EXPRESSING GENDER AND QUEER IDENTITY WITH INTONATION:
VARIATION AMONGST MASCULINE, NEUTRAL, AND FEMININE ALIGNING
AFAB QUEER SPEAKERS IN DC

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Science
in Linguistics

By

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Washington, DC
March 16, 2018
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ABSTRACT

Many sociolinguistic studies have examined how language use can express gender and sexuality in talk. (Lakoff 1973; Tannen 1994; Murray 1999; Bucholtz, Liang & Sutton 1999; Eckert & Rickford 2002; Hellinger & Bußmann 2001; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003; Bucholtz & Hall 2005; Eckert & Wenger 2005; Podesva 2007) However, much of this research only considers binary cisgender male and female identities, and does not include non-binary, trans, or other genders and queer identities in the conversation. From a poststructuralist/constructivist Queer Linguistics (QL) perspective (Motschenbacher 2011; Eckert 2014), I argue that intonation is a language feature that can be used to convey gender expression alignment and queer sexuality. Through quantitative sociophonetic analysis following ToBI guidelines (Beckman & Ayers Elam 1997), I analyze intonation use in the speech of ten AFAB (assigned female at birth) queer people in Washington, DC, of which three are masculine aligning, three neutral aligning, and four fluid neutral → feminine aligning in their gender expression. I found that the masculine aligning group uses the most falling intonation, which I argue is evidence supporting my hypothesis that falling intonation is used by this group to convey masculinity. I also argue that the overall preference for plateau intonation and greater dispreference for high rising intonation by all participants is evidence that this intonation pattern is being used to convey queer identity in speech.
The research and writing of this thesis is dedicated to my participants. Thank you for your time, honesty, life changing conversation and insight, and just for being the wonderful humans you are.

I would also like to dedicate this work to queer survivors of discrimination, sexual assault, and domestic abuse. You are strong, valid, and valuable. You are the reason I get up every day and work towards a better future through social justice.

Lastly, I would like to thank my friends, family, and everyone else who helped and believed in me along the way.

With all my love and gratitude,

Liz
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CHAPTER I: Introduction

In many contexts, gender is one of the first identities people may express and perceive. Hairstyle, dress, and the physical body obviously play a role in constructing and perceiving gender, but language may convey gender, as well. A variety of language features can be combined to express gender, such as specific lexicon and referential content, i.e. pronouns and words like *girl* or *sir* (Brown and Levinson 1979; Silverstein 1985; Seki 1986; Ochs 1987, 1992), prosodic variation of features such as pitch, voice quality, and intonation (Sachs 1975; Britain 1992; Gaudio 1994; Podesva 2007; King et al 2011; Hancock & Helenius 2012; Zimman 2012; Henriksen 2013; Linneman 2013; Podesva & Callier 2015; Tyler 2015; Levon 2016), and other types of sociophonetic variation (Labov 1966; Trudgill 1974; Eckert 2008; Podesva 2011; Kirtley 2013; Kajino 2014). Speakers may vary their use of such features in different contexts to draw upon and communicate different sociocultural meanings related to gender or other intersecting identities, such as sexuality. These meanings are socialized, sustained, and transformed through linguistic variation in talk, mediated by a relation to social acts and activities, and other social constructs such as socioeconomic class and ethnicity. (Ochs 1992)

Sometimes the voice and the image do not match socialized ideals of how gender should be expressed, which can be a difficult and possibly dangerous issue for people who identify as non-binary, transgender, genderqueer, or another ‘non-normative’ gender identity. People whose gender expression may disalign with binary expressions of gender may be subjected to discrimination on a personal and/or institutional level, and may fall victim to mental health issues, sexual harassment, or physical assault. (Martin-Story
However, socialized ideals of gender and other social constructs are just that: \textit{idealistic}, not \textit{realistic}. In reality, gender expression varies across different contexts, social situations, cultures, and social groups. (Ochs 1992) Therefore, it can be even more difficult to project and perceive ‘non-normative’ identities, since their expression may go against socialized expectations of normative binary gender expression.

In this paper, I will provide a look into how AFAB (assigned female at birth) queer people in DC use intonation in talk to help express gender and queer identity. From a poststructuralist/constructivist point of view, I argue that gender expression is constructed and presented through a combination of deliberate choices relating to physical attributes, such as clothing and hairstyle, and linguistic devices, such as intonation. I also argue that intonation is used to construct queer identity, suggesting that the same linguistic device may index separate, but intersecting identities, in this case gender and sexuality.

Following Motschenbacher (2011) and Eckert (2014), I also argue that abstracting from the idea of ‘normativity’ is important for the progress of research and promoting a more open-minded and tolerant social climate. However, understanding the binary classifications that are available for selecting and classifying speakers for research purposes, and what such classifications represent, is necessary in order to detect greater variation, and enact such progress and change. (Eckert 2014: 529) Therefore, my use of binary classifications of gender in this paper is not meant to claim that there is a static gender binary with which all identities must align, but rather to provide a backdrop against which the actual realization of participants’ expressions may be seen and described more clearly. Overall, the goal of this paper is to offer at least a small glimpse
into a specific community of practice that is underrepresented in sociolinguistic literature, as well as discuss issues surrounding the topics of ‘normativity,’ gender identity, gender expression, queer identities, and the sociolinguistic study of intonation and gender in general.

1. Defining the queer community

AFAB queer people in DC are a group of individuals belonging to the greater LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, & others) community. Although my participants all self-identify as queer, they have varying gender identities and gender expression alignments. Queer is a kind of blanket term used by many community members in DC to describe themselves as falling somewhere on the LGBTQ+ spectrum, and may be used to express gender and/or sexuality. For example, a cisgender\(^1\) (cis: identifying as the same gender assigned at birth) female lesbian may identify as queer, but so may a transgender (trans: identifying as a gender not assigned at birth) man or non-binary (not identifying as binary male or female\(^2\)) person may use it, as well. In my own case, as well as for others I have spoken to over the years, queer has become an easy blanket label to use in order to describe to people that we are neither heteronormative nor gender normative. I personally identify as pansexual (not limited in sexual choice with regard to biological sex, anatomy, or gender identity), and non-binary (with a gender fluid expression), but I tend to use queer to describe both my non-binary gender identity and sexuality.

\(^1\) See Killermann (2013) for a comprehensive list of LGBTQ+ terminology.
\(^2\) Gender fluid may be used as a more specific term when someone fluctuates between male and female.
However, it is important to note that although *queer* has become a popular term reclaimed by the community, not all members of the entire community use the term due to America’s dark history of gender and racial discrimination, and many years of fighting for LGBTQ+ rights and social justice\(^3\). For the purposes of this paper, I will use *queer* to describe my participants and the community, since my participants and I all self-identify as queer, and use the term to describe our community here in DC.

It is also important to make a clear distinction between *gender identity*, *gender expression*\(^4\), and *gender expression alignment*. *Gender identity* refers to how a person internally identifies in regards to gender. A person’s gender identity is self-defined, and cannot be determined by others or by biological sex. (Aleshire 2016) *Gender expression* refers to the way in which an individual communicates their gender identity to others in a given context. (Aleshire 2016) People may express their gender through clothing, language (including declaring preferred pronouns and referential terms), and using hormone therapy and/or undergoing surgeries to change their physical anatomy.

