work hard and long enough for it. As iratepear insists in Example 9, "You just gotta practice!" (lines 19-20). Those who object to the prediction that they will be able to sound as feminine as models like iratepear are generally encouraged to be patient, i.e. to prolong the lag and fatigue it induces (see also Examples 2 and 7). However, the insistence that certain practices will always lead to success if practiced for a long enough period of time suggests that those who never reach their goal have only themselves to blame. This situation incites the next emotion I will discuss, which is rage.

Anger in this community often comes as a response to unsolicited coaching directed at those struggling with perceived lack of progress. In the comments on iratepear's post, iratepear responds to frustration expressed in the comments by other members of the community. Several commenters express frustration with the process that manifests as dysphoria, which can lead to avoiding voice training altogether. In Example 9, iratepear implicitly responds to these comments when she says others "are totally capable of this" (line

---

[5] For instance, the post in Example 5 garnered complaints that TransVoiceLessons "already had a high pitched voice" while another assures others that "she's had facial surgery to look that cute."

18), acknowledging that she also struggled with "hat[ing her voice]" (line 19). The people who originally expressed frustration responded to these comments positively, thanking iratepear for her advice and inspiration to really try voice training. Example 13 shows the comments from a user who initially said they were "intimidated to start" and after receiving a comment from iratepear saying she was also intimidated, responds promising that "[they're] going to start tomorrow."

Example 13: Encouraging comment thread from iratepear

However, feelings of futility and frustration are not always met with a positive response. A final set of examples come from a post containing a "Mother Ignoring Kid Drowning In A Pool" meme (Example 14), which was posted to r/TransVoice on May 29, 2021 with the title "I think I'm funny. (Also, consider this my petition for a meme/meta flair)"; it had received 1,054 net upvotes as of February 11, 2022, placing it as the post with the sixteenth highest score of all time on r/TransVoice as of the time of data collection. The

meme shows three different groups and represents them in relation to their relative amount of

voice training resources, showing "trans fems" as happily being guided into the pool by

"voice training resources," suggesting they are the group that receives the most attention and

help, while "trans mascs" are struggling, and "nb [non-binary] people" are the bottom of the

pool.

Example 14: Voice training resources meme

While users typically congregate around common emotional and embodied

experiences, conflict arises around contested community ideologies, such as "transmasculine

people have an easier time voice training" (see also Zimman 2016). This meme sparked an at

times heated discussion around the availability of resources for voice feminization,

masculinization, and androgynization. This is evidenced by the stickied comment[6] from a moderator of the subreddit that tells users to "keep civil [sic] in the comments" and notes that, "this meme is rightfully drawing attention to a resource deficit that exists within the community." Conversation in the thread generally consisted of people discussing the idea that Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) for transmasculine people transitions their voice for them (Zimman 2017; Azul et al. 2018) or people saying they dislike memes that make comparisons between trans experiences.

One comment thread in particular, Example 15, shows an instance where these discussions turned towards conflict. AdorableAlice1312, who positions herself as transfeminine through her use of the pronoun "we" on line 2, expresses distaste for the message of this meme, saying "don't act like trans masc have it worse" (line 1), and invokes the effect that testosterone can have on the voice such that trans masculine people "physically get their voices lowered" (line 1-2). AdorableAlice1312's initial comment has a score of -3 points, demonstrating a negative response from users in the thread.

---

[6] Moderators can "sticky" comments to the top of threads so that they appear at the top of the comments, regardless of the score of the comment.

Example 15: Comment thread in response to Example 14

[−] **AdorableAlice1312** -3 points 1 year ago

don't act like trans masc have it worse, they physically get their voices lowered while we suffer and have to work for sometimes maybe years to even pass at all

permalink embed save report give award reply

    [−] **bingobongo** 17 points 1 year ago

    Just wrote out my opinion to a different question about it:

5   https://www.reddit.com/r/transvoice/comments/nne5vg/i_think_im_funny_also_consider_this_my_petition/gzuxrss/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=ios_app&utm_name=iossmf&context=3

