“THERE’S A LOT OF BAGGAGE”: TRANS NORTH CAROLINIANS’ ORIENTATIONS TO SOUTHERN IDENTITY IN DISCOURSE

by

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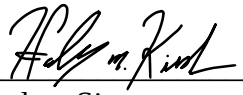

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ABSTRACT

HALEY MARIE KINSLER. “There’s a lot of baggage”: Trans North Carolinians’ Orientations to Southern Identity in Discourse. (Under the direction of Professor Jason Swarts.)

This study uses a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the discourse of 13 sociolinguistic interviews collected as part of the *North Carolina Trans and Nonbinary Language Project*. In this analysis, I explore how transgender, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming people in North Carolina use stancetaking (Kiesling, 2022) as a discursive strategy for articulating their relationship to Southern identity. Through inductive and iterative coding of interview transcripts, I identify how participants’ stancetaking varies depending on the degree to which they identify as Southerners. In some cases, participants rejected stigmatized characteristics, such as conservatism or anti-LGBTQIA+ sentiment, that have been linked to an enregistered Southern persona (Agha, 2005). In other cases, participants indicated that critical reclamation of Southern identity allows them to combat dominant social narratives that assume that transness and Southernness are antithetical. Overall, this study explores participants’ use of stancetaking to interrogate the complex sociopolitical environment of the region, deconstructing popular conceptions of the South in the process.

This work is rooted in trans linguistics, a growing discipline that centers the linguistic resilience of trans people and draws on trans-analytical frames for interrogating social issues (Zimman, 2020). Previous research has tended to center the experiences of cisgender people in the LGBTQIA+ community, despite trans and nonbinary people experiencing oppression and marginalization at disproportionate rates (Stryker, 2008). In using a trans linguistic approach, I illustrate how participants adopt discursive strategies as a form of survival and resilience in a cisheteronormative society. The purpose of this analysis, then, is to begin to document the lived experiences of trans people in North Carolina and investigate the ways in which they articulate their relationship with Southern identity given this complex environment that is, at times, hostile to the trans communities that exist in the region.

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"There's a lot of baggage": Trans North Carolinians' Orientations to Southern Identity in Discourse

Trans life in the South is often represented through the circulation of narratives that are limited due to their emphasis on outsiders' perspectives. As a result, trans communities are assumed not to exist in the region, and even for the trans and nonbinary people who, in their resiliency, establish their lives in the South, it is assumed that they must reject all that is associated with Southern identity to survive the political hostility that exists there. In recent years in the Southern United States, a rise in legislation targeting trans communities has contributed to growing concern about trans and nonbinary people's ability to live safely within the region (Trans Legislation Tracker), further contributing to the narrative that transness and Southernness must stand in contradiction to one another. In comparison to other regions in the United States, trans and nonbinary people in the South are particularly susceptible to marginalization on the basis of their gender identity and expression, and this has included the passage of legislation that restricts their access to medical care and public spaces, as well as their subjection to disproportionate rates of harassment, unemployment, and denial of social services (Grant et al., 2011). Still, as a means of survival in the face of these threats of violence rooted in anti-trans sentiment, trans and nonbinary people form community networks[1] in the forms of collectives, chosen families, and organizations, and in doing so they adapt strategies for navigating everyday life in a region that enforces cisnormative ideals and the gender binary. To document these acts of resistance and survival, a growing body of scholarship documents the practices of trans people who continue to make their lives in the South (Rogers, 2018; Dugan & Fable, 2019; Smart et al, 2020; Crowley, 2023). This analysis contributes to this body of work, looking at trans and

[1] Importantly, this includes the work of organizations in the Carolinas such as House of Kanautica and Tranzmission, as well as the work of trans and nonbinary drag performers whose art uplifts our communities, celebrates our joy, and transmits our histories.

nonbinary participants' stancetaking as a discursive strategy that allows them to navigate daily life in the region.

North Carolina offers one such location for looking at trans life in the South, especially given its historical passage of anti-trans legislation, including HB 2, the infamous "bathroom bill" that barred access to public restrooms for trans and nonbinary people in 2016 and repealed shortly thereafter. Since its passage, anti-trans sentiment in North Carolina has risen, with bills passed as recently as 2023, including HB 754 (Fairness in Women's Sports Act), HB 808 (Gender Transition/Minors), and SB 49 (Parent's Bill of Rights)[2]. These bills seek to restrict trans and nonbinary people's access to public spaces, healthcare, and education. In response to the rise in transphobia in the state, organizers, creatives, and activists have taken on advocacy work for the rights of transgender and nonbinary communities in the South and have worked to create spaces dedicated to serving these communities. Several of the participants interviewed as part of this corpus shared their experiences in attending local events for the LGBTQIA+ community, their favorite queer and trans-centered venues, and other venues in which they have sought out connection and community with trans and nonbinary people.

Just as these spaces are formed with social justice and the centering of trans and nonbinary people in mind, Lal Zimman's (2020) call for a trans linguistic framework emphasizes the importance of placing trans and nonbinary people at the forefront of documenting their own linguistic practices. In the analysis presented here, trans linguistics offers a means for exploring

[2] In her study investigating linguistic profiling as a mechanism by which housing discrimination against racially minoritized people is made feasible, Wright notes that raciolinguistic research often requires that a researcher "schedule discrimination against bodies and beings (perhaps even one's own) into one's work day" (2023: 58). During the time of drafting this literature review, I made frequent trips to the North Carolina General Assembly, resulting in my witnessing firsthand the voting and passage of several of these anti-trans bills. I found it strange to find myself citing events that unfolded over the course of writing this paper, as though I could be granted distance from them. This experience often led me to reflect on this excerpt from Wright, and I concur with her point that the labor that comes with researchers engaging with oppressive systems that they themselves face must be acknowledged. As researchers, we must make explicit the ways in which we carry these lived experiences in our engagement with this work, all the while pushing toward liberation for our communities.

how trans and nonbinary people respond to outsiders' views of the South, allowing them the agency to share their views on Southern identity, both in terms of responding to popular narratives about what it means to be a Southerner, as well as defining their personal orientations to Southern identity. This paper, then, evaluates the discursive strategies that trans and nonbinary people in North Carolina employ in critical response to the complex sociopolitical landscape they live in, particularly in their use stancetaking to articulate their reasons for choosing to accept or reject Southern identity.

Literature Review

Early studies focused on LGBTQIA+ speakers helped to expand work in linguistics beyond the heteronormative lens and frameworks that had been offered up to that point in previous scholarship on language and gender (Leap, 1995). The establishment of the field of lavender linguistics led to an increased focus on the relationship between gender, sexuality, and language, offering a starting point for understanding how issues of power, difference, and identity, relating specifically to gender and sexuality, are communicated in language. The establishment of queer linguistics as a discipline, then, builds on this earlier body of work, placing a greater emphasis on using linguistic analysis as a method for deconstructing hegemonic structures and interrogating social issues rooted in heteronormativity. According to Leap, then, queer linguistics is rooted in the critical analysis of normativity as it is upheld in language:

> "...linguistic practices reflect, reproduce, and validate the heteronormative order; and by doing so, they expose the regulatory processes lending authority and privilege to certain – but not all – forms of sexuality, racial/ethnic background, class position and citizenship and, in some cases, transnational loyalties" (2013: 643).

These fields of study offer frameworks for understanding the relationships among language, sexuality, and other dimensions of identity, exploring how these multiple interrelated axes of identity are constituted and negotiated in speakers' discourse.