In order to consider all gender identities, including *agender* (identifying as having no gender) and *bigender* (identifying as both male and female), I will introduce and use the term *gender expression alignment* in this paper. This term can be used to describe how a person’s gender expression usually aligns on a scale of masculinity to femininity based on societal perceptions of cues such as social roles and practices (nurturer versus provider), choice of clothing or hairstyle (dresses versus pants), and specific language features (higher pitch versus lower pitch) as representing binary gender. For example, someone who aligns as more feminine expressing may usually wear makeup and

\(^3\) See Eaklor (2008) for an overview of this history.
\(^4\) Also commonly referred to as *agender presentation*.
‘women’s’ clothes, whereas someone who is more masculine aligning may usually wear ‘men’s’ clothes and maintain a short haircut.

Furthermore, this term allows for the description of someone’s usual expression without assuming their gender, or assuming they have a static gender or a gender at all (for the case of agender people). This term may also be more applicable to describing people whose gender identity and gender expression disalign in terms of societal expectations. For example, one of my participants identifies as cis female, prefers female pronouns, but aligns as gender neutral expressing. This participant has longer hair, wears jeans, button down flannel shirts and boots, and wears very light makeup. This blending of the archetypal masculine and feminine allows her to express herself as more gender neutral aligning, despite her identifying on the inside as a cisgendered woman. Another person may identify as a trans man with a gender fluid expression, but align as more masculine presenting, meaning they usually prefer to use more masculine-indexing social cues to express themselves, but sometimes they may use more neutral or feminine-indexing cues, too.

Of course, I believe that all people regardless of gender identity should all be able to express themselves however they want, but the fact remains that society still resides within a binary system. Our internal gender identities (or lack thereof), and social constructs in general, do not exist in a vacuum or within one’s independent consciousness. As Bucholtz and Hall (2005) describe, identity is a co-constructed product of speaker performance and listener perception based on macro and micro-level social alignments and the socialized meanings behind them. Socialized meanings of constructs

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5 A non-binary, bigender, or gender fluid person’s gender expression may vary drastically from day to day, or across greater periods of time.
such as gender shape how many people perceive others. McConnell-Ginet (2010) also describes the relationship between performance versus perception, stating that “gender and sexual identity work most often involves how a particular socially recognized identity will be manifested and when and where it will matter to what we do, including what we say (and how we are interpreted, something we can never completely control).” (pp. 11)

The socialized meanings that effect this performance and perception dance are normalized, instilled, and maintained over time regardless of the immense variation that actually exists across contexts, within social groups, or even within a single person. (Kirtley 2013) Despite the continued normalization of the gender binary and heteronormativity, more and more queer people are coming out and presenting as their true selves more often. Society is slowly becoming more accepting of ‘non-normative’ identities and expressions, but there is still much work to be done in terms of societal change, equality, and dismantling the idea of normativity.

2. The queer community as a community of practice

Although my participant group consists of people of differing gender identities and expressions, they all have important interconnecting qualities that signify them as a coherent participant group: self-identifying as queer, long-term residents of the DC area, middle class, college educated, and mostly white. These factors, along with the desire (as queer people) to keep safe spaces, shared events, and a sense of community and camaraderie, AFAB queer people in DC can be researched as a community of practice.

A community of practice is an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power
relations, and general practices (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992: 464, following Wenger 1998). Eckert and Wenger (2005) further describe a community of practice as an ongoing collective negotiation of a ‘regime of competence,’ which is neither static nor fully explicit. This means that simply sharing linguistic and social norms, attitudes, and beliefs is not enough to be a community of practice, but rather these community norms and practices must be consciously and continuously negotiated by in-group members. For the queer community in DC, this could involve the continuous negotiation of shared spaces and events, such as considering where to host queer women’s events (in light of the fact that there are no lesbian bars/clubs in DC), and what terminology to use to describe the community, such as queer, LGBT, GLBT, or LGBTQ+, etc.

AFAB queer people in DC continuously negotiate who can be an in-group member. Some of my queer friends and participants here in DC claim that the queer community is separate from the gay community, which is more cis male-centric. The ‘queer community’ in DC is more inclusive of all identities, but there is still an emphasis put on ‘queer women’ in terms of negotiating safe spaces and events. However, all AFAB queer people in DC are competent within the community, and therefore able to negotiate and engage in communal events and activities, such as queer women’s events, which are held to create safe spaces for any AFAB queer person (not just cisgendered queer women). People in this community also share social norms and ideals, especially surrounding queer-related issues of inclusivity and matters of social justice.

As previously stated, specific language use can help define a community of practice. Since identities in general are realized through talk, this makes community linguistic norms all the more prevalent. (Goffman 1977; Butler 1990; Bucholtz & Hall
Intonation is a prosodic linguistic feature that can carry many social meanings, including gender and sexuality (Henriksen 2013; Linneman 2013; Hancock et al. 2014; Levon 2016). I am interested in how AFAB queer people in DC use intonation in talk to index queer identity, and align themselves in terms of individual gender expression.

CHAPTER II: Background

1. Intonation as a carrier of meaning

Zsiga (2013: 392) defines intonation as the use of pitch and other suprasegmental features to convey discourse-level meaning. She describes how the relationship between intonation, semantics, and syntax come together to do pragmatic work. Declaratives and WH-questions generally have falling intonation, since the WH-word signifies a question meaning (“Where is the cake.”), whereas yes/no questions, especially those without the support of do, generally have final rising intonation to mark a question context (“Is there any cake left?” or “Do we have any cake left?”). Positive tag questions have rising intonation on the tag to convey a positive meaning, or the expectation of a positive response, whereas negative tag questions have falling intonation on the tag to convey a negative meaning, or in anticipation of a negative response. This is the difference between the positive and negative meanings associated with the same phrase spoken using different intonation; “You’re a werewolf, aren’t you?” (positive tag) versus “You’re a werewolf, aren’t you.” (negative tag). (Zsiga 2013: 392-395)
However, intonation does not just signify pragmatic meaning in relation to syntactic context, but its variation may also do some identity work, including indexing gender, which has been explored in the sociolinguistic literature. For example, Clopper and Smiljanic (2011) found intonation differences among female speakers of two dialect regions; Barry (2007) found that women in his study used more final rising intonation than men; Guy, Horvath, Vonwiller, Daisley, and Rogers (1986), and Britain (1992) found that women produce more final rising intonation than males in Australia, and Warren (2005b) reported the same results for speakers in New Zealand. In section 3 of this chapter, I will describe these and other studies more thoroughly. First, I would like to discuss the study of gender in Queer Linguistics (QL).

2. Gender and Queer Linguistics

Gender has been analyzed as a key social variable since the early days of sociolinguistics. Early studies on the relationship between gender and language provided a first glimpse into how sound change is propagated through communities, how stable variables pattern across contexts and demographics, and how speech may vary between groups to convey different social meanings. (Labov 1966; Lakoff 1973; Brown & Levinson 1979) Unfortunately, many sociolinguistic studies on gender and language variation only consider binary cis male and female identities. (Lakoff 1973; Zimmerman 1975; Brown 1980; Eckert 1990; Tannen 1990; Cameron 2007)

As Eckert (2014) describes, gender has emerged as the primary social constraint in variation, but it can be problematic due to its treatment as a male-female binary, which erases dynamics that are at the center of the relation between gender and language use.
This is where Queer Linguistics (QL) can fill in the theoretical gap in sociolinguistic research on gender and sexuality.