    Yes we trans women have it harder with our voices, but keep in mind

10   it's much harder for trans Mascs to get access to HRT, as DIY testosterone is a controlled substance, whereas estrogen is not and in some places laws/parents make it hard or impossible to obtain hormones legally

    permalink embed save parent report give award reply

        [−] **AdorableAlice1312** -3 points 1 year ago

        yeah but sorry i'm cursed with not being able to do anything

15   about my voice and i can't even get hrt for years so it just fucking HURTS to see

        permalink embed save parent report give award reply

AdorableAlice1312 resists the premise of the meme, saying that "we [transfeminine people] suffer" (line 1) and "work for sometimes maybe years to even pass at all" (lines 2-3), suggesting that it is transmasculine people who have it easier when it comes to the voice. The adversarial stance AdorableAlice1312 takes when they say "dont ask like trans masc have it worse" (line 1) is somewhat atypical for a meme post, and suggests that the post may have inspired feelings of anger in them. The top reply to this comment, from user bingobongo, does not acknowledge the suffering that AdorableAlice1312 mentions. Instead, bingobongo brings up difficulties that transmasculine people have with accessing Hormone Replacement Therapy (lines 9-13) while also recognizing AdorableAlice1312's point that transfeminine people "have it harder with [their] voices" (line 9).

43

In AdorableAlice1312's next comment, which also has a negative score, they share their experiences of pain with anger and rage, including taboo, affectively charged language in their stance that it "fucking HURTS to see" (lines 15-16), presumably in reference to people who can transition their voices successfully and easily being represented as "having it worse" when AdorableAlice1312 has struggled to get access to HRT and say they are "not … able to do anything about [their] voice" (lines 14-15). bingobongo then responds, once again without addressing the painful feelings that AdorableAlice1312 is communicating.

Example 16: Continued comment thread from Example 15

AdorableAlice1312 -3 points 1 year ago

yeah but sorry i'm cursed with not being able to do anything about my voice and i can't even get hrt for years so it just fucking HURTS to see

15

permalink embed save parent report give award reply

bingobongo 10 points 1 year ago

... you can change your voice. I did, I voice trained. So can you?

/r/transvoice ans transvoicelessons are a good place to start.

Turn your victim energy into productive energy.

20

Take a book read it in high pitch 20-30 minutes, 3-4 times a week.

At first you'll sound effeminate, and eventually it'll progress more and more until you just need to work on your resonance.

25

The vocal chords and the neck muscles that control where your larynx is, are all just muscles. You just need to workout these voice muscles to get to where you want to get.

Will you ever sing like a cis woman? No probably not.

30

Can you talk, cough, sneeze etc. like one? Yeah you can.

permalink embed save parent report give award reply

AdorableAlice1312 -7 points 1 year ago

31

it doesn't work

bingobongo's response in Example 16 starts by contradicting AdorableAlice1312's claim ("… you can change your voice," line 17). They next point to their own success with voice training, saying that "[they] did [i.e., changed their voice], [they] voice trained" (line 17) and then saying "So can you?" (lines 17-18), which positions them as a source of authority. By bluntly contradicting the claim that AdorableAlice1312 can't do anything about their voice, bingobongo implies that the hurt being expressed can also be avoided. This is further evident when bingobongo directs AdorableAlice1312 to turn their "victim energy into productive energy" (line 20) followed by a series of instructions for voice training. This construal of AdorableAlice1312's emotions is a shift from a lack of acknowledgement to a rejection of their feelings. Paired with the offering of unsolicited advice, bingobongo seems to cause AdorableAlice1312's bad feelings to intensify. Rather than identify with AdorableAlice1312's feelings, as iratepear did in the comment thread on her post, bingobongo labels these feelings as a choice and draws on conservative political discourses that attribute social inequality to "victim mentality" among the subjugated.

<u>Example 17: Continued comment thread from Example 16</u>

[-] **AdorableAlice1312** -6 points 1 year ago

31 it doesn't work

permalink embed save parent report give award reply

[-] **AdorableAlice1312** -4 points 1 year ago

just hurts... they can wake up sounding cis and i'll always just sound gay

permalink embed save parent report give award reply

[-] **bingobongo** 9 points 1 year ago

You'll sound gay... at first... Keep going.