Although linguistic research on LGBTQIA+ speakers has grown substantially since the late 1990s, the linguistic practices of trans people have not been explored to the same extent. Early studies conducted in various communities across the Global South began to document the linguistic practices of speakers who exist outside of normative understandings of gender (Hall, 1995; Kulick, 1998). However, as Zimman (2020) notes, "self-definition is critical to contemporary understandings of transgender identity", and researchers who approach this work from a position outside of the trans community may risk depicting participants in a way that does not fully encapsulate their local or personal understandings of gender identity. Zimman[3] seeks to address this concern in his (2020) call for the establishment of *trans linguistics* as a discipline that centers work conducted by researchers within the trans community. As a discipline, he notes, trans linguistics offers "not only a label for community-based linguistic research with trans communities, but an opportunity to reconsider issues through a trans lens" (2021: 427). In other words, trans linguistic work centers trans community members' knowledge as they document the linguistic strategies that their communities adopt as a form of survival and resilience to confront the everyday issues they face from living in a cisheteronormative society. Trans and nonbinary people experience oppression and marginalization at disproportionate rates compared to their cisgender counterparts (Stryker, 2008), and it is in response to this marginalization that trans communities have developed innovative discursive practices that are crucial in maintaining their safety as they navigate hostile environments and cisnormative institutions. A growing body of

[3] Many thanks to Dr. Zimman for believing in this project before I was even able to start working on it. Your support of trans linguistic work in the South made a difference for me.

research documents trans communities' use of discursive strategies in medical settings, for example. This includes a study from Konnelly (2021), who found that nonbinary patients responded to transmedicalist and binary narratives in communication with medical practitioners in order to maintain their access to gender affirming care. In this way, the discursive practices of trans communities can have material effects that determine whether a person is able to gain access to resources and spaces that might be otherwise restricted. These discursive practices can be a primary factor in determining whether a trans or nonbinary person gains access to medical care (Speer & Green, 2007; Borba, 2017; Borba, 2019; Konnelly, 2022), maintains their safety after being publicly misgendered (Jones, 2022), obtains legal documents that list gender markers in alignment with their identity (Ryan, 2020), or receives safe housing and necessities while incarcerated (Halliwell et al., 2022). In a similar manner, this study draws on the experiences of trans and nonbinary North Carolinians as they respond to the political tensions of the South, considering the types of discursive strategies they mobilize to grapple with the possible social implications for identifying as a Southerner.

Furthermore, previous studies of LGBTQIA+ people have tended to center those living in major cities in the Northeast and West Coast of the United States, leading to a lack of representation of the complex lived experiences of transgender people in the South (Stone, 2018). This metronormative understanding of LGBTQIA+ identity validates narratives that assume that every trans people who is born and raised in the South must have the desire to move to urban enclaves located outside of the region, especially given a longstanding history of marginalization of LGBTQIA+ people in the South (Smith, 1997). This absence of representation erases the existence of trans and nonbinary communities in the South, and, by extension, their lived experiences, organizing efforts, and development of strategies that have

been crucial for their survival. Part of this erasure may stem from reductive depictions of the South as a stronghold for racist and sexist ideologies; however, as Howard points out, "these concepts are rarely identified as conservative, white male, heterosexist constructs. *Instead, they are made to speak for all* [emphasis added]*"* (1997: 5). In addition to the ideological constructs that Howard highlights, there is a heavy emphasis on the acceptance of gender roles in the South (Rogers, 2022), which is of particular significance for those in the trans community who do not conform to the restrictive standards of cisnormativity that are imposed on them. While a person's physical proximity to the South often leads to the assumption they are in agreement with such conservative or cisheteronormative values, this assumption is not extended to trans, nonbinary, or gender nonconforming people who instead are assumed to reject these values and to reject the South in its entirety as a result.

These narratives open questions, however, about the degree to which trans and nonbinary people agree that trans and Southern identity should be considered mutually exclusive, or whether it is necessary to instead complicate and critique popular depictions of Southern culture and identities. Smith speaks to the importance of centering trans and nonbinary people's agency as they articulate their relationship with Southern identity, reminding us "our projects will be stronger if we consider our subjects' *relationships* to popular definitions of the South and inquire about *their* definitions of *southern*, rather than presuming or requiring regional identification" (1997: 382). For this reason, this analysis seeks to reject assumptions about what it means to be a Southerner, instead asking how trans and nonbinary North Carolinians respond to popular conceptions of the South in their discourse, and considering the implications of what it might mean to identify as a Southerner in a place where one faces marginalization as a result of their transness. This offers a re-centering of the experiences of trans people in North Carolina,

highlighting the importance of participants' agency as they explain how they make sense of their proximity to Southern identity given this complex environment that is, at times, hostile to the trans and nonbinary communities who live there.

Theoretical Framework

This analysis draws on Kiesling's (2022) description of *stancetaking* to understand how it may be used by participants, considering stancetaking as a strategy for "[expressing] relationships that a speaker is attempting to indicate to other people in an interaction—the interactants—and to the content and objects being constructed within their talk" (2022: 410). In the case of the interviews analyzed here, participants utilize stancetaking as a discursive strategy that allows them to simultaneously convey their relationship to Southern identity while also interrogating popular conceptions of the South, calling to attention the social consequences of identification with Southernness. In a study with trans youth living in the United Kingdom, Jones 2022) similarly looks at stancetaking as a discursive strategy utilized by participants as they share narratives recounting their experiences with public misgendering and misrecognition in a peer support group. Critically, she highlights three main aspects of stance that speakers may enact in their discourse:

> "...it may be argued that stances typically fall into three categories: they are *evaluative* (whereby the stancetaker interprets an idea or object either positively or negatively), epistemic (whereby stances are based on what a stancetaker does or does not know), and *affective* (whereby stances are based on emotion)" (2022: 553).

In other words, stancetaking allows a speaker to state their relationship to a particular object that they are assessing, and this relationship may be communicated in terms of a positive or negative assessment of the object, the degree to which they can commit themselves to a point of view on

the object, or an emotional response to the object. Additionally, though stancetaking is often used by speakers to express their relationship with a given discursive object, they may also report other speakers' stances to define their position relative to others' relationships with these objects. In addition to speakers placing themselves relative to their interactants, they can elect to *align* or associate themselves with a particular social group, or, conversely, *disalign* and therefore disassociate themselves from a social group (Agha, 2005). Participants can engage in stancetaking in a multitude of ways, then, by reporting their own stances, reporting the stances of others, or (dis)aligning with or from Southerners as an identity group.

As participants make use of stancetaking to express their relationship to Southern identity, they also respond to characteristics that have been attributed to stereotypical depictions of Southerners, including agreement with conservative beliefs or a lack of education. In some cases, these characteristics are invoked through references to marked linguistic features that have been historically associated with the South, such as the use of the word "y'all," (McCurdy, 2023). This linking of the Southern linguistic repertoire with stereotypical depictions of Southern identity takes place through a process that Agha refers to as *enregisterment*, or "processes whereby distinct forms of speech come to be socially recognized (or enregistered) as indexical of speaker attributes by a population of language users" (2005: 38). In other words, speakers who use Southern features such as "y'all" are associated with attributes that have been socially linked to Southern identity over time. Agha further notes that processes of enregisterment can culminate, then, in the establishment of a stereotypical persona: "a register's forms are social indexicals in that they index stereotypic social personae (viz. that speaker is male, lower-class, a doctor, a lawyer, an aristocrat, etc.)" (2005: 39). In this case, a Southern persona refers to a stereotypical social figure who conforms to socially marked conceptions of prototypical

Southern identity. As participants take stances on features, including semiotic or linguistic, that have been enregistered, and therefore linked, to the Southern persona, they are able to place themselves in relationship to this persona and the attributes that are associated with it.

Research Questions

From the literature on stancetaking, enregisterment, and personas, I developed two research questions aimed at identifying instances of these strategies in my participants' discourse:

1. Are there discursive strategies that occur simultaneous to stancetaking? If so:
    a. How do participants make use of stancetaking at the same time as they either align with Southern identity, disalign from Southern identity, or offer a comment related to the characteristics attributed to the Southern persona?
    b. How do participants differentiate between their own stances and the stances of others?
    c. How might participants vary in the degree of stancetaking that they engage in, especially depending on the degree to which they identify as a Southerner?
2. If a participant does engage in stancetaking, what contexts are more likely for different kinds of stance moves to occur in?
    a. Are certain kinds of stances (i.e. epistemic, evaluative, or affective) more likely to occur with discussions of identity (i.e. alignment, disalignment, or Southern personas)?
    b. Similarly, do participants favor particular kinds of stances depending on the degree to which they identify themselves as Southerners?