QL, in contrast to general sociolinguistics, explicitly takes intersectionality and other complexities surrounding gender into account, and challenges the concept of normativity. Motschenbacher describes the QL view of normativity in his (2011) article “Taking queer linguistics further: Sociolinguistics and critical heteronormativity research.” He describes how all identity categories can be problematic because they regulate and exclude people who do not meet societal standards of normativity. This includes the categories of woman/man and lesbian/gay. The experience of an upper class, white, lesbian cis woman in the suburbs cannot possibly be the same as a working class, rural, lesbian cis woman of color, especially if one or the other is closeted (has not yet ‘come out’ as a lesbian).

QL calls for a more constructivist approach to analyzing identities, which Motschenbacher (2011) describes through the QL concept of poststructuralism. Both of these terms refer to the idea that identity is not a pre-discursive given that speakers possess before interacting. The relationship between language and identity is constructive (constructed in the very moment of language use). This means people do not ‘have’ gender, they ‘do’ gender in interaction. Butler (1990) similarly explains gender as performative, and not a stable, pre-discursive construct. She describes how people do not act out a pre-existing gender, they ‘do’ gender, because identities do not exist beyond their expression. This can be confusing when considering ‘non-normative’ identities, since some gender identities and gender expressions do not match according to societal ideas of normativity. Therefore, I would rephrase Butler’s (1990) explanation of gender
expression by saying that internal gender identities do exist, but are irrelevant outside of their expression in interaction. Especially to queer people, internal identities matter. They exist in personal, independent consciousness, but the expression of internal experience is what other people can see and consider, making identities relevant in the physical world.

Motschenbacher (2011) also describes how gender and sexuality cannot be treated as if they are completely separate, independent aspects of identity. Both gender and sexuality tend to rely on the same discursive resources, but reflecting critically on the interrelation between the two has its merits, as well, based on (most) people’s psychological reality and awareness of heteronormativity. (pp. 150) Because people are generally socialized into accepting a concept of normativity, in regards to binary gender and heterosexuality, for example, the conversation must begin by explaining what is considered normative, and then breaking it down piece by piece to reveal that there are many more identities than traditionally considered, such as non-binary identities, and queer sexuality (beyond lesbian and gay). This breakdown of normativity can reveal that all identities are fluid, ever-changing, and constructed through interaction. While some sociolinguistic literature has attempted to counter ideas of normativity, homophobia, and heterosexism by discussing queer identities from a constructivist approach (Gaudio 1994; Podesva 2007; Hancock & Helenius 2012; Zimman 2012; Henriksen 2013; Podesva & Callier 2015; Tyler 2015; Levon 2016), QL aims to take that a step further, challenging all normativity, and bringing non-cis and queer identities into the conversation of gender and language variation. (pp. 152)

Eckert (2014) following Goffman (1977) also discuss how the concept of normative binary gender is maintained by the continued ‘doing’ of binary gender. Every
time a person uses a single-sex restroom, for example, they are reproducing the male-female binary. Boys and girls from a fairly young age are taught their place in this binary, and because not everyone will fit into the binary, gender socialization can be an unpleasant or traumatic experience for some children, teens, and adults, as well. Such socialization may be explicit; for example, a father may tell his son “boys do not cry.” However, it may be implicit as well, for example, if the son interprets his father’s low pitch as being a masculine trait, which he should learn to use in interaction to ‘do’ cis male masculinity. Eckert (2014) also describes how femininity and masculinity are defined locally, reflecting local gender ideologies, and they may vary considerably across communities and through time. These ideologies are also deeply embedded with other hierarchies of power, particularly race and class (pp. 530).

For example, you may have been presented in childhood with two contrasting and opposing images: mom vs. dad, Barbie vs. Ken, the prince vs. the princess, the soccer player vs. the ballerina. These images are used to socialize children and instill these archetypes in the collective consciousness of our society. The problem is that no one is actually completely binary or the perfect model of a woman or man, because masculine and feminine, and woman and man mean different things in different contexts even amongst cis women and men. The archetypes we see socialized through the media are primarily those of the hetero/gender-normative, white, educated, christian middle-upper class, erasing a whole universe of varying, intersecting identities.

That being said, when myself or my participants use the terms masculine and feminine, we are not making claims of what these terms mean for everyone in all contexts. Since language is better at capturing categorical/unidimensional concepts than
more abstract concepts such as gender, which is more of a continuous scale of a multidimensional hypothetical structure, we are using these terms to compare our own experiences to those projected by the archetypes of gender as perpetuated through gender socialization.

Throughout this thesis I will discuss my data with regards to archetypal gender: the archetypes of masculinity versus femininity in relation to the societal collective consciousness of socialized binary gender constraints. This is to say that society has socialized binary gender into being, and our consciousness of what is masculine and feminine is based on stereotypes of an idealized form. These archetypes are the stagnant, pre-discursive identities that society has made normative, although most people do not meet the standards of such normative identities. Again, from a QL standpoint, I will not discuss my participants as belonging to pre-existing categories of masculinity or femininity, but will describe how intonation is used to construct and perform variations of masculinity and femininity in a given context.

3. Intonation and gender studies

Many studies have explored the relationship between gender and intonation. For example, Linneman (2013) describes how uptalk (a term for phrase final rising intonation in a declarative syntactic context; Cameron 2007, and Thomas 2007, amongst others) is used more by women. Looking at contestant responses in the gameshow Jeopardy!, he finds that contestants in general use rising intonation in their responses 37% of the time, although there were gendered differences amongst this percentage. Women in general used rising intonation nearly twice as often as men, but black women used rising
intonation less frequently than white women. (Again, it is important to remember that
gender expression varies across contexts and social groups.)

Other studies have also claimed that cis women use more rising intonation than
cis men. Guy, Horvath, Vonwiller, Daisley, and Rogers (1986), and Britain (1992) found
that women produce more HRTs (high rising terminals; another way to say phrase final
rising intonation) than males in Australia. Warren and Daly (2000) had similar findings,
but also observed that women used a higher pitch for final rises in intonation questions
(yes/no and tag questions not marked syntactically with a wh-word). In another study,
Daly and Warren (2001) explored the effects of gender and different speech tasks, finding
more salient gender differences of intonation in the story-telling task due to different
approaches to the task (expression of emotion, engagement, attitude, involvement with
interviewer, etc.). Warren (2005b) also reported that cis female speakers used more HRTs
than cis men in New Zealand, of which Barry (2007) shows similar results, finding that
women in his study used more HRTs than men, and a greater pitch range overall.

Furthermore, Clopper and Smiljanic (2011) also claim that gender can be encoded
in part through prosodic features such as intonation. They explored the effects of talker
gender on the distributions of pitch accents and phrasal-boundary tone combinations
using the ToBI system of Mainstream American English (Silverman et al 1992; Beckman
& Ayers Elam 1997; Beckman, Hirschberg & Shattuck-Hufnagel 2005), but adopted a
phonetic approach to describing F0 (pitch) movement (Glasgow ToBI: Mayo, Aylett &
Ladd 1997) in order to not assume anything about phonology, while capturing the
phonetic realization of their participants. Instead of describing intonation in terms of
HRTs or uptalk, they provide three phonetic realizations of an IP (intonational phrase; a
phrase accent and boundary tone combination): a final fall to the bottom of a speaker’s pitch range (L-L%; typical declarative phrase final falling intonation), a fall followed by a rise (L-H%; typical ‘list’ intonation), a plateau (H-L%; usually phrase-medial to convey a meaning of “more to come”), and a high rise (H-H%; HRTs).

This (2011) study is a good example of a more intersectional look into gender and intonation. They found differences among female speakers of two dialect regions: Midland and Southern American English. Southern women showed a preference for H-phrase accents compared to midland women, suggesting that intonation does do some identity work.

