

Performing and Communicating Queer Identities online: YouTube Coming Out Videos



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Which common features and structures exist between different coming out YouTube videos? Which moves appear to be "genre-specific" (cf. Swales 1990)?

Research Questions

- Which strategies are used by the content creators to appraise their own identity and the coming-out process?
- 3. What role do everyday narratives play in constructing queer identities?
- 4. Are there differences concerning the communication of sexual identities vs. gender identities (cf. also Zimman 2009)?

Appraisal Theory

(cf. e.g., Martin & White 2005)

Methods/Frameworks

Concerned with "the means by which

writers/speakers positively or negatively

states-of-affairs with which their texts are

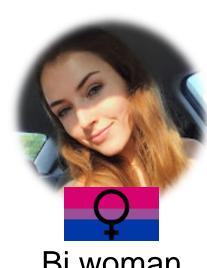
evaluate the entities, happenings

Positive Discourse Analysis (cf. e.g., Martin & Rose 2007, Macgilchrist 2007)

Focusses texts that "seek[...] possibilities for transformations which can overcome or mitigate limits on human wellbeing" (Fairclough 2013: 14)



















dominant cultural ideologies surrounding

heterosexuality and binary gender which

are often hidden or implicit within language



Common experiences

Negative evaluation

recognizing that I was gay, and honestly hating myself fully for it

so fucking scary (.) it was so scary and it's like I- (.) for a while was (.) scared to say that

I was really **scared of it** and I didn't want to be feeling that way

I didn't think I was right

this girl who's- who's just turned sixteen (0.5) and (1.0) has been feeling really (0.5) broken but without (0.5) really knowing why

I was (1.0) **super nervous** to actually even tell my husband

I remember just being so like @deathly afraid@ of leaving my friend group of girls to go into the (.) boys bathroom

I was **upset**. I knew I was trans but I didn't want to admit it as it seemed traumatic

What is the thing that is making me unhappy?

Positive evaluation

it shows that you can live (a) happy, positive life as a gay man

Queer Linguistics

(cf. e.g., Bucholtz & Hall 2006)

Aims "to challenge and uncover

it does **feel so freeing** really really fucking does

labeling it (0.7) is what gave me clarity and it's what (.) made me feel much more confident in it because I did struggle so long

And that's what's made me happy.

it was the **biggest weight off my back** that I didn't even realize was (.) on my back essentially. [...] it's the **best decision** that I ever made.

I honestly feel so: (.) a-much better

I was like "This is me! This is what I have to do. This is what's going to make me happy, like @finally thank you, thank you@"

I'm still getting there, but I'm so much better with it now

Fully me. But like in a way that I'm 100% fine with.

Everyday narratives

After coming out

More or less banal events, experiences and impressions that make up our everyday lives (Gülich 2008: 403) 'ordinary' events may turn out to be significant: established through context or function of narrative (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann 2002: 127f.)

I remember in second grade my teacher s- for whatever reason, like would make all the girls put their hair up into a ponytail and because I had long hair, she would make me put my hair up as well and everybody was like "Oh hahaha, so funny, Sam has put, you know, (.) their hair up". I didn't care, I thought it was – I was like, I was living the life, you know. Anyways, back to the story.

Memory marker

Chronology & Focussing on specific memory

Quotative & Direct speech

Return to the main sequence

Dual role of the narrator

Use of 'their': Replacement of, presumably, masculine pronoun indicates adaptation of story to current state of knowledge; use of neutral instead of feminine pronoun indicates lack of knowledge at time of memory

Laura Singendonk & Theresa Hehemann

Summary: Common features and differences

Common features in videos:

- Timeline of coming-out process (Self Friends/Family)
- Evaluation of situation as negative before coming out, as positive after coming out
- Positive reactions by family and friends
- Reference to online content

Differences between gender- and sexuality focused coming-outs

- Trans videos focus on different topics than others, partially because of the different stages in the transgender process (e.g., mentions of transition steps, revealing gender history)
- This is mirrored in the everyday narratives: a lot more variety of narrative topics; however, these topics are typical of trans narratives (cf. Zimman 2012)

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Bruns, H., & Leiting, S. (in print). Using gender-inclusive language in German? It's a question of attitude... In: F. Pfalzgraf (Ed.), Public attitudes towards gender-inclusive language: A multinational perspective. [Language and Social Life], De Gruyter Mouton. Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. (2007). Working with discourse: Meaning beyond the clause. London: Continuum.

Jones, L. (2019). Discourses of transnormativity in vloggers' identity construction. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 256, 85–101.

Lucius-Hoene, G., & Deppermann, A. (2002). Rekonstruktion narrativer identität. Ein Arbeitsbuch zur Analyse narrativer Interviews. Opladen: Leske+Budrich.

Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2006). Gender, sexuality and language. In *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics* (pp. 756–760). Elsevier.

Fairclough, N. (2013). Critical discourse analysis and critical policy studies. *Critical Policy Studies*, 7(2), 177–197.

Outlook: Future research in QuIP (Queer Identities Project)

Discourse shaping queer identities:

- Coming-out discourse on online platforms 2 which strategies do speakers use to find and establish their identities
- Language and discourse can help people to shape and establish their identities (cf. Queen 2014)

Queerness in language variation:

- Sociolinguistics: gender often still as a binary category (but: Levon 2021; Bruns & Leiting in print).
- Sexual orientation also a valuable category (e.g., Motschenbacher 2010)

Diachronic and contrastive perspective:

Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. (2005). The language of evaluation. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/978023051191

Zimman, L. (2009). The other kind of coming out: Transgender people and the coming out narrative genre. Gender and Language, 3(1), 53–80. https://doi.org/10.1558/genl.v3i1.53

Zimman, L. (2012). Voices in transition: Testosterone, transmasculinity, and the gendered voice among female-to-male transgender people. Doctoral dissertation, University of Colorado at Boulder

Swales, J. (1990). Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings. Cambridge: Cambridge UP

- Text corpora based on the San Francisco and Berlin archives
- Use of appraisal strategies (cf. Martin & White 2005) and common collocations to understand the history of queer identities in the U.S. and Germany

Motschenbacher, H. (2010). Female-as-norm (FAN): A typology of female and feminine generics. In M. Bieswanger (Ed.), Language in its socio-cultural context: New explorations in gendered global and media uses (pp. 35–67). Frankfurt am Main: Language in its socio-cultural context: New explorations in gendered global and media uses (pp. 35–67). Frankfurt am Main: Language in its socio-cultural context: New explorations in gendered global and media uses (pp. 35–67). Frankfurt am Main: Language in its socio-cultural context: New explorations in gendered global and media uses (pp. 35–67). Frankfurt am Main: Language in its socio-cultural context: New explorations in gendered global and media uses (pp. 35–67).

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