Nonbinary speakers' rates of (ING) stable across conversation topics

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Gender in sociolinguistics

- Past sociolinguistic studies have used gender as a variable, usually categorizing participants via cisnormative assumptions.

- However, framing gender as a male–female binary is inadequate (Corwin 2009, Eckert 2014, Garmpi 2020).

- Gratton 2016: The construction of nonbinary identity is its own active process

Background

1. Gratton 2016:
    - 2 nonbinary consultants – 1 assigned male at birth (AMAB), 1 assigned female at birth (AFAB)
    - Interviewed across 2 contexts – queer and non-queer situations
    - (ING) variation: found to be gendered (Campbell-Kibler 2007, Tamminga 2016)
    - Consultants decreased their rates of the (ING) variant associated with their sex-assigned-at-birth when in non-queer contexts
    - Routine threat: misgendering in cis spaces; stance work mitigates that threat (Gratton 2017)
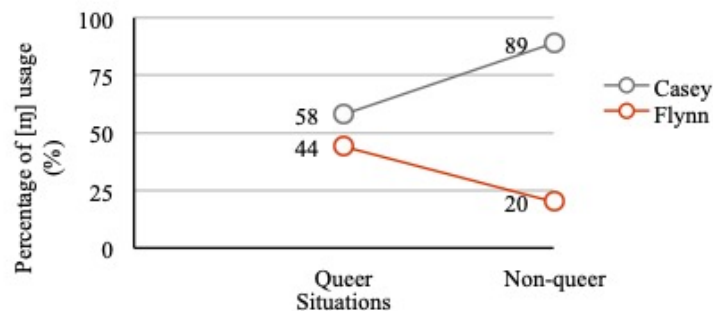
Figure 1: Distribution of [ŋ] usage by consultant and situation.

Casey was AMAB
Flynn was AFAB

Background

Figure 1: Distribution of [ŋ] usage by consultant and situation.

1. Gratton 2016, 2017:
   - Suggests that *threat of misgendering* is a primary mechanism for changing rates of (ING)

2. But what other mechanisms might also play a role?
   - Attention Paid to Speech (Labov, 1972)
   - Activation of indexical field
     - Grieser (2019, 2022): African American Language speakers use higher rates of final consonant devoicing (an AAL feature) when speaking about African American topics

3. Here: does indexical activation (topic of gender) cause non-binary speakers to shift their rates of (ING)?
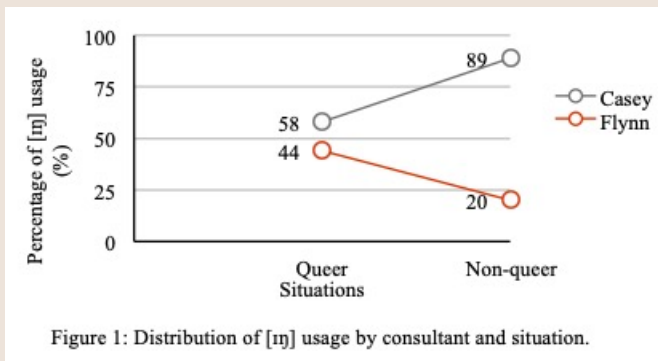
Do nonbinary speakers shift (ING) when speaking about gender?

Want to control for:
- Interlocutor
- Threat of misgendering
- Environment (cis vs. non-cis spaces)

Controlling: interlocutor
- I'm the interviewer
- Nonbinary

Controlling: threat of misgendering
- I'm part of a community of practice with all participants
- I share gender ideologies with the participants

Controlling: environment
- Interviews done 1-on-1 via Zoom in participants' homes

Participants: 6 nonbinary speakers

- Participants varied in their specific nonbinary identities, but all participants used labels (e.g. genderflux, nonbinary woman) to describe their nonbinary identity in further detail.

All 6 participants:
- lived in Michigan at the time of the study.
- had some level of college education.
- ranged in age from 21 to 27.

5 participants identified as white, 1 participant identified as black.

3 participants were AMAB, 3 participants were AFAB.

Recording

- Interviews were conducted on Zoom.