Henriksen (2013) looked at question intonation variation amongst eight male and eight female Manchego Spanish speakers. All speakers performed three speech tasks; a contextualized sentence reading task, a declarative question gap task, and a wh-question gap task. The different tasks were used to try to trigger style shifting in order to elicit speech of different levels of formality. Citing Labov (1966, 1972), he describes that style shifting can show identity work in sociophonetic variation because the less attention paid to speech, the closer to a speaker’s vernacular you may get. For example, read speech in a reading task may elicit more careful ‘correct’ or ‘standard’ speech, whereas in spontaneous speech, more identity indexing variation may come into play since participants might be less concerned with speaking or sounding ‘correct.’ In his (2013) study, he found that 12/16 speakers exhibited at least one style-shift between speech tasks, but the style shifting occurred in dissimilar fashion for women and men. This gendered difference led him to suggest that Manchego men use specific intonation patterns to acquire a status of local male identity or in-group prestige.
Now, if binary cis men and women show differences in intonation use, do non-binary or trans people use intonation similarly based on their gender expression alignments? There is currently no sociophonetic research on specifically non-binary identities and intonation. However, there are examples in the literature of how queer and/or trans people may use intonation to express their gender expression alignment.

For example, Moonwomon (1985) compared the intonation patterns of two lesbian and two straight cis women. Although this data set is very small, her findings do provide evidence that intonation may be used to align with or against societal gender norms. In this (1985) study, she found that the straight women were more likely to speak with a higher pitch, and use a greater pitch range. One of the straight women used the highest of all pitches for high rising intonation, whereas one of the lesbian speakers had the most ‘level’ plateau intonation, and used the most falling intonation. This provides evidence that intonation can convey gender expression alignment as well as queer sexuality, and that queer speech in general may deviate from stereotypically feminine speech.

Wolfe et al (1990) discusses voice perception relating to passing trans women (a trans person that expresses themselves as female and is perceived as female). In their (1990) perception study, they looked at intonation variation amongst passing and non-passing trans women, finding that the nine trans women who were perceived as female use a higher percentage of rising intonation than the eleven speakers perceived as male.

Hancock and Garabedian (2012) discuss how the combination of pitch and resonance is most influential in how listeners perceive a speaker’s gender, but intonation, voice quality, pragmatics, and non-verbal communication contribute as well. They
discuss how this information can help transitioning trans women in presenting and passing as female, in that they can use these features to feminize their voices with the help of speech pathologists and hormone treatment.

In Hancock, Colton, and Douglas’s (2014) perception study comparing the pitch and intonation patterns of cis men, cis women, and male to female (MTF) trans women, they found that speakers with a larger percentage of utterances with rising intonation, and a larger pitch range are more likely to be perceived as female by listeners. They also found that a high percentage of utterances with falling intonation might distinguish a speaker as male. Trans women who did not pass as female in the study appear to use less rising and more falling intonation than cis women and passing trans women.

Cartei, Cowles, and Reby (2012) use a voice imitation study to investigate speakers’ ability to change their pitch in order to manipulate the expression of gender in talk. Reading in different speech tasks, they had 32 native British-English adult speakers use their normal voice, then try to sound as ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ as possible. Overall, the results suggest that both men and women raise their pitch when feminizing their voice, and lower their pitch to sound more masculine.

The results of this (2012) study, along with others (Wolf et al 1990; Hancock & Garabedian 2012; Henriksen 2013; Hancock et al 2014), provide evidence that intonation is a feature that can vary in use in regards to expressing gender. This evidence also suggests that the perception of its variation is influenced by societal awareness of language norms relating to the two archetypes of binary gender (higher pitch/rising intonation: feminine, versus lower pitch/less rising intonation: masculine), which may
consciously or unconsciously effect the gender expression alignments of those who wish to be perceived a certain way.

This notion then leads me to my guiding research questions:

- Do more feminine aligning AFAB queer people use more high rising IPs (H-H%) in talk to express their feminine alignment?
- Do more masculine aligning participants use more falling intonation (L-L%)?
- Do gender neutral aligning speakers use more plateau IPs (H-L%), or a greater amount of both high rising and falling intonation to construct a gender neutral alignment?
- Do AFAB queer people in general prefer certain IP types over others to construct gender and queer identity?

My hypothesis is that intonation use will vary in concordance with the scale of gender expression alignment: the more masculine aligning participants will use more falling intonation to convey masculinity, more feminine aligning participants will use more rising intonation to convey femininity, and neutral aligning participants will use more plateau intonation in order to help neutralize their gender expression in speech.

CHAPTER III: Methods

1. Participants

My participant group includes ten AFAB queer people of varying gender identities and gender expression alignments. They all self-identify as queer, and are all long-term residents of the DC area and native American English speakers. The age range for my
participant group is 21 – 35 years old. In regards to ethnicity, seven participants identify as just white, one participant identifies as white/Jewish, another identifies as biracial, and one identifies as African. Participants rated their own gender expression alignment based on a 1-10 scale with 1 being the most masculine, 5-6 neutral, and 10 the most feminine. None of the participants labeled themselves as being entirely masculine (1) or entirely feminine (10). In fact, none of the more feminine aligning participants labeled themselves as being more feminine than a 7, which they described as being a gender fluid neutral → feminine alignment rather than just feminine aligning. Therefore I have come up with the following labels to represent my speaker sample: masculine aligning (Andy, T, SC), neutral aligning (Ray, Bitsy, Maggie), and neutral → feminine aligning (Ily, Jasmine, Lindsey, M). (All participant information shown in table 1 below.)

Table 1: Participant information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Home state</th>
<th>Race/ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Preferred Pronouns</th>
<th>Sexuality</th>
<th>Self-Rating</th>
<th>Gender Alignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andy</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>White/Jewish</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>Straight</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>DC</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Genderqueer</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Queer</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>CT</td>
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<td>Cis female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gay</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Pansexual</td>
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<td>Cis female</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Queer</td>
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<td>Cis female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ily</td>
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<td>African</td>
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<td>Female</td>
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<td>Bisexual</td>
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<td>Bisexual</td>
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<td>N-Fem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lindsey</td>
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<td>VA</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Cis female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Queer</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>N-Fem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Data collection and processing

After finding my participants, I conducted recording sessions. All sessions were audio recorded and filmed (if the participant consented to be video recorded) in a recording studio in the Gelardin New Media Center at Georgetown University’s main campus. These sessions were all conducted with the same equipment: Olympus LS-100 audio recorder, Sony Wired Lavalier Mic, Canon XA10 Camcorder, and basic tripod.

Sessions with participants included a reading task, a subsequent opinion of the reading passage to elicit spontaneous speech, and an informal interview guided by questions relating to the topic of gender identity and expression to elicit more spontaneous speech. Overall, each session lasted about 45 minutes to 1 hour. The reading passage used for the reading task involves 3 short paragraphs about gender expression found in Baum’s (2015) article in *Teaching Tolerance Magazine* titled, “Sex? Sexual Orientation? Gender Identity? Gender Expression?: Knowing the difference can make all the difference to students who do not conform to binary norms.” This passage was selected in order to elicit participant opinions on descriptions of gender expression and gender identity related issues.

