

TRANSCRIPT: WHY DO MEN HAVE DEEPER VOICES THAN WOMEN?

BY ERIKA ENGELHAUPT

HOST LEAD:

MOST OF US TAKE IT FOR GRANTED THAT MEN HAVE DEEPER VOICES THAN WOMEN. LIKE IN THIS EPISODE OF SEINFELD, WHERE ELAINE MISTAKES A GUY NAMED DAN FOR A WOMAN ON THE PHONE.

HIGH PITCHED VOICE: NOREEN'S NOT HERE, THIS IS DAN.

ELAINE: OOH.

DAN'S GIRLFRIEND EVEN STARTS TO QUESTION HIS MANLINESS.

NOREEN: GREAT. I'M GOING OUT WITH A MAN WHO SOUNDS LIKE A WOMAN.

AND AS ERIKA ENGELHAUPT REPORTS, SCIENTISTS ARE GETTING CLOSER TO UNDERSTANDING WHY A DEEP BARITONE HAS COME TO BE SEEN AS SUCH AN IMPORTANT PART OF BEING MANLY.

TRACK:

DAVID PUTS IS AN ANTHROPOLOGIST AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY. EIGHT YEARS AGO WHEN HE WAS A GRADUATE STUDENT, HE WAS EATING LUNCH ONE DAY IN A MALL FOOD COURT.

PUTS: AND I OVERHEARD A COUPLE OF GUYS BEHIND ME WHO SEEMED TO BE TRYING TO SPEAK IN AS DEEP AND BOOMING A VOICE AS THEY COULD MUSTER.

THE TEENAGERS SOUNDED SO STRANGE THAT PUTS TURNED AROUND TO SEE WHAT ON EARTH WAS GOING ON.

PUTS: I SAW AN ATTRACTIVE YOUNG WOMAN SITTING NEAR THEM WHO COULD OBVIOUSLY OVERHEAR, AND IT JUST BECAME CLEAR TO ME THAT THEY WERE SORT OF COMPETING TO TALK IN A DEEPER VOICE.

THE GUYS WERE FAKING DEEP VOICES, TO IMPRESS THE GIRL. IT MADE PUTS WONDER, IS A DEEP VOICE A KIND OF MATING CALL? HE DECIDED SOME EXPERIMENTS WERE IN ORDER.

PUTS SET UP A KIND OF DATING GAME IN THE LAB. MEN CAME IN, AND PUTS TOLD THEM THEY WERE COMPETING WITH ANOTHER GUY FOR A LUNCH DATE WITH A PRETTY YOUNG WOMAN. PUTS RECORDED THE GUYS TALKING ABOUT THEMSELVES,

(AMBIENCE: I'M AN ATHLETE HERE, I'M ON THE SWIM TEAM. I'M ABOUT SIX FOOT ONE, A HUNDRED AND EIGHTY POUNDS, I'M PRETTY PHYSICALLY FIT)

AND THEN PUTS CREATED DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF EACH GUY'S VOICE, USING A COMPUTER TO TWEAK THE VOICE HIGHER AND LOWER.

(AMBIENCE: I'M NOT MUCH OF A DANCER)

(AMBIENCE: I'M NOT MUCH OF A DANCER BUT I DO LIKE GOING OUT AND HAVING FUN)

THE GUYS FOUND OUT LATER THERE WAS NO DATE. BUT WOMEN DID HEAR THE RECORDINGS, AND THEY WERE IMPRESSED BY DEEP VOICES. PUTS ASKED THEM TO CONSIDER WHICH MEN WOULD BE ATTRACTIVE FOR A SEXUAL FLING, LIKE A ONE NIGHT STAND, AND THEY PREFERRED THE VOICES THAT HAD BEEN LOWERED... AND IT DIDN'T MATTER WHAT THE GUY SAID ... THE PITCH OF HIS VOICE MADE A DIFFERENCE. AND THE DEEP VOICE EFFECT WAS STRONGEST WHEN WOMEN WERE OVULATING. OTHER RESEARCH BACKS THIS UP -- WHILE WOMEN ARE FERTILE, THEY LIKE MORE MANLY FACES AND BODY ODORS.

PUTS ISN'T SURPRISED THAT SEXUALITY COULD HELP DRIVE MEN'S VOICES. FOR ONE THING, BOYS' VOICES DON'T GET DEEPER UNTIL PUBERTY. THAT'S WHEN TESTOSTERONE KICKS IN AND MAKES THE VOCAL CORDS GROW LONGER AND THICKER.

PUTS: TRAITS THAT EMERGE WITH SEXUAL MATURITY ARE LIKELY TO BE TRAITS THAT ARE IMPORTANT IN MATING, OR IN REPRODUCING, AND NOT ONES THAT ARE NECESSARY EARLY IN LIFE WHEN YOU'RE NOT LOOKING FOR A MATE, COMPETING FOR A MATE.