Methods & Results

Data Collection & Participant Demographics

This analysis explores thirteen sociolinguistic interviews conducted for the *North Carolina Trans and Nonbinary Language Project* between August and October 2023. This is a collaborative project with Dr. Archie Crowley[4] (Elon University) that aims to document the experiences of trans and nonbinary people in North Carolina. Participants for the project were recruited via snowball sampling, following the dissemination of a recruitment flier (Appendix A) via our networks, including our contacts in local LGBTQIA+ organizations and online social platforms, including Discord, Facebook, and Instagram. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and was semi-structured, with participants organically guiding discussion on various topics in addition to responding to a pre-written series of interview questions (Appendix B) that explore language use in trans communities and trans life in the South. Participant demographics were collected prior to the interview through an open-ended response survey (Appendix C), allowing participants to answer questions without confinement to pre-set boundaries or labels. This demographic information is listed as it was submitted via the survey (Table 1).

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Name[5]	**Gender Identity**	**Race**	**Ethnicity**	**Age**
Daisy	Agender/Genderqueer	White	White, sometimes say Scots-Irish	26
digit	trans masc and agender	white	white/i don't really get asked	20
Hannah	(Trans) Woman	White	White	36
Jaden	Nonbinary, transfeminine	Caucasian	Hispanic	25
Jeremy	Genderqueer Transmasc Non-Binary	White	Non-Hispanic	36
Kay	Trans non-binary (but i usually just say non-binary)	Black	African American	23

[4] I would like to offer a deep thanks to Dr. Crowley for their support of this work. They have been instrumental in getting this project off the ground, particularly in the ample help they offered in handling many of the logistics that were necessary for recruiting participants and conducting interviews. I am deeply for their contribution to this work and their dedication to conducting linguistic research in collaboration with trans communities in the South.
[5] All names listed are pseudonyms that were provided by participants as part of the demographic survey.

M	Non-binary	White	Non-Hispanic	35
Oliver	Trans man / transgender man / FTM	White, not hispanic	American	25
RB	I feel like I have a total absence of gender and it doesn't really bother me, but I do wish that there was more language that could help articulate this better.[6]	White	Ashkenazi Jew and Western European	35
Seth H.	Male (I am a trans man)	White	Southern American	45
Starlight	Genderqueer, Transmasc	White	N/A	22
Stone	lesbian (gnc) femme	afro-caribbean	American	21
Sylvia	Non-binary? I don't really think of myself as a description, but rather as removed from gender	Black and White (mixed Race)	American	26

As stated by De Fina, identity labels and categories offer insight into the "ways in which members of a culture organize experience into categories with associated features" (2006). In this case, participants orient themselves to gender labels in a variety of ways, with some participants listing several identities, as is the case with Daisy, who identifies as both agender and genderqueer. Other participants provided more detailed answers, including Sylvia, who replied to the survey by stating "Non-binary? I don't really think of myself as a description, but rather as removed from gender." These responses offer a starting point for understanding how participants understood their identities holistically, which is important in considering how their backgrounds and local understandings of identity labels, gender, race, and ethnicity may have shaped their experiences living in the South. In the same way that this analysis is centered on participants' relationship with Southern identity as it is revealed in their discourse, the collection

[6] For many trans and nonbinary people, offering a description of one's gender identity can be a deeply personal matter that presents several challenges, and, in some cases, there may be limitations posed by the context in which a person is asked to provide a label for their identity. For example, several of the participants mentioned in their interviews that they use different terms to describe their identities when in the presence of other trans people than in the presence of cis people. Demographic surveys are often limited in their ability to depict the complexity that comes with gender identity labels for members of the trans, and one excerpt of RB's larger response to this survey question is retained here to highlight this limitation.

of open-ended demographic information offered context that could influence how other aspects of participants' identities might intersect and interact with Southernness.

With a similar concern regarding issues of identity, I follow the call put forth in Bucholtz et al. (2023) to recognize the centrality of researchers' positionality in their approach to their data. As I have begun to interrogate the significance of conducting work with trans communities, I have come to recognize the methodological implications that arise from my positionality and lived experiences as they shape my approach to data collection and analysis. I began working on the *North Carolina Trans and Nonbinary Language Project* as a graduate student in English with a concentration in linguistics at North Carolina State University. I am a white, queer, trans person who has lived in central North Carolina since 2011, with most of my life spent in the state's most populous county (North Carolina Population and Housing Information). My primary research focus centers around issues of language and gender, particularly those pertaining to trans communities in the United States. My lived experience as a trans and queer person living in the South largely motivated my interest this project as I wanted to conduct research that illuminated the linguistic practices that I saw members of my community engaging in, and in doing so, I wanted to honor their creativity and linguistic expertise. My background as a trans person who has lived in North Carolina for most of my life was important in shaping the way engaged in conversations about the region with participants, as well as my familiarity with issues of local relevance or importance to members of the trans community here. However, it is important to acknowledge how my position as a white researcher who currently lives and works in a major city may have limited the extent to which participants of color and participants from rural areas in the state felt comfortable in sharing their experiences with me. Additionally, given that my role for the project included the use of my social networks for participant recruitment,

the backgrounds of participants who felt comfortable reaching out to participate in the study often mirrored my own. For this reason, any future work that I engage in for the project will require that I continue to interrogate my own positionality that shape my research as I seek to address methodological limitations in the work I do.

Qualitative Coding Scheme & Reliability

Drawing on Geisler and Swarts'[7] (2019) methodology for verbal data analysis, I developed an iterative coding scheme aimed at identifying patterns in the discursive moves taken by participants in response to the question "do you identify as a Southerner?" This scheme was developed following repeated reviews of participant interview transcripts and recordings. The STANCE[8] dimension was developed in order to identify the types of stance moves that participants took in their responses. Furthermore, the IDENTITY dimension was developed to determine instances in which participants variably (dis)aligned with Southern identity, as well as identify instances in which they reference attributes that have been linked to the Southern persona. Finally, the PRONOUN dimension was applied to identify the first instance of a subjective or objective pronoun in a clause, with the purpose of distinguishing between instances in which participants communicated their relationship with Southern identity as opposed to the stances of others. Based on participants' range of responses, participants were sorted into three contrast groups based on their proximity to Southern identity. These groups included SOUTHERNERS, who indicated a strong proximity to Southern identity, CONTEXTUAL SOUTHERNERS, who indicated that they used the Southern label only in description or in

[7] I am deeply grateful to Dr. Swarts for being my advisor for this project. Throughout the course of this project, he was a wonderful mentor, who was always open to my questions and offered me ample support every step of the way. I am thankful for him allowing me to make use of this methodology while also making it my own and for sharing in a genuine interest for the innovative ways that people use language as a form of self-expression.

[8] When referencing the qualitative coding scheme used in this study, I will list the names of codes or coding dimensions in capital letters.

particular contexts, and NON-SOUTHERNERS, who indicated a strong distance from that identity label (Table 2).

Table 2: Contrast Group Exemplars

Contrast Group	Participant	Excerpt
Southern	Oliver	"I definitely when I hear about like Southern culture, I definitely feel kinship with it…"
Contextually Southern	digit	"Yes, but it kind of depends who I'm talking to…"
	Jaden	"That is not a sort of identity that I claim proudly, but it does describe me…"
Non-Southern	Stone	"I would not say that I consider myself a Southerner…"
	Jeremy	"I would say I identify as a North Carolinian maybe… I feel like I'm more of a citizen of my state than anything else…"

From there, participants' responses were segmented into clauses to ensure that each codable unit included no more than one claim in which a stance might be taken, and then each clause was coded according to the qualitative coding scheme (Table 3).

Table 3: Coding Scheme

STANCE Dimension	
AFFECTIVE	Code for AFFECTIVE any segment in which the participant is offering a stance based on an emotion
EPISTEMIC	Code for EPISTEMIC any segment in which the participant is offering a stance based on their knowledge and beliefs or expressing commitment to a point of view
EVALUATIVE	Code for EVALUATIVE any time that the participant is offering an assessment of something
IDENTITY Dimension	
ALIGNMENT	Code for ALIGNMENT any segment in which the participant states that they identify as a Southerner or references a particular context in which they would identify as a Southerner or a reason they cite to validate why they identify as a Southerner
DISALIGNMENT	Code for DISALIGNMENT any segment in which the participant states that they do not identify as a Southerner or references a particular context in which they would not identify as a Southerner or a reason they cite to validate why they do not identify as a Southerner
PERSONA	Code for PERSONA any segment in which the participant references a larger Southern register, including linguistic or semiotic, or persona

In order to maintain mutual exclusivity between each code, a note in the coding scheme regarding the use of phrases such as "hate" or "love" in this scheme clarified that they should be

coded for their evaluative function as they indicate the quality of the object the participant is referring to, rather than coded for their reference to an emotion alone.