After all sessions were completed, I used ELAN to transcribe all ten readings and opinions, and about 3 minutes of each interview (of participants answering the question “How do you identify in regards to gender?”). This provided about 2-3 minutes of read speech and 7-8 minutes of spontaneous speech data, resulting in about 10 minutes of speech data per participant. Unfortunately, the recorder battery went out during Lindsey’s interview, resulting in only 5 minutes of speech data from the reading passage and opinion. However, the neutral → feminine aligning group has the most participants, so I
do not think this was a significant limitation. Also, although I tried to get the same amount of data per person, token counts will still vary due to how much and how fast the participant talked in the recordings.

3. IP labeling and phonetic analysis

After transcribing, I exported textgrids from ELAN in order to label and analyze IPs in Praat. My formant settings in Praat are as follows: 30 dB, 5500 hz max, 5 formants, .025 window length, 1 mm dot size. Praat recommends a pitch setting of 100-500 hz for female voices (PPGB, 2005), but I kept it at the default of 75-500 hz due to the high amount of creaky voice present in my sample, and interspeaker pitch differences.

My methods for analyzing intonation follow Clopper and Smiljanic (2011). They describe their methodology of analyzing intonation as being more like the phonetic tiers as used in the analysis of the Intonational Variation in English (IViE) project (Grabe et al 2000), but still following ToBI guidelines. (Beckman & Ayers Elam 1997) These guidelines suggest labels for pitch accents, phrase accents, and boundary tones; *pitch accents* are associated with lexically stressed syllables (H*, L*), a *boundary tone* is the final tone of a phrase at the boundary of another (H%, L%), and *phrase accents* are the tones accentuated between a pitch accent and boundary tone (H-, L-). These three labels are included in two levels of phrasing: intonational phrases (IPs), and intermediate phrases (ips). Every IP consists of one or more ips. and every ip must have at least one pitch accent. Guidelines for ToBI labeling are based on phonetic criteria including visual inspection of the F0 track and repeated listening. For F0 changes associated with IPs, Clopper and Smiljanic (2011), following ToBI guidelines, labeled four phonetic types
that are sequences of a phrase accent and a boundary tone: a fall to the bottom of the speaker’s range (L-L%), a fall followed by a rise (L-H%), a plateau (H-L%), and a high rise (H-H%).

Following Clopper and Smiljanic (2011), I also used ToBI (Beckman & Ayers Elam 1997) labeling guidelines in Praat; first labeling lexically stressed syllables (*), then phrase accents (-), and finally boundary tones at IP boundaries (%). I am only analyzing IPs for this study, so I only labeled phrase accents and boundary tones with L and H. Therefore, I labeled four phonetic types of IPs as in their (2011) study: a low falling (L-L%), a fall followed by a rise (L-H%), a plateau (H-L%), and a high rising (H-H%). There are 977 IPs overall with the following distributions per type: 269 (L-L%), 209 (L-H%), 432 (H-L%), 67 (H-H%).

There is no length requirement for IPs, as length is effected by speaker speech rate and style. Overall, the decision to label a segment as an IP was based on the presence of at least one pitch accent, a phrase accent, and a boundary tone. The labeling of IP environment as phrase (utterance) initial, medial, or final is loosely based on breath groups. I say loosely, because breath is controlled differently across speech tasks. In the reading style, participants generally use one breath for each sentence, speaking much more formally and carefully, paying more attention to their speech, whereas in spontaneous speech, speakers may pause mid-sentence, and take another breath before continuing their thought. This makes breath groups less reliable as markers of segmenting IPs by environment. Therefore, rather than label IP environments strictly per breath group, the environment is more-so related to sentences or completed thoughts. Completed thoughts are more relevant in spontaneous speech, since speakers may complete a
thought without realizing a ‘complete sentence,’ such as “I wanted to go to the park, but you know...”.

Furthermore, participants may have false starts, or self-corrections of mispronounced words, which can affect breath groups (in all styles). Overall, IP environment in the spontaneous speech data is more-so based on intuition and careful examination of the F0 track/IP type. At times I also referred to ToBI guidelines for suggestions on this topic. The guidelines suggest that there are more likely to be L-H% and H-L% IPs phrase-medial, whereas H-H% and L-L% IPs are more likely to be initial or terminal. (Beckman & Ayers Elam 1997) However, this is not true in all cases, and for all speakers, which is why I also took breath groups, sentences, and completed thoughts into account.
As a final note on IP labeling methodology, *um* at the beginning or end of an IP was not counted as part of a phrase unless highly stressed (*um* generally stayed at the same pitch of the previous boundary tone). One word utterances/feedback words such as *Right!, Yeah!, Totally!,* etc. were also not counted as phrases, although just looking at the pitch range variation of these utterances would be an interesting study in and of itself.

4. Coding and quantitative analysis

After labeling IPs in Praat, I then created a spreadsheet and coded the following factors for each IP token: speaker (participant’s chosen pseudonym), age (21-35), ethnicity (white, white/Jewish, African, biracial), home state (CT, PA, VA, DC, MD), sexuality (straight, queer, pansexual, bisexual, gay), gender identity (cis female, trans male, genderqueer), gender expression alignment (masc, n-fem, fem), alignment rating (2-7), preferred pronouns (male, female, neutral), IP type (L-L%, L-H%, H-L%, H-H%), IP environment (phrase initial, medial, or terminal), style (declarative, reading, yes/no)
question, WH question, constructed dialogue), context (introduction\textsuperscript{6}, reading passage, opinion, interview), and topic (NA, gender identity, queer identity). After the 977 tokens were coded, I used R to analyze the data, and create tables and graphs to explore relationships between factors.

In regards to coding for style, declarative signifies a declarative utterance in spontaneous speech. The reading style signifies any utterance being read from the reading passage, and constructed dialogue refers to an utterance that is meant to be a re-voicing of something someone else said, whether actual or hypothetical. Tannen (2007) describes constructed dialogue as “the recontextualization of words in a current discourse.” (pp. 17) This concept has also been referred to as reported speech (Gunthner 1999), or speaking for another (Schiffrin 1993). I use constructed dialogue, as I feel like it best describes what happens when a speaker takes another speaker’s actual or hypothetical words, or previous discourse, and brings them into a new interaction, such as telling a friend what your mom said to you the night before. I coded an utterance as constructed dialogue when a participant voiced another person, usually a gender normative/heterosexual person, such as one of my participants quoting an older, heteronormative cis woman saying, “I remember a time when men were men and women were women.”

\textsuperscript{6} “Introduction” includes any utterance produced before the reading task began.
CHAPTER IV: Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPEAKER</th>
<th>Alignment</th>
<th>Total IPs</th>
<th>H-H% n</th>
<th>H-H% %</th>
<th>H-L% n</th>
<th>H-L% %</th>
<th>L-H% n</th>
<th>L-H% %</th>
<th>L-L% n</th>
<th>L-L% %</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANDY</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
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<td>42</td>
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<td>33</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>45</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>49</td>
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<td>N-Fem</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 above shows results for IP use per speaker. Across all speakers, the results show that H-L% IPs are favored over other types, occurring 37% of the time or more for all speakers. Lindsey (neutral → feminine aligning) and Ray (neutral aligning) use it the most frequently at 53% and 52%, and Maggie (also neutral) uses it the least at 37%. The results also show that H-H% IPs are the least preferred across all speakers. Maggie and Bitsy (both neutral aligning) use this IP type the most (13% use), whereas T (masculine aligning) uses it the least (2% use).