35   Keep practicing.

It'll take anywhere from 3-9 months of active training to get to a girl voice that feels natural, but it's entirely possible and sustainable, since it hurts for me to go back to my previous voice now.

40   They're muscles that you train.

permalink embed save parent report give award reply

[-] **AdorableAlice1312** 8 points 1 year ago

it's been a year

When AdorableAlice1312 responds that "it doesn't work" (line 31) and reiterates the feeling that it "just hurts" (line 32), bingobongo says that it takes effort over time and can take between 3 and 9 months to get a "girl voice that feels natural" (line 37), once again offering voice training advice instead of addressing the emotions that AdorableAlice1312 was expressing. AdorableAlice1312 finally replies saying that they have been voice training for a year, the only comment of theirs in the thread with a positive score and the last in the thread.

Throughout this exchange, bingobongo takes the position of expert and provides unsolicited, in-depth voice training advice to AdorableAlice1312, while the latter is talking about how bad voice training and dysphoria feels in the context of a meme post that implies trans femmes it easy when it comes to the voice. bingobongo has concluded not only that AdorableAlice1312 is somehow doing voice training wrong, but that the very emotions that they are trying to talk about are part of the problem. Yet they condemn feeling like a "victim"

46

without offering any sort of advice on how to deal with those feelings aside from telling AdorableAlice1312 to turn them into "productive energy" (line 20).

These last few comments in the thread in Example 17 demonstrate the ways in which transnormativity and rejecting or ignoring emotions can hinder discussion about voice training on r/TransVoice. Popular success stories may create a sense of hope and something to aspire toward, but they also set a standard for users to meet, however unintentionally. When seeing people reach a voice that they like and enjoy within two months, people who haven't started voice training can experience a kind of anticipatory anxiety as they fear what may happen if their voice doesn't sound like they want it to within a certain timeframe. This previously discussed exchange shows the failings of these idealized timelines. bingobongo is happy to provide advice, guidance, even exercises that AdorableAlice1312 can do to help with voice training, but AdorableAlice1312 is stuck on the bad feelings, restating them in almost every comment. As soon as it's made apparent that AdorableAlice1312 has already been at this for longer than bingobongo says voice training can take, the exchange falls apart and the original feelings of anger, rage, and pain that AdorableAlice1312 brought up go unresolved. When negative feelings are not given space in community and band-aid solutions are slapped on top, the root causes of these emotions continue to perpetuate and experiences that fall outside of the norm get left by the wayside.

This exchange shows the ways in which transnormativity promotes neoliberal and individualistic understandings of identity and transition (Zimman 2019). Unlike the trans affective commons that Malatino (2022) identifies as emergent from sharing and recognition of bad feelings, bingobongo repeatedly ignores AdorableAlice1312's pain and anger, stifling

the community connection that comes with a trans affective commons and resulting in an exchange in which bad feelings persist.

Conclusion

Emotions are an inevitable part of life. The ways in which people process and communicate emotions is an important part of any community, especially when those emotions tend to skew towards "negative" ones. On r/TransVoice, members often communicate fatigue and frustration as they undergo a difficult process that does not always go smoothly. Turning to a community of other people going through the same process, they hope to find support from other people going through the same things, hoping to build a trans affective commons. In some cases, they do find this support, such as in iratepear's video and comments, providing a sense of hope and inspiration for these people feeling frustrated and dysphoric. However, these do not always resolve cleanly, as evidenced by the interaction between AdorableAlice1312 and bingobongo, a case in which anger lingers and the typical advice for voice training fails. The lack of recognition from bingobongo emphasizes the importance of recognition in the creation and maintenance of a trans affective commons.

Transnormativity in posts and comments further emphasizes the need for a trans affective commons on r/TransVoice. Popular success stories implicitly create standards for users to compare themselves to and elicit emotional responses when users find themselves failing to meet the standards of the community. Without explicitly addressing that different people can take different amounts of time to make progress like on iratepear's post, exchanges devolve into neoliberal, individualistic ideals, as seen in the exchange between AdorableAlice1312 and bingobongo.