AND THAT'S IN LOTS OF ANIMALS, NOT JUST HUMANS. IT'S LIKE WHEN PEACOCKS MATURE -- THEY GROW THOSE SNAZZY TAIL FEATHERS TO IMPRESS THE LADIES.

STEVEN GAULIN IS AN EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGIST AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT SANTA BARBARA. FOR HIM, THIS RAISES MORE QUESTIONS.

GAULIN: EVOLUTIONISTS ARE SORT OF LIKE THAT PROVERBIAL 2½ YEAR OLD WHO KEEPS SAYING, BUT WHY? BUT WHY?

GAULIN WORKS ON THE ORIGINS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR. HE AND PUTS WANTED TO KNOW WHY DEEP VOICES WOULD MAKE WOMEN FEEL FRISKY. AND THEY HAD AN IDEA.

GAULIN: PITCH, WHAT WE HEAR, COULD AMOUNT TO AN ADVERTISEMENT OF TESTOSTERONE DOSAGE.

AND TESTOSTERONE, OF COURSE, IS THE THING THAT MAKES MEN, MEN. IT BUILDS BROAD SHOULDERS AND BIG MUSCLES. JUST WHAT A WOMAN WOULD WANT FOR GUARDING THE CAVE FROM MAMMOTHS. AND EVEN NOW, HIGH TESTOSTERONE IS THOUGHT TO MAKE MEN HEALTHIER AND MORE FERTILE.

PUTS ALSO LOOKED AT SOMETHING ELSE. HE ASKED MEN TO RATE HOW DOMINANT OTHER MEN'S VOICES SOUNDED, AND MEN WERE MORE INTIMIDATED BY DEEPER VOICES. THAT MAKES SENSE -- ANIMALS USE PITCH TO SHOW DOMINANCE

(AMBIENCE: DOG DEEP GROWL)

OR SUBMISSION,

(AMBIENCE: YELP)

AND MEN DO TOO.

(AMBIENCE: GO AHEAD, MAKE MY DAY.)

PUTS: SO WHAT IT WOULD MEAN IS THAT YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO GET IN A FIGHT WITH A GUY WITH A LOW PITCHED VOICE.

THIS MIGHT EXPLAIN WHY MEN HAVE DEEPER VOICES THAN WOMEN. DEEP VOICES MAY HAVE GIVEN OUR MALE ANCESTORS AN ADVANTAGE -- THEY SCARED OFF THE COMPETITION AND THEY GOT MORE MATES. OVER THE COURSE OF HUMAN HISTORY, MEN'S VOICES MAY HAVE GOTTEN DEEPER OVERALL, AS BARITONES WON OUT OVER HIGH TENORS.

SO IF A DEEP VOICE HELPS MAKE A MAN A MAN, WHAT ABOUT WOMEN? PSYCHOLOGIST SUSAN HUGHES OF ALBRIGHT COLLEGE STUDIES THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF BOTH MEN'S AND WOMEN'S VOICES. SHE SAYS IT'S HARD TO DEFINE WHAT MAKES A WOMAN'S VOICE APPEALING TO MEN. SOME STUDIES SHOW THAT MEN LIKE A HIGH PITCH. BUT THEN THERE'S THE SULTRY FACTOR.

HUGHES: FOR WOMEN'S VOICES, THERE'S ALSO THE KIND OF BREATHINESS OR RASPINESS TO A VOICE. THE PERSON THAT POPS INTO MY HEAD IS KATHLEEN TURNER. SHE PLAYED THE PART OF JESSICA RABBITT,

HUGHES: AND JESSICA RABBITT HAS THIS HOURGLASS SEXY FIGURE AND IS SUPPOSED TO BE THIS VERY SEDUCTIVE CHARACTER.

HUGHES DID EXPERIMENTS WHERE PEOPLE RATED DIFFERENT VOICES, AND THEY TENDED TO AGREE STRONGLY WHICH VOICES WERE ATTRACTIVE. THEN SHE TOOK MEASUREMENTS OF THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE VOICES. SHE FOUND THAT WOMEN WITH SEXY VOICES TEND TO HAVE A MORE HOURGLASS FIGURE. A LITTLE LIKE JESSICA RABBIT. SHE SAYS THIS COULD BE A SIGN OF GOOD GENES -- MAYBE A GOOD MATE.

SO, IF YOU'RE FEELING A LITTLE SELF CONSCIOUS ABOUT YOUR OWN VOICE RIGHT NOW, YOU'RE NOT ALONE.

FOR INTERN EDITION, I'M ERIKA ENGELHAUPT.