Speakers differ in their preference for L-H% versus L-L%, however. While Ray (neutral), Jasmine (neutral → feminine) and M (neutral → feminine) prefer L-H% to L-L% IPs, other speakers show an opposite preference. For L-H% IPs, T (masculine aligning) and Lindsey (neutral → feminine aligning) use them the least at 15%, and M (neutral → feminine aligning) uses this IP type the most at 27%. L-L% IPs are used the
most by SC (masculine aligning) at 34%, and used the least by Jasmine (neutral → feminine aligning) at 19%.

Table 3: Gender expression alignment x IP type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALIGNMENT</th>
<th>Total IPs</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
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<td><strong>H-H%</strong></td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>69</td>
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<td>173</td>
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<td>82</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
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<td>42</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows results for gender expression alignment group and IP type. All groups show a preference for H-L% IPs (masculine: 42%; neutral: 42%; neutral → feminine: 48%), and disprefer H-H% IPs (masculine: 4%; neutral: 11%; neutral → feminine: 7%). The results do suggest a difference between groups for L-H% versus L-L% IPs. The masculine and neutral aligning groups prefer L-L% IPs relative to L-H% IPs, but the neutral → feminine aligning group seems to favor them equally. However, the masculine aligning group strongly favors L-L% IPs, while the neutral speakers favor this type more weakly over L-H% IPs.

Table 4: IP Environment x type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENVIRONMENT</th>
<th>Total IPs</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>H-H%</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>L-L%</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminal</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows results for IP type and environment. Consistent with Beckman and Ayers Elam’s (1997) ToBI guidelines, H-H% IPs are more likely to occur in a phrase.
initial or terminal environment, L-L% are more likely to occur phrase terminal, H-L% IPs are more likely to occur phrase medial, and L-H% IPs are least likely to occur phrase terminal. In contrast to their (1997) guidelines, my participants show a preference for L-H% IPs in a phrase initial environment, rather than a phrase medial environment, although their use is quite close (initial: 26% use; medial: 22% use). The results being consistent with ToBI guidelines provides evidence that I labeled IPs correctly. However, per gender expression alignment group, they do not provide any salient evidence to describe variation in regards to constructing identity.

Tables 5 – 7 show results for the relationship between context, gender expression alignment, and IP type. Due to the very small amount of introduction tokens, and the fact that not all participants gave an introduction before starting the reading task, I will not be considering this context in the results or analysis sections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALIGNMENT</th>
<th>INTERVIEW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H-H%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total IPs</strong></td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MASCULINE</strong></td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NEUTRAL</strong></td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NEUTRAL → FEMININE</strong></td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the interview context, all gender expression alignment groups prefer H-L% IPs, which is actually consistent across all contexts. Masculine aligning speakers prefer IPs with low falling boundary tones (L-L%: 38%), over those with rising boundary tones (L-H%: 18%; H-H%: 4%). Neutral aligning participants show a similar pattern favoring IPs with falling boundary tones (L-L%: 31%). This group also uses the most frequent H-H% IPs (16%) and the least frequent L-H% IPs (17%) out of any other group. The neutral →
feminine aligning group shows a preference L-H% IPs, with the highest rate across groups at 38%.

Table 6: Gender expression alignment x IP context x type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPINION</th>
<th>Total IPs</th>
<th>H-H%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>H-L%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>L-H%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>L-L%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MASCULINE</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEUTRAL</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEUTRAL → FEMININE</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the opinion context, masculine aligning participants, again, favor L-L% IPs (30% use) over L-H% (28%) and H-H% IPs (6%). Neutral aligning participants almost equally favor L-H% (24%) and H-H% IPs (20%) over L-L% IPs (16%) in this context. Neutral → feminine aligning participants in this context are the opposite, showing almost an equal preference for L-H% (24%) and L-L% IPs (21%) over H-H% IPs (11%).

Table 7: Gender expression alignment x IP context x type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>READING PASSAGE</th>
<th>Total IPs</th>
<th>H-H%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>H-L%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>L-H%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>L-L%</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MASCULINE</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEUTRAL</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEUTRAL → FEMININE</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the reading passage context, all groups show a preference for L-L% IPs over L-H% and H-H% IPs. The masculine aligning group uses L-L% IPs 30% of the time, versus L-H% (19%) and H-H% IPs (.9%). The neutral aligning group is similar, with L-L% IPs occurring 25% of the time, versus L-H% (18%) and H-H% IPs (.8%). The neutral → feminine aligning group uses the least L-H% IPs in this context (12%), also showing a preference for L-L% IPs (28% use), and disferring H-H% IPs (1%).
The results for topic, environment, the introduction context, age, preferred pronouns, home state, style, and sexuality either did not have enough tokens, or did not provide enough variation to make any claims. Therefore, these factors will be left out of the analysis. For topic, this is due to the nature of the discussion throughout all speech tasks being very consistent. There ended up only being two topics: gender identity and queer identity, which were very difficult to distinguish from one another in the first place, and the majority of which were coded as gender identity. As previously stated, the results for environment provide evidence that I labeled IPs correctly, but they do not add anything to the conversation of intonation variation by gender expression alignment.

1. Analysis

![Figure 3: IP type x gender expression alignment](image-url)
Figures 3 and 4 show that masculine aligning participants use the most low falling intonation overall. This supports my hypothesis that masculine aligning participants may be using falling intonation to convey masculinity in speech.

However, the results show that my hypothesis that more feminine aligning (neutral → feminine) participants would use more rising intonation appears to be incorrect. The neutral aligning group appears to use the most high rising intonation. Although all groups show a preference for plateau intonation, the neutral → feminine aligning group uses it the most, preferring this type over both high rising and low falling intonation.

Since the neutral aligning participants present masculinity more physically (through hair, dress, and physical anatomy, for example), perhaps they are using high
rising intonation to balance the construction of their neutral alignment. In contrast, neutral → feminine aligning participants may be using less high rising intonation since they express their femininity more through hair, dress, and physical anatomy (except for Lindsey, who was dressed more masculine-coded for her interview than others in this alignment group).

Luzzatto and Gvion (2004) describe the relationship between behavior and the body for queer women who identify as lesbians. They explain how many lesbians must constantly negotiate their identities through appearance and behavior to appease both the ‘straight’ world, and the lesbian community. Some feel the need to pass as heteronormative in certain contexts (such as at work, or with family) by developing a self-presentation of a female, while in the lesbian world they must conform to different and changing norms of community membership, including picking a side on the ‘butch’ (more masculine aligning) versus ‘femme’ (more feminine aligning) spectrum. (pp. 46) Although this is certainly changing due to the current emphasis on including trans and non-binary people into the queer community, this constant negotiation of behavior and body norms still persists for many queer people. This idea can help explain why the more feminine aligning participants might use less high rising intonation to balance out their more feminine-coded physical representations.

Furthermore, queer people who identify as non-binary, trans, or gender fluid often experience a heightened awareness of their gender expression (West and Zimmerman 1987; Abelson 2014), which makes this relationship all the more prevalent. If someone wishes to communicate that they are non-binary, it makes sense that they would be more conscious of how their speech and appearance combined can affect how people perceive
them, since we still exist in a binary gendered society. After all, the voice has been called a bridge between the body and language use, or between physical reality and internal subjectivity. (Cameron 2001; Dolar 2006; Podesva et al 2015)

I believe that participants who are neutral aligning or more fluid (sometimes more neutral, sometimes more feminine) may seemingly have a more intricate combination of physical and linguistic representations to construct their gender expression alignment, since theirs is non-binary in nature. However, everyone uses both physical and linguistic representations of gender to construct their particular alignment, such as the masculine aligning participants who use the most falling intonation, and wear ‘men’s’ clothes (or more masculine looking ‘women’s’ clothes), have short hair, wear a binder to present a more masculine figure, etc.