To ensure that my application of the codes was both consistent and representative of participants' responses, a second coder[9] was trained using a sample section of the data and performed an initial coding pass on 25% of the data. Both simple and corrected agreement were calculated for this pass, with the corrected agreement calculated using Cohen's kappa (1968) to account for bias for codes used in higher frequencies. Following this first pass, the second coder and I worked through coding discrepancies to revise the coding scheme, and from there a second pass was conducted on another 24% of the data. The simple and corrected reliability came in at acceptable measures of 0.95 and 0.93 respectively for the PRONOUN dimension following the first pass, so no revision of these codes was needed. For all other coding dimensions, however, both simple and corrected reliability were calculated following the second coding pass (Table 4).

Table 4: Final Reliability

Coding Dimension	Simple Reliability	Corrected Reliability (Cohen's Kappa)
STANCE	0.98	0.95
IDENTITY	0.86	0.78

The frequency of the codes for the STANCE and IDENTITY dimensions are listed in Table 5. Here, there was wide variability in the length of participants' responses during the interview, and there was consequential variation in the number of times a code was applied for each participant. Daisy, for example, accounted for 17.73% of the total clause count, with 68 total codes applied throughout his interview. This high token count stands in stark contrast to a

[9] Dr. Crowley was instrumental in conducting the secondary coding for this project. Working with a second coder who conducts their work from a trans linguistic perspective was an immense help in ensuring that the coding scheme offered an interpretative lens for the data that was reflective of my research questions.

participant like Starlight, who accounted for only 2.64% of the data and whose interview was coded just six times.

Table 5: Code Counts Across Participants

Interview Information		STANCE			IDENTITY		
Participant	**Clauses**	**AFFECTIVE**	**EVALUATIVE**	**EPISTEMIC**	**ALIGNMENT**	**DISALIGNMENT**	**PERSONA**
Southern Participants							
Daisy	114	2	2	35	6	9	14
digit	24	0	0	0	5	1	2
Kay	26	8	1	2	5	4	0
RB	17	0	1	0	8	0	1
Seth H.	87	4	3	6	5	2	21
Contextually Southern Participants							
Hannah	33	0	9	0	6	3	8
Jaden	47	2	3	5	9	7	13
M	55	4	5	3	8	2	2
Oliver	63	0	7	3	5	0	3
Sylvia	101	6	4	5	4	5	22
Non-Southern Participants							
Jeremy	38	0	3	10	3	12	2
Starlight	14	0	3	0	0	2	1
Stone	21	1	2	3	1	4	6
Total	643	27	43	72	65	51	95

This variability in participant contribution presented a concern about which findings could potentially be more representative of participants with high token counts, rather than all of the participants within a particular contrast group.

Statistical Analysis

To address the quantitative limitation posed by variability in participants' contributions during their interview, this study uses statistical analysis and visualization to identify and make sense of patterns in the distribution of these codes across participant interviews. To identify relationships between both the coding dimensions, the codes within each respective dimension,

and the participants' contrast group (i.e. SOUTHERN, CONTEXTUALLY SOUTHERN, or NON-SOUTHERN), two logistic regressions were conducted. The goals of this statistical analysis include (a) describing the quantitative distribution of stance and identity codes, (b) testing the relationships between coding dimensions as described in the two research questions, and (c) offering a starting point for further mixed methods approaches to the analysis of trans and nonbinary speakers' discursive practices.[10]

First, a mixed-effects logistic regression model was applied using the glmer function from the lme4 package (Bates et al., 2015) in R:

Mixed-Effects Model: Presence or absence of STANCE code ~ IDENTITY + PRONOUN + participant contrast groups + (1 | speaker)

This model was structured to test the first research question, so it predicted whether a STANCE code would be more likely to be present or absent in a clause containing codes from the other coding dimensions, including the PRONOUN and IDENTITY dimensions. It additionally predicted whether stance codes were more likely to be present or absent depending on the contrast group that a participant belongs to. Finally, random intercepts were used for participants to account for variation in the number of codes applied in their interviews since several participants accounted for most codable clauses which, by extension, skewed the distribution of codes.

The major findings of the mixed-effects logistic regression model (Appendix D) included effects where codes from other dimensions predicted whether a STANCE code was likely to also be present in the clause. Figure 1 visualizes the significant findings from this model.

[10] This section of the analysis is in large part due to Dr. Dodsworth, who encouraged me to be curious about my data and explore mixed methods approaches to discourse analysis. I am deeply appreciative of all the time she dedicated to helping me in the running and interpretation of these models; a happenstance conversation in the linguistic lab truly shaped the course of this project, and I am grateful for that.

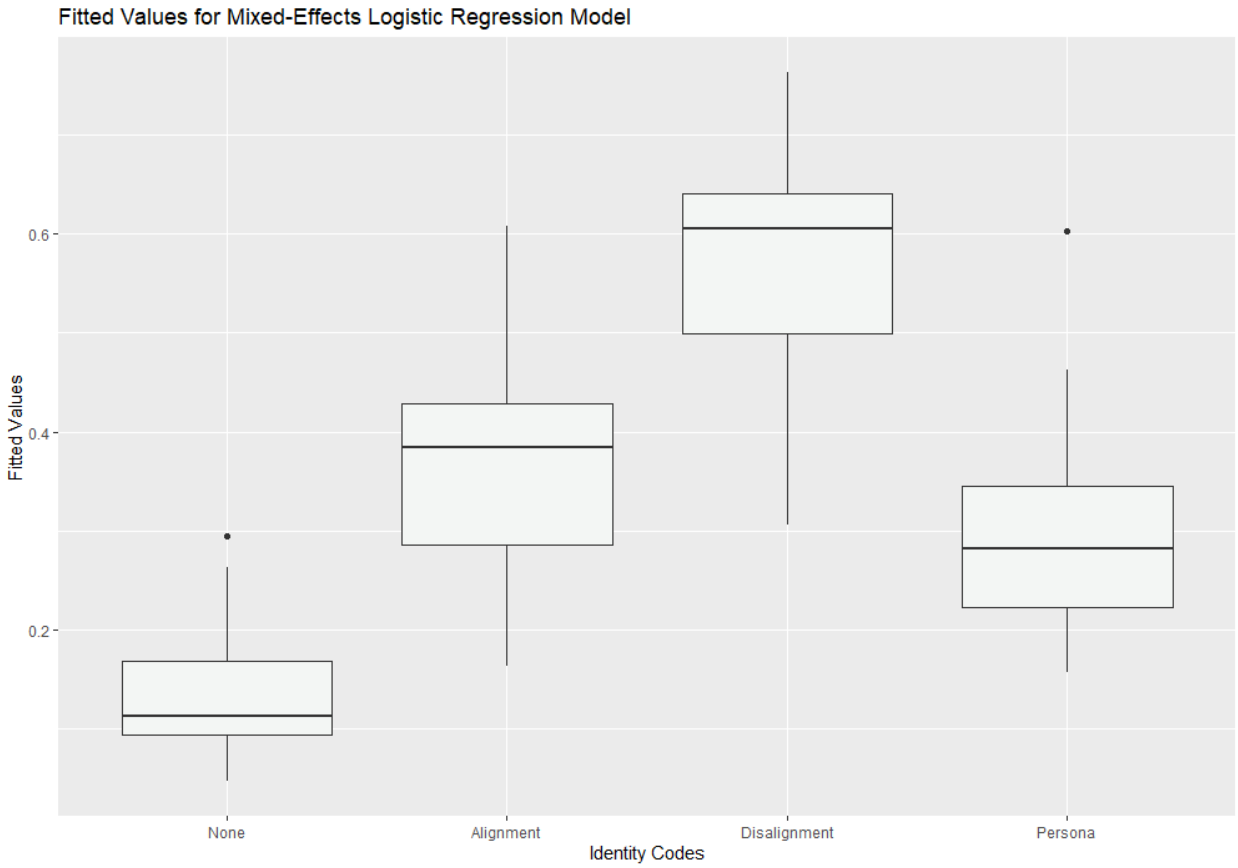

Figure 1: Fitted Values for Mixed-Effects Logistic Regression

The model predicted a significant effect in which a 1ST PERSON SINGULAR PRONOUN code was more likely to occur with a STANCE code, relative to when there was not a PRONOUN code present (est. = 0.57, $p < 0.05$). The lack of a significant effect for all other PRONOUN codes, however, indicates that participants were more likely to report their own stances on Southern identity, rather than the stances of other individuals. Furthermore, the model predicted that STANCE codes are significantly favored in the presence of IDENTITY codes, relative to when there was not an IDENTITY code applied. In other words, whenever an IDENTITY code was applied in a clause, it was more likely for a STANCE code to also be present in that clause, and this was the case for any of the IDENTITY codes, including. ALIGNMENT, DISALIGNMENT, and PERSONA. In cases where a participant engaged in stancetaking, then, they were more likely to simultaneously