- Participants recorded audio locally using Audacity

  - High fidelity audio (Sanker et al., *to appear*)

- Sociolinguistic interview modules were made to elicit narratives and opinions, specifically about gender (Labov 1984).
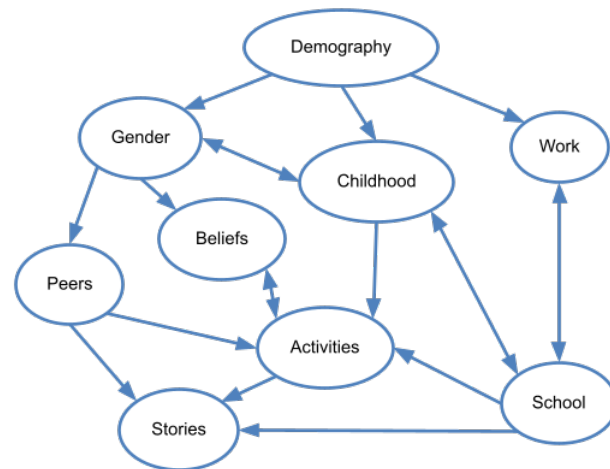
Recording

Gender question examples:
- How important is it to you to express your gender in ways that others can see?
- What was your experience with discovering your gender identity?
- Are there any ways that you think people can avoid sounding cis?
  - Cis = a person whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth
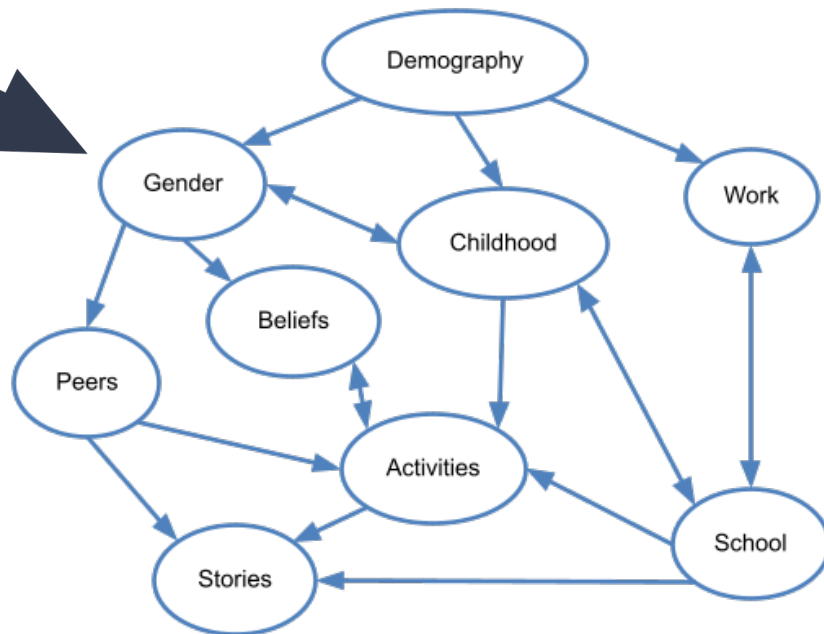
Coding

(ING)

–ing –in variation was coded auditorily in Praat using handCoder_style.praat (Fruehwald, Kodner & Tamminga, 2013)

Monosyllabic content words, like 'ring' or 'sing', were excluded from the analysis because their pronunciations do not vary.

–ing –in' variation

"I'm **watching** Avatar The Last Airbender right now, **doin'** a rewatch of that."

Coding

Gender vs. *Not-gender*

Topic was coded based on interview content.

Gender includes participants talking about:
- their own gender experience
- Gender Module of the interview
- gender as it related to other topics not listed above

All other contexts were coded as *not-gender.*

Directly talking about *gender*

"On one hand, I see -- I see myself **bein'** outside of the male-female binary as a whole, but also I see -- but also I see myself almost **being** uh -- I guess like faded kinda like in the middle of the two."

Indirectly talking about *gender*

"They recently added gender-neutral pronouns to the game. Every time I start a new Shovel Knight game, I'm like, 'all right, lady Shovel Knight, gender neutral pronouns' and then just, and then I -- it me."