Voice coaches and speech language pathologists can take this information and adapt their programs to better serve the trans community. In the data collected, formal voice coaches either ignored or treated emotions as individual problems that require individual solutions. While these solutions do offer some benefit, they do not offer long-term, reliable bearing of these emotions. The emotions evoked by voice training and the programs and coaches themselves are powerful ones that are best addressed in an affective commons with other trans people, like on r/TransVoice. Moving forward, voice training programs and voice coaches must recognize emotions in their work. By starting from a place of intentionally acknowledging the emotions of trans people as they go through this process and encouraging emotional connection with other trans people, the importance of these emotions can be recognized and treated in a way that is respectable to them and the person experiencing them.

References

Ahmed, S. (2004). Collective feelings: Or, the impressions left by others. *Theory, Culture & Society*, *21*(2), 25–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276404042133.

Akram, U., Irvine, K., Allen, S. F., Stevenson, J. C., Ellis, J. G., & Drabble, J. (2021). Internet memes related to the COVID-19 pandemic as a potential coping mechanism for anxiety. *Scientific Reports*, *11*(1), 22305. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-00857-8.

Anderson, N. (2019). Queer memes on Instagram: Starting conversations, building community, and unconsciously raising queer visibility. Poster presented at Northeastern Illinois University Student Research and Creative Activities Symposium. 19 April, 2019.

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Azul, D., Arnold, A., & Neuschaefer-Rube, C. (2018). Do transmasculine speakers present with gender-related voice problems? Insights from a participant-centered mixed-methods study. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, *61*(1), 25-39. https://doi.org/10.1044/2017_JSLHR-S-16-0410.

Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2004). Language and identity. In Alessandro Duranti (Ed.), *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, 369-394. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural

   linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies*, *7*(4–5), 585-614.

   https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445605054407.

Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2016). Embodied sociolinguistics. In Nikolas

   Coupland (Ed.), *Sociolinguistics: Theoretical Debates*, 173-200. New York:

   Cambridge University Press.

Butler, J. (2015). *Senses of the Subject*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Eckert, P. (2010). Affect, sound symbolism, and variation. *University of*

   Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics, *15*(2), Article 9.

   https://repository.upenn.edu/pwpl/vol15/iss2/9/.

Gal, N., Shifman, L., & Kampf, Z. (2016). "It Gets Better": Internet memes and

   the construction of collective identity. *New Media & Society*, *18*(8),

   1698–1714. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444814568784.

Gress, N. (n.d.). About – Undead Voice [webpage]. Retrieved July 4, 2022, from

   https://www.undeadvoice.com/about.

Hall, K. (1999). Performativity. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *9*(1/2),

   184–187. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43102461.

Hardy T., Rieger J., Wells K., Boliek C. (2020). Acoustic predictors of gender

   attribution, masculinity–femininity, and vocal naturalness ratings amongst

   transgender and cisgender speakers. *Journal of Voice 34*(2),

   300.e11-300.e26. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvoice.2018.10.002.

Horak, L. (2014). Trans on YouTube: Intimacy, visibility, temporality.

    Transgender Studies Quarterly, 1(4), 572-585.

    https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-2815255.

Johnson, A. H. (2016). Transnormativity: A new concept and its validation

    through documentary film about transgender men. *Sociological Inquiry*,

    86(4), 465–491. https://doi.org/10.1111/soin.12127.

Jones, L. (2019). Discourses of transnormativity in vloggers' identity

    construction. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*,

    2019(256), 85-101. https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2018-2013.

Le Page, R. B. & Tabouret-Keller, A. (1985). *Acts of Identity: Creole-based*

    Approaches to Language and Ethnicity. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ.

    Press.

Malatino, H. (2022.) *Side Affects: On Being Trans and Feeling Bad*.

    Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Milani, T. M. (2018). Queer performativity. In Kira Hall and Rusty Barrett

    (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Sexuality*. New York:

    Oxford University Press. Online edition:

    https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190212926.013.15.

Raun, T. (2015). Archiving the wonders of testosterone via YouTube.

    Transgender Studies Quarterly, *2*(4), 701-709.

    https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-3151646.