In regards to the whole participant group, it appears that all participants favor plateau intonation and greatly disfavor high rising intonation, a pattern which all speakers may be using to construct queer identity in speech. This provides evidence that queer identity may also be constructed in talk using intonation patterns, and that queer speech in general may deviate from stereotypically feminine speech, especially considering that the more feminine aligning speakers in this study did not show a significant use of high rising intonation (and actually used it the least out of the three alignment groups).

Although a control group of non-queer cis women would be needed to solidify this claim, this argument is consistent with Moonwomn’s (1985) finding that one of her lesbian participants had the most ‘level’ plateau intonation. Queen (1997) also suggests that lesbian speech includes a narrow pitch range and generally ‘flat’ intonation pattern. (pp. 240) Using more plateau intonation, and little high rising intonation may be a
method of *queering* language (constructing queer identity with specific language use).

Since being queer is seen by society as being non-normative, perhaps these queer-identifying participants are using this intonation pattern in talk to index their ‘non-heteronormative’ sexuality, and to separate themselves from heteronormative AFAB people; even if a queer speaker identifies as a binary cis woman, they may want to express their gender identity differently due to the intersection of gender and sexuality.

Other identities intersecting with gender and sexuality may have an influence on language use, as well. For example, Ily, who presents the most feminine in terms of physical appearance, identifies as fluid neutral → feminine aligning, prefers female pronouns, and identifies as a cis woman, has one of the lowest percentages of high rising intonation use (3%), which would appear to be inconsistent with the literature on more feminine intonation patterns. However, Ily identifies as queer and African, an intersection of which could also affect intonation use.

This is consistent with Linneman’s (2013) finding that black women use rising intonation less than white women. In fact, Jasmine is biracial (half black), and is also fluid neutral → feminine aligning, prefers female pronouns, and presents more feminine with hair and clothing, and also has one of the lower percentages of high rising intonation use (5%). Perhaps the neutral → feminine aligning group shows less use of high rising intonation due to this group having the only presence of queer people of color. If I take Linneman’s (2013) finding as legitimate, my results here seem to be suggesting something similar: that queer people of color that align as neutral → feminine expressing do use less high rising intonation than their white counterparts (white: M (8%), Lindsey (11%); biracial: Jasmine (5%); African: Ily (3%)). This is why intersectional
constructivist sociolinguistic research is so important. As I have discussed in the literature review, identities are not pre-discursive and independent from one another; they all may intertwine or blend or not! Some identities may expand while others contract and vice versa, creating a sort of symphony of identity that plays out through interaction.

![Figure 5: % use of IP type x gender expression alignment x gender identity](image)

**Figure 5: % use of IP type x gender expression alignment x gender identity**

Figure 5 shows the percentage of use per IP type by gender expression alignment and specific gender identity. This factor is difficult to analyze due to most participants identifying as cis female despite their varying gender expression alignments. However, I did notice one interesting pattern. The results suggest that in all gender expression alignment groups, those that identify as cis female use more high rising intonation. Interestingly, the only trans man in the study used the least low falling intonation. This provides evidence supporting the idea that gender identity and gender expression do not always align in terms of stereotypical masculine and feminine speech patterns, and that
there are many more identities and issues to consider when analyzing gender construction, such as gender expression alignment, queer identity, and ethnicity.

Also consider the results for the relationship between gender expression alignment, context, and IP type (figure 6). The results for the opinion and interview contexts seem to be patterning together for high rising, and plateau intonation, which suggests that there is patterned usage of intonation in spontaneous speech. That, combined with the fact that there is more high rising and low rising intonation in these contexts provides evidence that there is some patterned usage of intonation in regards to style shifting, as well.

Overall, participants seem to use more falling intonation and plateau intonation in the reading passage style, which may be indicative of more formal, careful, declarative
speech. The almost absence of high rising intonation in the reading passage context may be suggesting that high rising intonation does do identity work. If participants use high rising intonation to construct identity, rather than it simply being a component of careful, ‘correct’ speech, it makes sense that it would not be used significantly in this context.

So what about falling intonation? It is used more amongst the entire participant group in the reading passage context, but it is used the most across all contexts by the masculine aligning group. Since masculine aligning participants use falling intonation more in the interview context, I argue that they are using it to help construct their masculine alignment in spontaneous, more casual speech.

Interestingly, neutral → feminine aligning participants use more falling intonation in both the reading passage and opinion contexts, but neutral aligning participants use it more in the interview context. This may have to due with the nuances of the topic in the opinion versus the interview. The opinion was a direct response to the reading passage, in which words such as *dyke* and *tomboy* were discussed in relation to AFAB masculine presenting children. The part of the interview I chose to use for the interview data was a response to the question “How do you identify in regards to gender?” providing participants a chance to explain exactly how they align in terms of gender identity and expression. I believe that the most identity work would be done in the interview context, since the content of the interview data is a direct reflection of their personal identities, and not a response to a reading passage about someone else’s identity and experience.

Since the interview was the final task, and participants were probably more comfortable speaking with me at this point, this context would probably denote the most casual speech for the participants (closest to their vernacular). (Labov 1966; 1972)
Therefore, I would argue that neutral aligning participants using the most high rising intonation overall, and more falling intonation than neutral → feminine aligning participants in the interview context, suggests that they are using rising and falling intonation to construct and express their neutral alignment. In contrast, I argue that neutral → feminine aligning participants use more fall-rise and plateau intonation to construct the neutral side of their fluid neutral → feminine alignment, but as previously stated, the intersecting factors of gender and ethnicity are influential to intonation patterns, as well, and important to consider.

CHAPTER V: Discussion

I would like to use this discussion as a chance to discuss some serious issues surrounding gender and sexuality. There is evidence that seemingly ‘non-normative’ people are more likely to be subjected to acts of discrimination, violence, sexual assault, and domestic abuse. According to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), “LGBTQ people face higher rates of poverty, stigma, and marginalization, which put us at greater risk for sexual assault. Moreover, the ways in which society both hypersexualizes LGBTQ people and stigmatizes our relationships can lead to intimate partner violence that stems from internalized homophobia and shame.” (hrc.org) However, this is even more clear for queer people of color, especially trans men and women of color. For the former, it may be for obvious reasons: institutionalized racism is still rampant in our culture. For the latter, it is a more complicated issue.
Trans people, like all people, may encompass varying gender expression alignments; not all trans men express themselves as binary masculine, and not all trans women present as highly feminine. However, many trans people do prefer to pass as binary male or female, and for some people this is more-so an issue of safety rather than their personal gender expression alignment. Violence and discrimination against trans and non-binary people is a prevalent issue in this country, and according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), queer and trans people experience sexual violence at a higher rate than straight people. In fact, the CDC’s 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey found that 47% of trans people are sexually assaulted at some point in their lifetime. Discrimination and harm can also manifest in other ways, such as states passing laws banning trans people from same-sex bathrooms, or businesses denying them services simply for the way they present themselves. Because queer and trans people are faced with many social issues, they may be much more focused on safety and/or passing than more ‘normative’ people.

Trans people that identify as and/or wish to pass as binary male or female may go to great lengths to express their gender, including taking hormones, undergoing surgery, and/or seeking the help of speech pathologists to adopt a more perceptively masculine or feminine speech style. The issue here is that health insurance does not always cover these therapies and surgeries, and not all people can even afford health insurance. That is why, specifically for trans women of color, socio-economic disparity and institutionalized racism may be the most significant issue.

