ABSTRACT

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This paper examines the link between linguistic behavior, identity practices and social movement framing strategies. Crucially, while scholars have established the link between rhetorical strategies, collective identity and social movement framing, they have not explored the ways in which linguistic variation plays a part in the identity processes involved therein. This paper offers a case study of four speeches given by William Barber II, a prominent activist in North Carolina. I perform a quantitative analysis of two linguistic variables, /ay/ monophthongization and copula absence, in order to examine how Barber’s language patterns in each of the speeches. Furthermore, I perform a qualitative content analysis and link the content and context of each of the four speeches to the patterns of linguistic variation shown by Barber. I find that Barber’s use these two linguistic variables is complex and multifaceted. While /ay/ monophthongization seems to index Barber’s identity as authentically Southern and copula absence might emphasize Barber’s black identity, the use of these linguistic variables is conditioned by a variety of social and internal linguistic factors. Nevertheless, this paper offers insight into how these variables might serve as identity moves within the context of social movement framing.
The Language of Framing: A Sociolinguistic Approach to Social Movement Framing Strategies

by
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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my thesis to my family and friends without whom none of this would have been possible.
BIOGRAPHY

Jordan Holley is a graduate student at North Carolina State University.
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INTRODUCTION

A question central to the study of social movements is how social movement organizers and activists encourage participation in collective action. In order to answer this question, scholars turned to the idea of framing, or how individuals signify and construct meaning (Benford and Snow 2000). Framing research also explored how aspects of a frame deployer’s identity can affect the reception of a frame. Sociolinguistic work has examined the intersection of linguistic behavior and identity formation and asked the question: How do we construct our identities not just in what we say, but in how exactly we say it (Eckert 2000, 2008; Silverstein 2003; Johnstone 2007, Podesva 2011)? In this study I ask the question: Can a frame deployer’s linguistic presentation of identity be a tool for mobilizing support and if so, how?

While scholars have paid particular attention to frames as rhetorical devices and strategies, as of yet, little or no research has linked the language of frames to the linguistic behaviors of those who deploy or articulate them (Williams 1995; McCammon et al. 2007). Linguistic research has recognized the importance of speech in the act of identity formation, particularly the ways in which individuals alter their speech patterns to make identity claims (Eckert 1989; Ito and Preston 1998; Coupland 2007; Podesva 2011). Crucially, if linguistic behaviors are stance-taking actions which can alter how an actor is perceived, and if that actor is engaged in the process of articulating frames in the service of problematizing a social issue or mobilizing participants to take action, then those linguistic behaviors then constitute an important aspect of the framing process.

I examine the connection between the credibility of frame deployers and the frames they present with identity work strategies through a case study of William Barber II, a prominent black social activist in North Carolina. William Barber is the self-proclaimed architect of the
Moral Monday, a social movement which originated in North Carolina in response to Republican control of the North Carolina House, Senate, and Executive branch. Barber is a black activist who invokes the traditions of the civil rights movement, helping to organize sit-ins of the legislature as well as marches and rallies. Barber represents a prominent public face of mainstream left wing social movements in North Carolina and nationally. Barber’s case is interesting precisely because of his identity as a Southern black man. His speech is marked by linguistic features associated with African American Vernacular English (AAVE) as well as Southern dialects of English. Since such features are socially useful markers of racial or regional identity, Barber’s speeches provide a useful case for understanding how racial and regional identities are enacted through linguistic behaviors. In turn, these changing identities affect and are affected by his position within the social movement and his role as frame deployer.

Utilizing a sociolinguistic analysis of several of Barber’s speeches given for different purposes and directed at audiences of various racial make-ups and from separate geographic regions, I target specific linguistic variables to illuminate how language contributes to presentation of a Black, Southern identity. I use a set of quantitative techniques to measure and analyze the acoustic signal of Barber’s speech and assess the degree to which Barber’s speech can be variously characterized as ‘Southern’ or ‘Black’ at any given point in time. Additionally, I analyze variation in the thematic content of Barber’s speeches and the relationship between this variation and Barber’s linguistic variability. I explore its potential as a strategic deployment of identity for the purpose mobilizing an audience or gathering support. Likewise, the suppression of features of AAVE before white and mixed race audiences might suggest Barber’s strategic downplaying of a strongly Black identity in order to promote the broader appeal of the movement’s goals. The following analysis provides insight into how identity work is integral to
the articulation of frames for social movement actors and how linguistic behaviors can function as identity work. Though identities are constrained by social structures, actors nonetheless have agency in constructing their identities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