Scott, J. C. (1992). Domination, acting, and fantasy. In Carolyn Nordstrom and

Joann Martin (Eds.), *The Paths to Domination, Resistance, and Terror*,

55-84. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Shifman, L. (2013). *Memes in Digital Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Stanley, E. (2018). The affective commons: Gay shame, queer hate, and other

collective feelings. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, *24*(4),

489–508. https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-6957800

TransVoiceLessons. (2022, February 2). *HEAT FROM FIRE ...* 🔥 [Video].

YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynIoNPnX538

Zimman, L., & Hall, K. (2009). Language, embodiment, and the 'third sex'. In

Dominic Watt & Carmen Llamas (Eds.), *Language and Identities*, 166-178.

Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press.

Zimman, L. (2016). Sociolinguistic agency and the gendered voice:

Metalinguistic negotiations of vocal masculinization among female-to-male

transgender speakers. In Anna Babel (ed.), *Awareness and Control in*

Sociolinguistic Research, 253–77. New York & Cambridge, UK: Cambridge

University Press.

Zimman, L. (2016). Sociolinguistic agency and the gendered voice:

Metalinguistic negotiations of vocal masculinization among female-to-male

transgender speakers. In Anna Babel (Ed.), *Awareness and Control in*

Sociolinguistic Research, 253-277. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Zimman, L. (2017). Gender as stylistic bricolage: Transmasculine voices and the

    relationship between fundamental frequency and /s/. *Language in Society*,

    46(3), 339-370. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404517000070.

Zimman, L. (2018). Transgender voices: Insights on identity, embodiment, and

    the gender of the voice. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, *12*(8), e12284.

    https://doi.org/10.1111/lnc3.12284.

Zimman, L. (2019). Trans self-identification and the language of neoliberal

    selfhood: Agency, power, and the limits of monologic discourse.

    International Journal of the Sociology of Language, 256(1), 147–75.

    https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2018-2016.

Appendix A - Top 25 Posts of All Time Raw Post Data

Date Info Collected	Post Title	Post Date	Score	Number of Comments	Flair (if any)
2/10/22	Who else does this?	02/04/2021	2189	88	
2/10/22	L's Voice Training Guide (Level 1) for MTF transgender vocal feminization	09/12/2019	2162	104	
2/10/22	Oh my god I think I did it	04/12/2021	1970	132	Audio/Video
2/10/22	Me whenever I open YouTube lately	12/08/2020	1890	54	
2/10/22	Mafe (sic) this at work so quality is a bit lower, I thought it was funny tho (sic)	11/19/2020	1625	23	
2/11/22	Her videos are so helpful but sometimes I feel like I'm never going to be able to make my voice sound how I like	12/18/2020	1442	62	
2/11/22	i hate when that happens	06/08/2021	1419	46	
2/11/22	How I feminized my voice	04/17/2021	1385	36	General Resource
2/11/22	Why must practice require effort?	08/29/2019	1305	35	

2/11/22	Remember, your voice is a skill and like all skills you likely feel foolish even trying, but keep trying!	01/11/2020	1256	9	
2/11/22	Thanks, mom	10/31/2021	1218	17	
2/11/22	5 months since last update; 17 months of overall training	02/06/2020	1180	62	
2/11/22	Meatwad Voice Hacks	01/29/2020	1174	106	
2/11/22	We've all been here	04/28/2021	1099	17	
2/11/22	For any trans girls feeling dysphoric about a lower voice, I raise you: me, a cis girl, with a naturally deep voice giving you lovely ladies validation!	01/28/2020	1079	56	
2/11/22	I think I'm funny. (Also, consider this my petition for a meme/meta flair)	05/29/2021	1054	51	
2/11/22	MtF - 33yo - 6mo voice practice - rock ballade in Polish [sing]	05/09/2021	1044	10	Audio/Video

2/11/22	[25, trans femme] Does the voice match the face? I'd super appreciate any feedback/constructive criticism from you guys. Thanks!	07/26/2021	991	58	Criticism Wanted
2/11/22	MtF - 4mo voice practice, please judge my progress :)	02/19/2021	973	11	
2/11/22	Voice Feminization for ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS | How to Get Started	07/20/2021	955	51	
2/11/22	1 year voice update and thank you!	08/16/2019	948	39	
2/11/22	please don't delete your posts it feels super bad and nobody gets it right for the first time. you've got it!!	02/14/2021	908	8	
2/11/22	Inflection is all about movement! How to get your voice from androgynous to feminine.	09/27/2019	901	29	