discuss whether they (dis)aligned toward or away from Southern identity or offer commentary on characteristics that are attributed to the Southern persona. This effect was the strongest for the DISALIGNMENT code (est. = 2.04, $p < 0.001$), indicating that participants were most likely to make some type of STANCE move in cases where they offered a reason for not identifying as a Southerner. The effect for STANCE and ALIGNMENT, though to a slightly lesser degree (est. = 1.31 , $p < 0.001$). This model was limited, however, in that it focused on whether any of the STANCE codes were more likely to be present or absent in a clause, rather than identifying effects for particular types of STANCE moves, including AFFECTIVE, EVALUATIVE, or EPISTEMIC stance.

For this reason, to explore more complex relationships related to the STANCE dimension, a multinomial logistic regression was run using the multinom function from the nnet package (Venables & Ripley, 2002), also in R:

> **Multinomial Model:** STANCE ~ IDENTITY + presence of 1ST PERSON SINGULAR PRONOUN + participant contrast group.

This model was structured to answer the second research question, which was fundamentally different in its approach to understanding how participants enact stancetaking in their discourse. To ensure that the multinomial model focused on the kinds of STANCE moves being taken, it made predictions solely for clauses where a STANCE code was present. The model was structured to determine whether the kind of STANCE code that is applied can be predicted by the presence of IDENTITY or PRONOUN codes in the same clause, as well as the participants' contrast group. In this case, due to low counts for several codes, the PRONOUN dimension was collapsed for this model to predict whether it would be more likely for a 1ST PERSON SINGULAR code to be applied versus any other code in the PRONOUN dimension, including instances in which there was not a pronoun present in the clause.

While the results of the multinomial logistic regression model (Appendix E) did not find a significant effect of IDENTITY on the choice of STANCE code, it did find an effect between the contrast groups and the type of STANCE used by participants in those respective groups. Figure 2 visualizes these findings from the multinomial model.

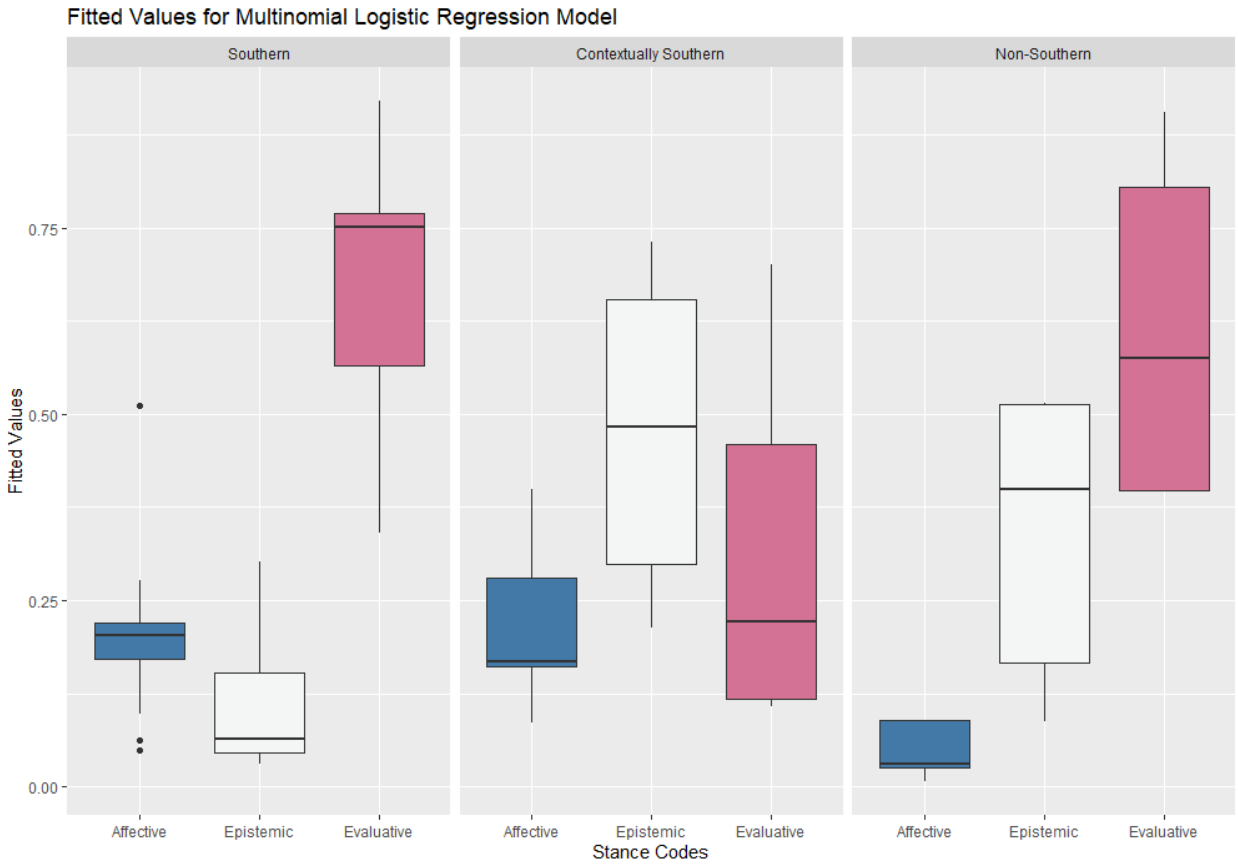

Figure 2: Fitted Values for Multinomial Logistic Regression

In this case, the strongest effect indicated that SOUTHERN participants were less likely to use an EPISTEMIC code than an EVALUATIVE code, relative to CONTEXTUALLY SOUTHERN participants (OR = 0.11, $p < 0.0001$). The same effect was true for NON-SOUTHERN participants, but to a lesser degree (OR = 0.32, $p = 0.067$). This finding is remarkable because it does not depict a linear relationship between participants' proximity to Southernness and their use of EVALUATIVE stance, as both SOUTHERN and NON-SOUTHERN participants were predicted to use EVALUATIVE

stance more frequently in comparison to other stance codes. Similarly, there were strong relationships between the participant contrast groups and the AFFECTIVE code. Here, the most significant finding indicated that NON-SOUTHERNERS were less likely to use AFFECTIVE codes than EVALUATIVE codes, relative to CONTEXTUAL SOUTHERNERS ($OR = 0.07$, $p < 0.05$). For SOUTHERNERS, the effect is non-significant but occurs in the same direction ($OR = 0.44$, $p = 0.138$). Notably, the multinomial logistic regression was limited in its inability to account for variability in participant contributions, which meant that Daisy may have influenced the effects identified specifically for the Southern participant group. However, given that the presence of a PRONOUN or IDENTITY code did not predict the type of stancetaking that participants engaged in, the model demonstrated that the degree to which a participant identified as a Southerner ultimately influenced what types of STANCE moves they engaged in overall.

Discussion

The effects present in both regression models indicate patterns in the types of stancetaking that participants engage in, as well as patterns in terms of what kinds of discursive strategies occur in the same contexts that a stance move occurs in. First, significant effects from the models predicted that the presence of an IDENTITY code in a clause increased the likelihood that a STANCE code was also present, although the particular type of STANCE code was not significant. Instead, variation in the type of STANCE codes used by participants was an effect of their membership in a particular contrast group. These findings suggest that participants communicate the degree of their proximity to Southern identity through strategic variation in both the type of STANCE moves and IDENTITY (dis)alignments that they engage in. For these participants, contending with the South's long standing conservative history requires that they offer stances on Southern identity critically, indicating how they respond to the oppressive

political atmosphere of the region while also rejecting outside narratives that assume trans and nonbinary North Carolinians must view their transness as being incompatible with Southernness.