Results
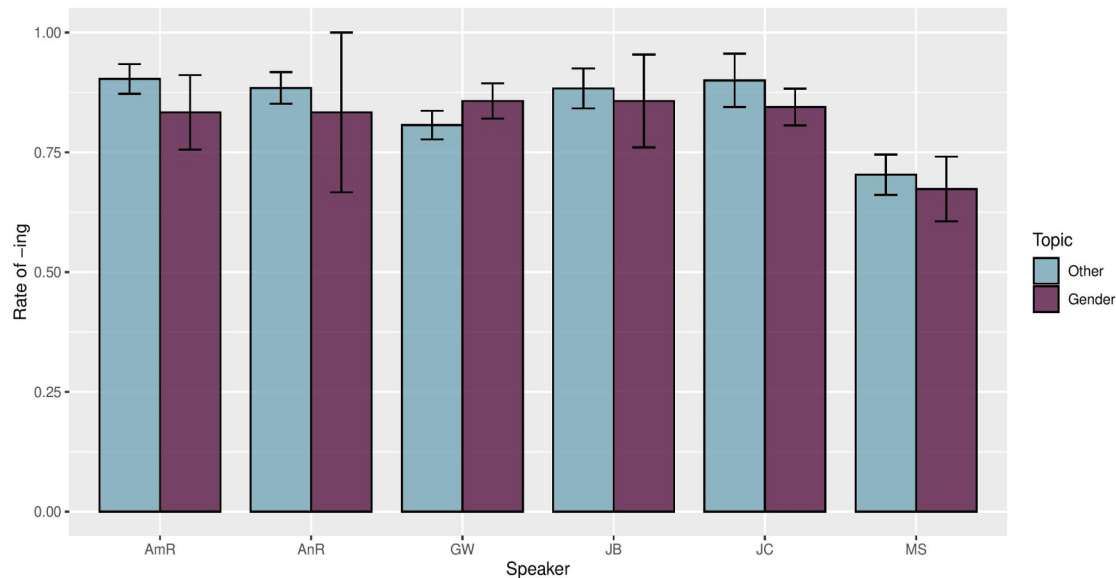
	Estimate	t value
(intercept)	0.92	21.5***
Style (gender)	-0.03	-0.43
Birth (amab)	-0.12	-2.04
Style:Birth	0.04	0.58

```
lmer(ING ~ style * sexbirth + (1|speaker) + (1|word))
```

846 tokens of (ING) across participants

Discussion

Nonbinary participants do not shift rates of (ING) across *gender* topics.

Why is this interesting?
- Gratton's (2016) work suggests that *threat of misgendering* is a primary mechanism for variable rates of (ING)
- But other mechanisms that could be causing this are:
  - *attention paid to speech* (casual vs. formal) or
  - *Indexical field activation* as a primary catalyst

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    - ~~*Indexical field activation* as a primary catalyst~~

Discussion

What else did we find?
- Speaker's assigned sex at birth plays no predictable role in rates of (ING).
- So nonbinary speakers should be analyzed as their own distinct community outside of the gender binary (e.g., Becker, Khan & Zimman, *to appear*)

Future Work:
- How do nonbinary speakers from different communities compare?
- Do we find the same effect with other gendered variables?
- Is there an interlocutor effect (I.e. interviewer who is cishet/not a known friend)?

Takeaway: after controlling for context, we did not observe (ING) variation across gender topics in our nonbinary participants.
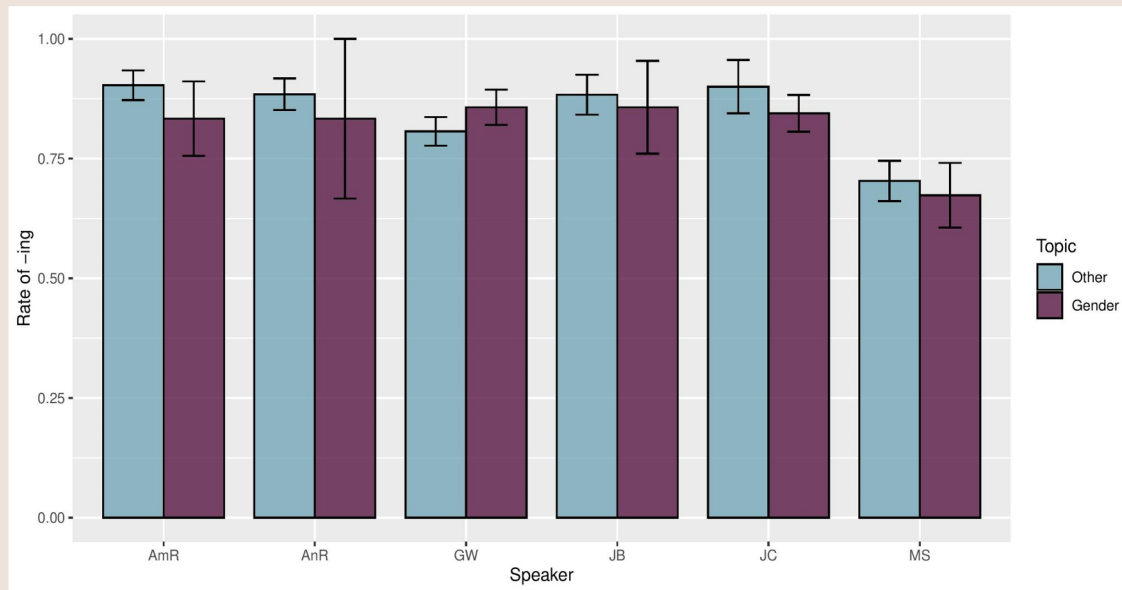
Thank you / Questions

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Who are my speakers?