2/11/22	MtF - voice practice, please judge my progress :)	11/25/2020	892	23	
2/11/22	QUICK TRICK: Thinning out the Vocal Folds	07/14/2021	883	207	

Appendix B - Top 25 Posts of Last Month Raw Post Data

Date Info Collected	Post Title	Post Date	Score	Number of Comments	Flair (if any)
02/09/2022	HOW TO: Laugh with a Bright/Femme Voice!	01/18/2022	411	50	Trans-Femme Resource
02/09/2022	I'm Portuguese I was wishing merry Christmas for a couple of my friends😅.. I'm still pre hrt(mtf,23) and I never had any type of voice coaching.. I guess I just want to know how and where can I improve(also pls don't mock me 🥹)	01/27/2022	357	16	Audio/Video
02/09/2022	Here's my voice training exercise!! Posting for reference of others but feedback is also welcome!	01/17/2022	355	14	Trans-Femme Resource
02/09/2022	"extremely lesbian voice"	02/07/2022	354	29	Criticism Wanted
02/09/2022	Students keep clocking me, is it definitely the voice?	01/20/2022	347	53	Criticism Wanted

02/09/2022	First day ever, feedback please (mtf 16 7mo hrt)	01/30/2022	332	16	Audio/Video
02/09/2022	How do I stop this from happening? I look like a gremlin :(	01/28/2022	330	11	Question
02/09/2022	Getting started in voice training flow chart, definitely not comprehensive but hopefully it gives you an idea	01/12/2022	331	13	General Resource
02/09/2022	HOW TO: Control Your Resonance by Releasing Your Shoulders!	02/01/2022	317	7	Trans-Femme Resource
02/09/2022	Do I sound feminine at all????	01/22/2022	305	62	Audio/Video
02/09/2022	HOW TO: Sing with a Femme Voice!	01/25/2022	302	34	Trans-Femme Resource
02/09/2022	does my voice pass? what can I work on?	01/15/2022	299	13	Audio/Video
02/09/2022	QUICK TIP: How to maintain your voice on the phone!	01/11/2022	294	1	Trans-Femme Resource

02/09/2022	So, I've been voice training for a few months now, but I've noticed that I don't do as well in actual situations as I do in practice, so I kinda want to hear how it comes across when I'm less focused, as well as how it sounds when paired with my actual appearance	01/10/2022	287	21	Criticism Wanted
02/09/2022	Here's my 8 months on T voice updates in 8 seconds :) so happy with my results so far	02/04/2022	266	22	Audio/Video
02/09/2022	aiming for a fem voice. advice/criticism welcome. tysm! :)	01/19/2022	257	8	Criticism Wanted
02/09/2022	trying a lower resonance. does it sound like a woman?	01/31/2022	243	77	Audio/Video
02/09/2022	I think my voice is getting better, what do you think?	01/14/2022	235	42	Question
02/09/2022	Thoughts? ✌️	01/14/2022	215	19	Question
02/09/2022	a video of me! honest feedback?	01/10/2022	212	10	Criticism Wanted

02/09/2022	does my voice pass as male? any changes i could make?	02/01/2022	207	19	Criticism Wanted
02/09/2022	Hello! I'm a trans girl and I just started a YouTube channel for my songs! I finally relearned how to sing a few months ago but I'm curious to your thoughts and if you can find anything I can work on!	01/18/2022	199	32	Audio/Video
02/09/2022	Background, Memes, & Phonetics of Heat from Fire!	02/02/2022	181	5	General Resource
02/09/2022	Recently had another voice drop, I'm 20. And just wanted to get opinions on my pitch. Apparently it's passing, I just can't get the old voice out of my head.	01/24/2022	169	20	Audio/Video
02/09/2022	Transgirl here, Six months into voice training and looking for feedback!	01/13/2022	168	21	Audio/Video