FRAMING AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Framing is an analytic concept that refers to a process of meaning making which ascribes significance to events in the world around us. Frames are ways of interpreting and understanding the social world in a meaningful and productive manner; they represent a lens through which social actors can view, interpret, and make sense of events and occurrences. From the framing perspective, scholars have examined how actors in movements frame reality in order to mobilize and garner support as well as neutralize opposition (Snow and Benford 1988; McCammon et al. 2007; Bloemraad, Silva and Voss 2016). One characteristic, frame resonance, refers to a frame’s effectiveness at mobilizing support on the basis of its credibility and its salience (Benford and Snow 2000). In other words, frame resonance is concerned with the believability of reality as presented by the frame, the viability of the frame deployer, and the importance of the values or beliefs associated with the frame to those being addressed.

As Snow et al. (1986) argue, frames are not articulated in a vacuum. How participants understand and are affected by frames is contingent upon factors such as their pre-existing worldviews or counter-framing by institutions or individual actors. Furthermore, frames build on the existing social knowledges of social movement actors, drawing connections to existing beliefs about inequalities or social problems in an attempt to organize and invigorate participants in order to increase participation in social movement or action.
Benford and Snow (2000) argue that frame resonance varies in two distinct ways, “credibility” and “salience.” Salience is further broken down into three features, “centrality, experiential commensurability and narrative fidelity” (Benford and Snow 2000: 621). These all refer, in some sense, to a frame’s relevance to the daily life of social movement actors. Do the frames invoke issues or beliefs that are central to the lives of participants? Do the frames speak to the daily experiences of participants? To what extent do frames connect and engage with pre-existing cultural worldviews and narratives? Credibility is also broken down into three distinct features, “frame consistency, empirical credibility, and credibility of the frame articulators” (Benford and Snow 2000:619). Consistency refers to both congruence in various articulated frames as well as congruence between those frames and actions taken by social movement organizations. Empirical credibility describes the ability of a frame to be supported with empirical evidence. This does not establish the absolute veracity of a frame but instead describes how material evidence renders a frame “real” to some portion of the population. Finally, the authors argue that the credibility of the frame deployer has an effect on the credibility of a frame. Benford and Snow (2000) report that status and knowledge of an issue are two factors that increase the credibility of a deployer.

Outside of status and knowledge, the credibility of a frame deployer is related to authenticity of the deployer and the movement more broadly. In regard to social movements, authenticity refers to the ability of a movement or actor, “to demonstrate closeness to a ‘pure’ ideal” (Luna 2017: 43). In particular, authenticity relates to the linkage of a movement or actor with an identity or set of identities that are judged to be relevant to movement goals and “real,” that is, not faked or falsified. For example, Oselin and Corrigal-Brown (2010) explore how protesters both for and against the Iraq war emphasized their identity as veterans to try and claim
an authentic closeness to this issue. Authenticity is established through a variety of practices all of which involve making claims to a certain identity.

Identity work is a set of processes used in the construction and maintenance of an identity that is (in this case) congruous with the beliefs, values and goals of the social movement organization (Snow and McAdam 2000). This identity work can be for the purpose of creating a collective identity, to challenge oppressive notions about certain identities or even strategically used as framing tool (Polletta and Jasper 2001; Bernstein and Olsen 2009). Identity work may be performed dramaturgically through collective action (or interaction) or discursively, through spoken or written discourse.

Social movement research has examined the importance of collective identity in the establishment and maintenance of movements. Melucci (1996) argues that collective identity is a processual phenomenon that must be continually accomplished by social movements. Jasper (1997) suggests that collective identities are founded upon a shared set of emotions about the world but also about other members of the social movement, importantly, feelings of goodwill toward other members of the movement and a shared negative emotions about others, particularly those who are considered to be in direct conflict with the goals and beliefs of the movements. Differences in social identities of members can serve as cleavages in social movements, particularly when these social differences align with differences of beliefs and goals. Social movements run into what Jasper (2004) calls the extension dilemma: the further a social movement is expanded, the more nebulous movement goals and values can become, a hindrance to the creation of a collective identity. In a situation where a social movement is defined by having a broad and inclusive membership, the establishment of a collective identity can be challenging and growing group membership can alter the kinds of frames that social movement
actors articulate. While research on social movements have examined the link between identity, collective identity and movement framing, these studies have largely examined either self-identification or discursive identity moves.