Southern Participants

The first group of participants, SOUTHERNERS, included those who expressed an overall strong alignment with Southern identity. Notably, several of the participants explained in their interviews that they did not always identify as Southerners, and that their acceptance of this label developed over time following careful consideration. One such participant, Daisy, explains this change in orientation towards Southern identity, drawing on their experiences growing up in rural areas throughout the Piedmont of North Carolina:

Excerpt 1: Daisy (he/they)

like even just a few years ago
I hated anything that made me seem like a Southerner
all through like middle school and high school
it was like
“I hate when people say y’all
y’all is stupid
no one says that”

[Several lines omitted]

but like it actually is really important to me now as a Southerner
as a person that grew up in a rural area
as a person that grew up in poverty
like when I was a kid
my stepfather like took us all hunting
and like I was always in the woods etc.
and like that’s really important to the way I feel about everything now
like being queer in any way

Daisy begins by providing a narrative account of their previous position on Southern identity. De Fina argues that, through providing narrative accounts, "narrators give situated meanings to categories describing race, ethnicity and gender, that these categories are often interconnected in intricate ways in the discourse of narrators, and that the latter negotiate through stories their sense of belonging or opposition to groups represented by those categories" (2006: 353). In this case, Daisy draws on the past to recount his previous stance on Southernness, including his initial opposition to being associated with Southerners, indicating that his current stance and relationship to that identity category has since changed. To accomplish this recounting, they switch into a narrator role, signaling to their interlocutor that they are beginning to tell a story. Temporal markers such as "just a few years ago" in line one and "all through like middle school and high school" help to ground the time in which the narrative is set. In this way, he is relegating his view of Southern identity to that particular period of time, offering a contrast between his previous evaluations of Southerners and his current evaluations of Southern identity.

In recounting his previous evaluation of Southern identity, Daisy draws on social meanings that have been indexed to the Southern figure to explain his initial disalignment from Southern identity. Here, an index refers to a linguistic sign or semiotic resource that is associated with a social meaning, identity, or group (Woolard, 2021). In this case, Daisy's use of "y'all" in lines four and five as a linguistic feature that has been indexed to Southernness indicates their evaluation of Southern identity at-large. Daisy uses "y'all" to evaluate the enregistered voice of a Southerner. He uses markers such as "I hate" to negatively evaluate the Southern voice and position himself in opposition to that enregistered identity. By negatively evaluating one aspect of the Southern linguistic repertoire, Daisy is indicating their former opposition to Southern identity as a whole. Following this recounting of their previous disalignment from Southern

identity, however, Daisy explains the motivations behind their shift towards alignment with Southern identity, stating “it actually is really important to me now” (line 8). He explains that his upbringing often included practices such as “hunting” (line 12) or being “in the woods” (line 13), and as these practices that are common in rural Southern communities, he has come to understand himself as being a member of that community, reclaiming the Southern identity label in the process. He extends this positive evaluation to his experience with queer identity as well, noting that Southern practices have shaped the way he feels about “being queer in any way” (15). For him, queerness and Southernness are two aspects of his identity that interact with each other in such a way that his experience as a trans person in the South could not be understood on the basis of just one identity alone. Here, Daisy provides a critique of their former views on Southern identity, problematizing the idea that the South is backwards, conservative, or mutually exclusive from queer and trans identity.

Another participant, Kay, similarly spoke back to the issue of the political context in North Carolina and the process that comes with reclaiming Southern identity:

Excerpt 2: Kay (they/them)

1 I feel like in the last couple of years is when I’ve actually started feeling more confident in saying that
2 because it’s
3 it's felt good to know like my origin
4 the origin in terms of like land I was born on
5 but knowing that the experiences I had on that land don’t have to define my connection with that land as well
6 because I think for a long time I hated being from here
7 because I mean just politically it’s awful

Kay explains that their identification with Southern identity is a recent development, one that they have only begun to take on “in the last couple of years” (line 1). They talk about how it has

felt to explore their "origin" (line 3) and tie to the land in this region. As a Black non-binary person living in the South, they contend with the complex history of this space, explaining how they have developed their understanding of their relationship with the physical land they live on in the context of their lived experiences of anti-Black racism, as well as the hostility that is present in the political context of the South. They explain that it took time to work through this relationship, saying that they had to come to a point of "knowing that the experiences I had on that land don't have to define my connection with that land as well" (line 5). In a similar manner to Daisy, Kay explains that identifying as a Southerner has been an ongoing process. They explain that "for a long time I hated being from here" (line 6), and they negatively evaluated the political space of the region, recognizing it as "awful" (7). In this way, both Daisy and Kay illustrate how EVALUATIVE stance moves might be used in explaining their relationships with Southern identity. For them, offering a critical response to historically oppressive systems and outsiders' views of the region allows them to reject popular conceptions that depict Southerners as a monolithic group consisting entirely of people who tolerate the political conservatism associated with the region. Their reclamation of Southern identity, then, opens up further possibilities for what Southern identity can look like, including the prospects for trans Southern identities.

Contextually Southern Participants

Other participants, however, moved more fluidly between (dis)alignment with Southern identity, offering explanations for contexts in which their identification with this label would vary. During my interview with Jaden, they offered several reasons for being hesitant to identify as a Southerner, explaining that this hesitance is in large part due to the characteristics they commonly associate with Southerners.

Excerpt 3: Jaden (they/them/theirs)

1 it- it has a lot of connotations
2 and I've experienced this also with my accent
3 I don't have nearly as pronounced an accent as a lot of people I know
4 but I do have some people pick up on it and like ask me where I'm from
5 and definitely if I am speaking with a more pronounced Southern accent
6 which I do have access to
7 it seems to shape people's opinions of me in a way that I don't like
8 with being kind of backwards
9 with being maybe a bit less intelligent
10 those sorts of things
11 my greater concern though is that people who do claim a Southern identity as a strong personal identifier
12 in my experience
13 have been people I don't get along with for various reasons
14 whether it is political in nature
15 or just kind of like personal beliefs wise
16 I don't feel community with them

Jaden opens with commentary on their view of the enregistered Southern persona. They refer to the "connotations" (line 1) or attributes that they associate with this persona, including the view that Southerners are "backwards" (line 8) and "less intelligent" (line 9). They further mention how these attributes are assigned to speakers with the linguistic register associated with the South, indicating that this conservative persona is specifically invoked when a speaker has a "pronounced Southern accent" (line 5). They mention that these attributes are assigned to speakers with the linguistic register associated with the South, indicating that this conservative persona is specifically invoked when a speaker has a "pronounced Southern accent" (line 5). As Wolfram and Schilling note, "dialect may symbolically mark people's regional and social identity in a way that is similar to other kinds of cultural behaviors associated with social

grouping" (2006: 163). For Jaden, however, sounding Southern poses the risk of being associated with a stigmatized Southern cultural identity that they do not relate to, and it is through this attribution of conservative beliefs and ignorance to the Southern persona that Jaden is able to justify their distancing from the Southern identity label.

Jaden then moves to take a stance on Southern identity by evaluating people they have met who align themselves with Southern identity. They reference negative experiences they have had with "people who do claim a Southern identity" (line 11), for reasons that are both "political" (line 14) and due to "personal beliefs" (line 15). In this way, Jaden positions those who align themselves with Southern identity as opposing their political and personal beliefs, further indicating a strong association between Southernness and conservatism. They indicate a strong disalignment when they state, "I don't feel community with them" (line 16). Jaden, then, offers a rejection of both the characteristics often associated with Southern identity, as well as the people who align themselves with Southern identity due to their practices and behaviors.