No difference in rates of *–ing* across speakers, **except** MS, who is from a rural area

Auditory coding with handCoder.praat

handCoder.praat output

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S
2	File	Segment	Position	Code1	Code2	Style	Seg_Start	Seg_End	Word	Word_Start	Word_End	Pre_Seg	Pre_Seg_Sta	Pre_Seg_Enc	Post_Seg	Post_Seg_St	Post_Seg_En	Window	Vowels_per_
3	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	1			19.822	19.873	LANSING	19.432	20.062	S	19.702	19.822	sp	20.062	20.242	7.58	1.055
4	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	1			41.993	42.053	LANSING	41.612	42.223	S	41.862	41.993	K	42.223	42.282	2.31	3.463
5	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	1			62.712	62.772	CREATING	62.302	62.883	T	62.682	62.712	DH	62.883	62.922	1.87	5.348
6	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	1			65.513	65.663	IMPLEMENTI	64.863	65.772	T	65.433	65.513	AO	65.772	65.803	3.019	2.981
7	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	1			91.193	91.252	WORKING	90.902	91.532	K	91.082	91.193	W	91.532	91.673	3.74	2.139
8	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	0			94.983	95.013	SOMETHING	94.663	95.122	TH	94.913	94.983	AY	95.122	95.193	1.96	3.571
9	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	0			100.623	100.653	WORKING	100.343	100.703	K	100.533	100.623	W	100.703	100.813	2.261	3.981
10	AmRIntervie	IH1	End	1			137.963	137.993	THING	137.882	138.143	TH	137.882	137.963	T	138.143	138.233	1.78	3.371
11	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	1			189.133	189.203	GOING	188.933	189.323	OW	188.993	189.133	T	189.323	189.413	2.27	3.965
12	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	0			268.093	268.142	LIVING	267.892	268.222	V	268.022	268.093	IH	268.222	268.272	2.58	4.264
13	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	1			285.972	286.042	GROWING	285.722	286.192	OW	285.872	285.972	AH	286.192	286.282	1.78	3.371
14	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	1			533.472	533.612	INCLUDING	532.873	533.812	D	533.422	533.472	sp	533.812	533.922	4.531	2.428
15	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	1			577.313	577.352	BEING	577.042	577.442	IY	577.062	577.313	AH	577.442	577.502	1.91	5.236
16	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	1			589.652	589.692	BEING	589.402	589.792	IY	589.522	589.652	EY	589.792	589.902	2.46	2.846
17	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	0			636.873	636.902	WANDERINC	636.442	636.992	ER	636.772	636.873	ER	636.992	637.132	2.91	3.436
18	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	1			642.662	642.713	PUTTING	642.472	642.832	T	642.623	642.662	M	642.832	642.873	1.78	4.494
19	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	1			665.542	665.612	WAITING	665.333	665.702	T	665.502	665.542	AA	665.702	665.822	1.631	5.518
20	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	1			703.663	703.783	HAPPENING	703.252	703.913	N	703.602	703.663	sp	703.913	703.992	1.531	3.919
21	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	1			713.803	713.843	LOOKING	713.533	713.973	K	713.693	713.803	B	713.973	714.003	1.85	3.243
22	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	0			722.142	722.173	TRYING	721.913	722.322	AY	722.043	722.142	T	722.322	722.473	2.71	2.583
23	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	1			776.082	776.132	SOMETHING	775.753	776.212	TH	776.022	776.082	AY	776.212	776.322	1.319	5.307
24	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	1			827.082	827.122	SOMETHING	826.772	827.163	TH	827.022	827.082	L	827.163	827.252	1.919	4.69
25	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	1		gender	929.342	929.423	SOMETHING	929.012	929.523	TH	929.222	929.342	sp	929.523	929.543	2.181	2.751
26	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	1		gender	931.003	931.053	LEARNING	930.683	931.213	N	930.933	931.003	M	931.213	931.253	2.139	3.273
27	AmRIntervie	IH0	End	0		gender	938.223	938.273	SOMETHING	937.953	938.443	TH	938.183	938.223	N	938.443	938.473	2.31	4.762