After reflecting on my discussion with Franca Lopez Barbera, I realised the need to narrow the scope of the project to achieve greater clarity and impact. One of the central concerns is the manipulation of younger generations, particularly in how they are influenced by media. Media holds the power to dissolve individual identities. Children, being among the most open and willing to reveal their true selves, are especially vulnerable to this kind of influence, making them a key focus for the project.

This leads to the heart of the issue: children, data manipulation, and data collection, particularly through technologies like voice recognition software. The increasing use of AI-driven systems to capture and analyse children's voices poses ethical and societal challenges. A core element of the project will be to raise awareness of how voices are collected, manipulated, and potentially misrepresented by these technologies. Voice data, like any biometric information, is deeply persaonal, and its use in shaping our understanding of identity, communication, and even intent is troubling. There is a crucial question around how the same message can be perceived differently depending on the voice delivering it. Voices are not neutral; they carry inherent biases. We often infer details such as age, gender, mood, and even social status from a voice, which means that the message, though unchanged in content, shifts in meaning based on the speaker.

This leads to a broader reflection on authenticity—how it is constructed, perceived, and manipulated. A relevant example is Pedro Oliveira's project CROSSOVER/CROSSTALK (Version) (2023), which examines the use of dialect recognition software to assess the origins of asylum seekers. Such technology, used in migration offices, can directly influence decisions about a refugee's status. This case highlights how society, through technology, creates expectations about what a 'valid' voice should sound like. The design of such technologies brings up important questions: Who built this software, for what purpose, and who ultimately benefits from these systems?

A key question within my project becomes: what does it mean to sound like a child? In today's society, would a message delivered in a childlike voice be dismissed, even if it addressed serious topics such as politics or social justice? The project could highlight the inherent bias we hold towards voices that do not align with traditional expectations. One provocative method of exploration could be to examine the mismatch between a speaker's physical appearance—age, gender, race—and their voice. What happens when voices do not 'match' their visual identities? This mismatch can create cognitive dissonance, raising questions about the legitimacy of the speaker's voice or the message itself. Another avenue of exploration is whether AI, relying solely on content, can accurately determine a speaker's age, gender, or intent. Who gets to decide where the boundary lies between a 13-year-old child and a teenager, and how do these distinctions influence perceptions?

I could enhance this exploration by creating an interactive installation or mock interface that mimics voice recognition software. This interface would allow participants to engage with a fictional AI that analyses their voice for biases—whether it's determining gender, age, mood, prefession or other characteristics. This interactive experience would provoke reflection, allowing audiences to see how much bias is embedded in everyday communication and how these biases are amplified by AI systems. Throughout the entire process, my intention is to challenge AI. It is not merely about creating a polished, functional product but about using the technology as a tool to communicate a deeper message about identity, authenticity, and bias. What do we want to uncover about how we interpret voices, especially children's voices? How can the technology, even in its speculative or mock form, reveal the complexities of these interpretations? The voice recognition software doesn't have to be real—it can be a conceptual tool for highlighting the broader implications of how we categorise and define voices.

Fear of the unknown often drives the design of these AI systems. There is an underlying desire to categorise everything—to fit people into neat boxes. Yet not everything or everyone needs to be defined in such rigid terms. My project will challenge this impulse, asking audiences to reconsider how we interpret voices and, by extension, how we define identity and authenticity in a world increasingly mediated by AI.

POSITIONS THROUGH DIALOGUE

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