Despite their repeated rejection of Southern identity, Jaden mitigates many of their evaluations of Southerners and stigmatized characteristics with the Southern persona through their use of EPISTEMIC stance. They explain that speaking with a Southern accent "seems" (line 7) to shape others' opinions of them, and that they could be viewed as "kind of" backwards (line 8) or "maybe a bit less" intelligent (line 9). Their use of these EPISTEMIC stance moves allow Jaden to offer a thorough explanation of why they do not feel comfortable with the negative characteristics ascribed to Southerners while maintaining that these views might not be shared by every person they encounter. They offer a similar point in their acknowledgement that "Southerner" might be understood in some instances as a descriptive label that refers to people who have grown up in the region, but they find it important to still position themselves as

someone who is cautious of the connotations that the Southern identity label carries, indicating a need to maintain their distance from stereotypical attributes associated with the Southern persona.

M similarly indicated that they grapple with their relationship to Southern identity, particularly due to the complex historical and sociopolitical environment of the region.

Excerpt 4: M (they/them)

So like I don't think I would identify as a Southerner
until somebody not from here was being shitty about the South
and then I would very much be like
"no shut up"
like if that makes sense
[Several lines omitted]
I hadn't thought about that too much
because like it feels
it feels like there's a lot of baggage with being a Southerner
but like I'm absolutely like from here
and like a lot of what makes me me probably came from that

In the first several lines, M offers various contexts in which they would shift from disalignment to alignment with Southern identity. They open by stating "I don't think I would identify as a Southerner" (line 1), signaling their distance from this identity label. Their use of an EPISTEMIC stance move when they say "I don't think" (line 1) illustrates the tentative nature of this disalignment, which indicates that it may be subject to change. They shift toward alignment with Southern identity in line two, as they clarify that they would only invoke Southern identity in the context of responding to outsider narratives about the South. Their use of "until" (line 2) signals that this alignment with Southern identity, however, is temporally bound and therefore contextually dependent. Then, M voices the type of response they would give to these outside

narratives, stating that they would respond to instances where “somebody not from here” was negatively evaluating the region by responding with “no shut up” (line 4). M acknowledged during our interview that the South is fraught with a history tied to slavery and anti-Black racism, and as a result, this history is often tied to Southern identity. For this reason, they demonstrate that their willingness to identify with the region despite this “baggage” (line 8) is contingent on whether an outsider or insider to the region is negatively, and critically, evaluating the communities and spaces within the South.

As participants who identify as a Southerner only in description or when relevant in certain contexts, then, Jaden and M often made use of EPISTEMIC stance moves in distinct ways to their NON-SOUTHERN and SOUTHERN counterparts. Examples of these EPISTEMIC moves, such as “I don’t think” (M, line 1) and “definitely” (Jaden, line 5) illustrate how these participants were able to shift the degree to which they expressed commitment to (dis)aligning with Southern identity in particular contexts. Although they both acknowledged during their interviews that they had deep ties to the region as a result of having been raised in North Carolina, they indicated that “Southern” functioned for them as a label that could be invoked in particular instances, such as responding to outsiders, or clarifying to others if they were born or raised in the region. CONTEXUALLY SOUTHERN participants, then, made use of EPISTEMIC stance moves as a mitigation strategy for helping them maintain distance from stigmatized characteristics that are attributed to the enregistered Southern persona, as well as its politically conservative history. Like their SOUTHERN counterparts, M and Kay offer a critical view of Southern identity, and they express that their critical view of Southernness is partially rooted in the way that historically marginalized communities, including trans communities, have been viewed in the South. They offer a distinct kind of critical engagement with Southern identity, however, as they utilize

EPISTEMIC stance moves to refuse a total reclamation of Southern identity in favor of aligning with Southernness more strategically when they feel it is necessary to do so.

Non-Southern Participants

Finally, Stone explained that her resistance to the Southern label was a matter of her not having been born and raised fully in the South.

Excerpt 5: Stone (she/her) or (they/them)

1 I'm not a Southerner
2 because I was not born and raised here
3 and because while I do consider Charlotte North Carolina my home
4 Southern culture did not inform my upbringing
5 but I love North Carolina
6 and if this country ever like kind of gets its shit together
7 I'd love to raise a family here

Although Stone shared that she spent part of her upbringing in North Carolina, she explains that this is not sufficient for her to feel that she can take on a Southern identity. She explains that while she considers Charlotte, a major city within the state, to be her "home" (line 3), this is countered by her not having been "born and raised" (line 2) in the state. Experiences such as being "born and raised" in the South, then, are aspects of the Southern persona that she feels she cannot relate to and therefore cannot claim. Importantly, she evaluates North Carolina, stating that she "loves" (line 5) the state. Like many NON-SOUTHERN participants, Stone's evaluations tended to focus on indicating the quality of life in North Carolina, rather than communicating a personal affective response to Southern identity. In this way, she describes her rejection of Southern identity as a matter of fact that arises out of the circumstances of her upbringing.

This sentiment was shared by Starlight, who similarly expressed that his disalignment from Southern identity was a result of his upbringing.

Excerpt 6: Starlight (he/they)

1 I would not personally identify as a Southerner
2 my family moved here from California
3 and so like I- we moved here when I was three
4 I don't remember anything else
5 you know
6 I've lived in North Carolina my entire life
7 but like my parents and my family, the people who are around me during my childhood, are not Southerners
8 and so like well I have grown up and lived here my whole life
9 I don't really- I don't necessarily identify as a Southerner

Starlight's approach is unique, however, as he explains that his rejection of Southern identity is not just a result of his personal relationship with the South. He opens by explaining that his family moved to North Carolina from California (line 2), indicating a clear distinction between the place of his upbringing and that of his family. He clarifies that he has a clear tie to the state, stating "I don't remember anything else" (line 4) and "I've lived in North Carolina my entire life" (line 5). Still, he defers to his family's relationship with the South, stating that "my parents and my family… are not Southerners" (line 7). He explains that this is a matter of his not being exposed to Southerners during his upbringing, pointing out that this is a matter relating to "the people who are around me during my childhood" (line 7). Like Stone, then, Starlight is able to maintain a more neutral view of Southern identity, explaining that he is not a Southerner due to the backgrounds of the people he would have spent time with during his childhood, regardless of whether those interactions took place in the South.

Stone and Starlight illustrate how NON-SOUTHERN participants were able to reject Southern identity labels without relying on affective responses. They both indicated that the capacity to consider whether one can claim Southern identity first requires that a person have

proximity to the South that arises in some way out of the circumstances of being raised in a Southern state. For Stone, this necessitates that a person has been born and raised in the South, and that having a tie to the physical region of the South is an important element for having the ability to identify oneself as a Southerner. For Starlight, there is a similar importance placed on being raised within the region, but this is complicated by whether a person is raised with exposure to Southern culture through other Southerners. In either case, not identifying as a Southerner is viewed as the result of circumstances that were out of the participants' control, which therefore does not necessitate a critical response to Southern identity on their part.

Conclusions & Limitations

Variation in the types of stances taken by the participants in this study were instrumental in allowing them the agency to offer a more complicated picture of trans life in the South. In some cases, participants rejected stigmatized characteristics, such as conservatism or anti-LGBTQIA+ sentiment, that have been linked to an enregistered Southern persona (Agha, 2005). In other cases, participants indicated that their Southern identity allows them to combat these dominant social narratives, rendering the diverse experiences of trans people in the South more visible. Overall, though, there was a clear relationship between the degree of proximity that a participant expressed toward the Southern identity label and the types of STANCE moves that they engaged in. For SOUTHERN participants, it was important to explain how they evaluate Southern identity, and the way that this shapes their ability to reclaim it as an aspect of their identity. Similarly, CONTEXTUALLY SOUTHERN participants indicated it was important to specify the types of contexts in which this identity label is accessible to them, simultaneously making use of EPISTEMIC stance as a mitigation strategy for maintaining their distance from negative attributes that are associated with the Southern persona. NON-SOUTHERN participants, however,

indicated less of a need to mitigate their rejection of Southern identity, instead evaluating the kinds of lived experiences that they feel a person would need to have in order for this label to be accessible to them. Participants' variation in the types of stancetaking they engaged in, their shifts (dis)alignment from or toward Southern identity, and their assessments of characteristics attributed to the Southern persona simultaneous to their stancetaking illustrate the strategic discursive choices that participants mobilize to be able to autonomously define their relationship with Southern identity in a critical way, especially given the complex history of the South and the predominance of outsider narratives that are restrictive in their descriptions of Southerners. Although participants were ultimately varied in their acceptance or rejection of the Southern identity label, they made use of stancetaking as a discursive strategy for articulating their relationship to Southern identity in such a way that made it possible for Southernness and transness to.

