Auditory Gaydar: Detecting and Being Detected

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Abstract:
Voice can be taken as a cue of sexual orientation. Indeed, listeners often guess whether a person is gay/straight on the basis of vocal cues, a phenomenon usually called auditory gaydar. In this talk I will present a series of studies that, on the one hand, investigated individuals’ gaydar judgments and, on the other hand, focused on gay individuals’ experiences of being noticed as gay because of their voices. In so doing, I will show that gay and straight individuals make inaccurate but not random gaydar judgments I will them show that these gaydar judgments can be influenced by the speaker’s communicative intentions and contexts. Finally, I will provide evidence that gaydar can elicit discrimination. Results will be discussed in relation to the “accuracy” of gaydar and its social costs.

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