Institutionalized racism makes it difficult for people of color to get access to all kinds of goods, services, and knowledge (a good education, loans, housing, jobs, etc.). It
also makes it easier for people to get away with discrimination, such as a white cop targeting an unarmed person of color who is deemed as “threatening” because their image or behavior does not fall under the umbrella of a normative American identity (white, heterosexual, male, etc.). For trans women of color, not having access to education may lead to not getting a good job, therefore lacking the funds for health insurance or independently paying for therapies and surgeries to present their gender to more easily pass and feel safe.

However, trans people, and especially trans women of color, should not have to feel like they have to pass as binary male or female in order to feel safe, but statistics and our society’s behavior show that that is not an option, still, today. According to the HRC, 28 deaths of transgender people due to fatal violence in the United States occurred in 2017, the most ever recorded. These victims were killed by acquaintances, partners and strangers, some of whom have been arrested and charged, while others have yet to be identified. Some of these cases involve clear anti-transgender bias. In others, the victim’s transgender status or presentation may have put them at risk in other ways, such as forcing them into homelessness (again, the socio-economic issue). While the details of the 28 cases differ, it is clear that fatal violence disproportionately affects trans women of color. The intersections of institutionalized racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia conspire to deprive them of employment, housing, healthcare, and other necessities, which are barriers that make them vulnerable. (hrc.org)

From what I have just stated, the situation may seem dire, but research, including this study on AFAB queer people, may be able to help! With more positive representations of queer people and people of color in academia and the media, hopefully
knowledge of queer related issues will be more readily available, widespread, accepted, and validated. In the case of racism and other types of discrimination, the biggest relieving factor can be education. Knowledge is extremely influential, and although not all people may take science-backed knowledge as legitimate facts, over time, educating people on the fluidity of gender, sexuality, and other intersecting identities, even just between academics, may positively affect societal collective consciousness, and change societal ideals of normativity.

Research can contribute to supporting queer and trans people by offering studies as a sort of how-to-manual in the case of people wanting to pass as binary male or female. This is one of the main goals of studies like mine, and Hancock, Colton, and Douglas’s (2014) perception study showing how trans women with more rising intonation pass more easily as female. If research cannot change all the people in the world, maybe it could at least assist trans people in having the educational resources to learn how to pass (if they want to), and hopefully reduce some of the dire statistics surrounding discrimination and violence against queer, trans, and black and brown bodies. Just giving queer and trans people a voice in the literature can help validate their identities in societal perceptual space, and alleviate some of the pressure of being queer in a straight world.

1. Limitations

First of all, I must say that I am disappointed that I could not get a larger and more intersectional sample of the AFAB queer community in DC. As previously stated, most participants (seven of ten) identify as white, one identifies as white/Jewish, one identifies as African, and another biracial. Unfortunately, this is the nature of academia;
universities, where many students like myself find their participants, are largely white and middle to upper class. The entire queer community includes people of all races, ethnicities, classes, dialect regions, etc. Therefore, due to the lack of intersectional diversity and the sample size in general being very small, this study has a very specific and small scope. The one benefit to having a more homogeneous participant group is that results may be more coherent. Still, intersectionality is important for queer visibility, especially for queer people of color. With more time and research, I hope that myself and other researchers can cover more ground in this regard.

Although careful inspection of the F0 track, repeated listening, and looking at the actual F0 measurements (Hz) of phrase accent and boundary tones provide a solid foundation for analyzing IPs, there is still the limitation of subjectivity. What one researcher may consider a phrase, ip, or IP may be different for another. The important thing here is that researchers choose a method, and stick with it for each IP token to eliminate some of this subjectivity, which is why I chose to follow ToBI guidelines, and Clopper and Smiljanic’s (2011) approach.

Another limitation was time, and not being able to consider other variables that may play a part in expressing gender, such as voice quality, speech rate, resonance, and pitch range. However, this provides a great opportunity for future research. Although I was able to look at style shifting in regards utterance context, transcribing each long interview to find intraspeaker topic based style shifting would be beneficial to this type of study. The interviews were largely based on the general topic of gender identity, but it is definitely possible to do a more detailed topic and subtopic coding within each
participant’s interview. This would provide more evidence of any identity work that is being done with intonation.

2. Suggestions for future research

After concluding this study, I have many ideas for future queer sociolinguistic research. Quantitatively, it would be helpful to conduct more studies on intonation and queer identities, especially with a more intersectionally diverse sample with AMAB (assigned male at birth) participants, as well. It would also be great to conduct such studies in other cities and countries, as well, to account for other cultural or dialect regional constraints. It would also be a good idea to look at other prosodic features such as voice quality, pitch range, and speech rate, since other studies have noted these as markers of gender. (Podesva 2007; Zimman 2012; Podesva et al 2015; Tyler 2015)

In regards to a more interactional sociolinguistic approach, it would be very interesting to look at intonation variation in the context of one word utterances/feedback such as “Right!” (as previously stated). Also, I would personally like to explore indexing gender and sexuality with intonation and other prosodic features in the context of constructed dialogue. I think it would be a good way to break down the ideas of ‘normativity’ in regards to how queer people voice non-queer or ‘normative’ people.

Also, when transcribing the data, I noticed a high amount of creaky voice on low falling terminals, especially for the masculine aligning participants. This led me to wonder if masculine presenting individuals use creak in falling intonation to make their pitch sound lower. This would have to be more of a qualitative study, since measuring F0 in creak is fairly difficult. There is a decent body of sociolinguistic research on creak and
other voice qualities, which discuss how voice quality can index various identities, including gender and local identity (Ogden 2001; Podesva 2007; Yuasa 2010; Szakay 2012; Starr 2015). Adding queer and trans people in the conversation would help in broadening the view of voice quality, gender, and sexuality in a more intersectional way.

CHAPTER VI: Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed how AFAB queer identifying people in DC use intonation to index their gender expression alignment and queer identity. Out of all factors I examined, gender expression alignment and context appear to be the greatest influence on intonation variation. This provides evidence that intonation is doing identity work in talk. Masculine aligning participants use most falling intonation overall, but especially in the interview context, suggesting that these participants are using falling intonation to construct and express their masculine alignment, which is consistent with the literature on falling intonation as indexing masculinity. All participants favor plateau intonation and disfavor high rising intonation, suggesting that this specific intonation pattern may be a marker of queer identity. Style shifting for neutral → feminine and neutral aligning participants between the reading passage, interview, and opinion contexts provides more evidence that intonation is doing identity work in spontaneous speech.

In his interview, Andy (trans male/masculine aligning participant) describes how discussing gender as a male-female binary is unacceptable, but a gender spectrum is also too conservative a concept. He describes gender as being a universe, with various intersecting qualities, which, probably not to his knowledge at all, is something Eckert
(2008) describes in a way, as well. She talks about identity and the meanings of variables as not being fixed but rather constituting a field of potential meanings – an indexical field, or constellation of ideologically related meanings, any one of which can be activated in the situated use of the variable. (pp. 454) In this way, identities are like stars throughout the galaxies: some may be far apart or closer in between, but collectively, these stars and galaxies interconnect through time and space to comprise a person’s complex and, realistically, fluid and ever-evolving identity universe, components of which are constructed and highlighted in different contexts of interaction, like constellations of stars coming into view as the earth moves into the shadow of the night, and disappearing as it moves into the light of the day.
REFERENCES