It is my hope that this study offers just one starting point for exploring how trans people define their identities, drawing on and representing their linguistic ingenuity in a way that lends them more agency in defining their relationship to Southern identity. It is essential, however, that further linguistic research with transgender communities in the South center reciprocity as part of the research model. At a time when anti-trans sentiment is growing, the fear that trans communities are feeling in the South is palpable. Ongoing consideration is needed to determine how we will preserve trans existence in states where anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation is taking hold while also conducting this work in such a way that both combats this legislation and celebrates trans communities. Knowing this, this analysis is not just part of a larger call to action to represent the experience of the trans community in research, but also a call for further actionable work to protect livelihood of trans people in the places where this work is conducted. Liberatory

action for trans people can take on a myriad of forms, whether it involves collaborating with participants to create spaces that center our joy, participating in mutual aid that works to fulfill the needs of those experiencing the most severe forms of marginalization in our communities, or participating in direct action and other forms of resistance. Furthermore, there is a need to continue to combat the metro-centric, white-centric, and northern-centric frames that have historically informed research in LGBTQIA+ communities. Many of the participants in this study were white, educated, and lived in relatively urban areas within North Carolina, highlighting a large gap in understanding the diversity of trans experiences in the state. Deeper researcher engagement in collaborative work with trans people of color, low-income and working-class trans people, and trans people in rural areas is necessary to address these methodological shortcomings and offer a more representative look at the breadth of trans life in the South, all the while centering their joy, honoring their existence, and celebrating their lives.

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Appendix A

Demographic Survey Questions

1. What do you want your pseudonym to be?
2. How old are you?
3. How do you describe your gender/gender identity?
4. How do you describe your gender expression?
5. What pronouns do you use?
6. How do you describe your race?
7. How do you describe your ethnicity?
8. How long have you lived in North Carolina?
9. Where did you grow up?
10. Where do you live now?
11. What languages do you know?
12. What is your educational background?
13. How would you describe your socio-economic status?

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Introduction

1. Did you have any questions about the consent form?

Topic 1: Participant Background

1. What labels do you use to describe your gender identity, if any? How did you come to pick that particular label over others?
2. Do you identify as transgender? Why or why not?
3. What other labels do you use to identify yourself? E.g., sexuality, ethnicity, social class, etc.
4. Do you identify as a Southerner?

Topic 2: Trans Communities

1. Where did you first learn about trans/nonbinary identity? Where did you look for information?
2. What is your relationship like with transgender/nonbinary communities, online or in person?
3. What has it been like to be trans/nonbinary in North Carolina for you?
4. What have your interactions been like with transgender/nonbinary individuals from other generations?

Topic 3: Metalinguistic Commentary on Trans Language

1. Do you think that language around gender has changed in the past 10 years?
2. How do you perceive the change in the language used to talk about gender?

3. What kind of discussions about language use in the community have you seen/heard in person or online?
4. Have you heard of disagreements about labels in the trans community? What kind? Do you think there should be agreement?
5. How do you relate your voice to your gender identity and expression?
6. What does language advocacy/language activism mean to you as it relates to the trans community?

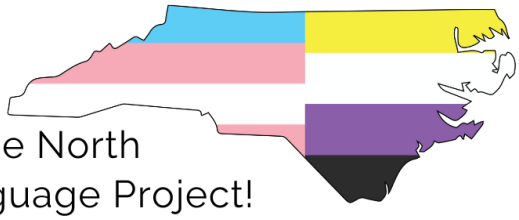
Topic 4: Wrapping Up:

1. Is there anything else you want to say about the language and the trans community? Or is there anything else I should have asked?
2. Is there anything you want to clarify or want to go back to, change what you said?
3. Is there anyone you know that would like to participate in an interview?
4. Can we give you the recruitment materials to share with your networks?

Appendix C

Participant Recruitment Flier

ARE YOU TRANS OR NONBINARY WITH A CONNECTION TO NORTH CAROLINA?



We are seeking interviewees for the North Carolina Trans and Nonbinary Language Project!

WHAT IS THE PROJECT?

This interview-based project is focused on gaining insight into the experiences of transgender and nonbinary people in North Carolina with language.

Participants will complete a survey and interview about trans identity, community, and language. Interviews will last about 60-90 minutes. Participants will receive $20 compensation for participation in the study.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

In order to participate in the project, you must:

- Reside in North Carolina
- Be 18 years of age or older
- Be transgender or nonbinary, or identify with an identity that falls under the transgender umbrella

This project has been approved by Elon University's Institutional Review Board Protocol #23-2784

SIGN UP TO BE INTERVIEWED HERE:

TINYURL.COM/NCTRANSLANG

WANT TO LEARN MORE? CONTACT US WITH ANY QUESTIONS:

Dr. Archie Crowley (they/them)
acrowley7@elon.edu

Haley Kinsler (he/they/she)
hmkinsle@ncsu.edu

Appendix D

Coefficient Table for Mixed Effects Logistic Regression[11]

Factor Group	Factor Type	Est	SE	Z Score	p Value
Intercept		-1.91	0.04	-6.41	< 0.001
IDENTITY [vs. no IDENTITY]	ALIGNMENT	1.31	1.20	4.04	< 0.001
	DISALIGNMENT	2.04	2.72	5.76	< 0.001
	PERSONA	1.29	1.03	4.54	< 0.001
PRONOUN [vs. 1ST PERSON SINGULAR]	2ND PERSON SINGULAR	-0.60	0.24	-1.34	0.179
	2ND PERSON PLURAL	-0.89	0.27	-1.33	0.182
	3RD PERSON SINGULAR	-0.47	0.42	-0.69	0.489
	3RD PERSON PLURAL	-1.02	0.29	-1.27	0.203
	None	-0.57	0.13	-2.40	0.017*
Contrast [vs. CONTEXTUALLY SOUTHERN]	SOUTHERN	0.57	0.64	1.56	0.12
	NON-SOUTHERN	0.32	0.62	0.72	0.47
Random Effects		**N**	**σ2**	**τ00**	**ICC**
Participant		13	3.29	0.17	0.05
	Observations	**Marginal R^2**		**Conditional R^2**	
	643	0.183		0.222	

** p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01*

[11] The presence or absence of a STANCE code in a clause was treated as the dependent variable for this model.

Appendix E

Coefficient Table for Multinomial Logistic Regression[12]

Response	Predictor Group	Predictor	Odds Ratios	SE	Z Score	p Value
AFFECTIVE [vs. EVALUATIVE]	Intercept		3.38	1.99	2.06	0.041*
	IDENTITY [vs. no IDENTITY]	ALIGNMENT	0.44	0.34	-1.06	0.292
		DISALIGNMENT	0.20	0.14	-2.22	0.028*
		PERSONA	0.26	0.19	-1.83	0.069
	PRONOUN [vs. non-1ST PERSON SINGULAR]	1st PERSON SINGULAR	0.18	0.10	-2.99	0.003**
	Contrast [vs. CONTEXTUALLY SOUTHERN]	SOUTHERN	0.44	0.24	-1.49	0.138
		NON-SOUTHERN	0.07	0.08	-2.34	0.021*
EPISTEMIC [vs. EVALUATIVE]	Intercept		4.09	2.31	2.50	0.014*
	IDENTITY [vs. no IDENTITY]	ALIGNMENT	1.66	1.18	0.71	0.480
		DISALIGNMENT	0.54	0.33	-1.01	0.317
		PERSONA	0.87	0.57	-0.21	0.834
	PRONOUN [vs. non-1ST PERSON SINGULAR]	1st PERSON SINGULAR	0.14	0.08	-3.53	0.001**
	Contrast [vs. CONTEXTUALLY SOUTHERN]	SOUTHERN	0.11	0.06	-4.04	< 0.001
		NON-SOUTHERN	0.32	0.20	-1.84	0.067
		Observations		**R^2**	**R^2 Adjusted**	

[12] The type of STANCE code present in a clause was treated as the dependent variable for this model.

	142	0.206	0.199

** $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$*