**IDENTITY, STYLE, AND LINGUISTIC VARIATION**

Research in sociolinguistics has examined in detail how specific linguistic features can be used in stance taking and in the enacting of an identity. Inasmuch as frame resonance is linked to the identity of a frame deployer and linguistic strategies are linked to the creation of an authentic identity, language use marks an important aspect of augmenting frame resonance. Sociolinguistic research over time gained an increasing interest in individual identities and the linguistic practices that assert these identities. Intraspeaker linguistic variation (also known as style shifting) refers to changes in certain measurable and socially meaningful aspects of the spoken speech of a single person. This axis of linguistic variation has been the source of attention from scholars since the beginning of sociolinguistic analysis. Early models of intraspeaker variation, based on the attention-to-speech model, were drawn from the work of Labov (1966, 1972), who suggested that stylistic variation of a single speaker was wholly attributable to how much attention a speaker was paying to both what they were saying but how they were saying it.

Labov theorized the concept of the vernacular and the standard. The vernacular represents a speaker’s dialect that is socially marked as unusual and at times undesirable which stands in opposition to the perceived “standard” way of talking. Attention-to-speech models suggest that when speakers are talking more “naturally” and “uncarefully,” their speech is likely to be more vernacular. When, however, speakers are paying more attention to their speech (for whatever reason), they are likely to try to sound less vernacular by reducing their usage of linguistic variants which they perceive to be non-standard. For example, in Labov’s early study
of the department stores in New York City, he examined department store clerks’ non-usage of /r/ in words like *fourth* and *floor*, a feature of certain New York City dialects. What he found was that r-lessness, the tendency drop or reduce “r,” was a feature of working class New York dialects. However, this feature decreased in prevalence when an interlocutor forced clerks to repeat themselves that likely drew more attention to their speech. As a result, the respondents were more likely to pronounce the /r/ when asked to repeat these words. In short, sound more standard and less vernacular.

This model has seen significant criticism. Bell (1984) provides an empirical refutation of the main tenant of the attention to speech model. The body of research suggests that attention alone is not the most significant factor in explaining stylistic variation. Bell’s research, which found that New Zealand newscasters showed stylistic variation when reading the news for different news stations (which were variously associated with a more or less formal delivery), prompted him to create the audience design model of stylistic variation. This model (based partially on Giles and Powesland’s (1975) work on accommodation) suggests that speakers, in order to facilitate communication, alter their speech to sound more like the person with whom they are talking. In a one-on-one setting, this means that speakers adjust their speech in real time (within a given set of parameters) to reflect more closely the style and variety of speech of the person with whom they are talking. Furthermore, Bell also suggests that speakers adjust their speech to reflect not the actual speech of the audience but the speaker's perception of the audience, including social judgements of the audience. That is, a speaker changes the way they talk based on their perception of the social position and personal character of their addressee(s).

Further additions to this model emphasize the changing social meanings of linguistic variables across various contexts, noting speaker agency in making (either conscious or
subconscious) decisions about their own speech. Silverstein (2003) outlines the concept of
indexicality, the ability of linguistic variables to carry differing social meanings across micro-
level contexts that reflect macro-level social meanings and judgements. Specific linguistic
features, e.g. vowel quality, consonant deletion/lenition, and specific morphemic structures come
to represent broad social categories. Then these features take on more broad social meanings that
reflect perceived social judgements of members of that social category. Put differently, linguistic
features associated with a certain dialect cue social judgements about someone who uses those
features including social class, education, geographic region, ethnicity, etc. For instance, Eckert
(2000) found that high school students in Detroit, MI adopted features of the Northern Cities
Vowel Shift associated with working class city dwellers. These features were used by members
of a high school clique to index a working class identity and, concomitantly, a more generic
identity of opposition to the school as an institution (Eckert 2000). Podesva’s (2011) case study
explored how a single speaker’s use of a geographic dialect features changed across social
situations (e.g. at work or with friends). Podesva argues that these changes reflect the speaker’s
changing role and identity across a range of social situations. Wolfram et al. (2016) show how
Martin Luther King Jr.’s use of Southern and black linguistic features change across speaking
contexts in ways that reflect the location, audience and substantive content of each speech.

Functionally, the literature of stylistic variation provides empirical evidence that
linguistic variation for an individual speaker does not represent a random behavior nor a simple
set of reactions to stimuli. Rather, stylistic variations signify agentic behaviors that speakers
utilize in stance-taking behaviors and in crafting and expressing their identities. For social
movement actors, conscious and subconscious sociolinguistic behaviors can augment and inform
ways of framing social movement issues. In particular, the identity work performed by linguistic
variation can be used to establish authenticity and in doing so enhance the credibility of a frame deployer to a specific audience.

CASE STUDY – WILLIAM BARBER

William Barber II was born in Indianapolis on August 30, 1963. His father, a preacher, and his mother, an office manager, were recruited to return to North Carolina’s Washington County to help integrate a local public school. At fifteen Barber was the president of the NAACP’s youth council, at 17 he was student body president, and at 19, he was president of the student body at North Carolina Central University. It is clear that even as early as fifteen years old, Barber was entrenched in the politics and activism of race in the United States. After graduating from N.C.C.U, Barber attended Divinity School at Duke and would later get his Doctorate from Drew University in public policy and pastoral care. In 1993, Barber became the pastor for Goldleaf Christian Church in Goldsboro, North Carolina and remains at his position there as of 2018. Barber acted as president of the North Carolina branch of the NAACP from 2006 until 2017. In 2007, Barber helped to organize the Historic Thousands on Jones Street People's Assembly, a coalition of over 93 advocacy organization in North Carolina. In 2013, Barber organized the “Moral Mondays” movement in response to the voting in of a Republican majority in both state houses as well as a Republican governor (Fletcher 2013).

While Barber and the Moral Mondays movement often focuses on racial inequality specifically, the movement and Barber engage in “fusion politics,” that links advocacy for abortion rights, the environment, public education, labor rights and recently, HB2, known as the “bathroom bill” because it eliminates protections for transgender persons in North Carolina. These are all issues that are connected to race but which engage activists from across racial lines.
While Barber spent time outside the South at Drew University and very early in his life, much of his linguistic formation took place in the South. Barber also lives and campaigns in the South, so it is reasonable to expect that Barber’s identity is situated firmly in a Southern identity. Barber’s ethnic identity as an African-American is also central to the political movement he began in North Carolina. Barber is a significant and well-known figure in social activism in North Carolina and the United States generally. As such, Barber serves as a prominent deployer of frames involved in modern contentious politics of the left. Barber is considerably vernacular in speech delivery, something that might be seen as a detriment to the establishment of broad appeal and collective identity. Despite this potential impediment, Barber has seen considerable success, even speaking at the Democratic National Convention in 2016.

DATA AND ANALYSIS

DATA

The analysis for this project combines two distinct methods: (1) a sociophonetic analysis of some linguistic features of Barber’s speech and (2) a qualitative content analysis to examine themes used in Barber’s speeches. A combined analysis of these two methods illustrates how linguistic behaviors are affected by local context, including the substantive content of speech. The data for these analyses are drawn from four speeches given by Barber in 2014 and 2015, a "The State of the State of Civil Rights" address at a North Carolina NAACP meeting with a primarily African-American audience, a speech at a synagogue in Selma, Alabama with a primarily white audience, a sermon at Riverside Church in New York City, New York with a primarily African-American audience, and a speech at a conference in Detroit before a primarily white audience. These speeches represent a purposive sample which I gathered with the intent of measuring two axes of difference: geographic region and audience racial makeup. The speeches
in North Carolina and Alabama take place in the South while the speeches in Michigan and New York were given in the North. Furthermore, the North Carolina and New York speeches were given to primarily black audiences while the Alabama and Detroit speeches were given to predominantly white audience. In the North Carolina speech, Barber is acting in his role as President of the North Carolina chapter of the NAACP; the speech focuses on outlining an agenda for each member organization for the next year with a focus on increasingly membership. The speech in Alabama is a commemoration of the 1965 Selma to Montgomery March, Barber was invited to speak at a synagogue there by a local rabbi. The speech in Detroit was an invited speech at the “Netroots Nation” conference, an annual conference centered on issues of online social movement organizations for self-identified progressives. The speech in New York is a sermon given at Riverside Church in New York City, the church has a historical association with social justice movements and the civil rights movement in particular. The first phonetic variables of interest are /ay/ glide weakening, that is the weakening of the dipthong in words like PRI\_ZE to a more monophthongal vowel, e.g. the word ‘tide’ might be pronounced like ‘tod.’ This variable was selected because it represents a variant in both Southern and Black American dialects; however, it is more commonly associated with Southern dialects of English. The second linguistic variable under study is copula/auxiliary absence, that is, the deletion or contraction of is/are. Full deletion is a feature highly indicative of AAVE and its use is correlated with social class category in African-American communities. As such, if Barber uses deletion, it is likely to show significant variation across contexts and serve to index a black identity specifically.

ANALYSIS OF /ay/ MONOPHTHONGIZATION

The first of the two variables in this analysis is the glide weakening of the /ay/ vowel, the vowel found in words like bide and tight. In General American English, /ay/ tends to be a
diphthong with a low-central vowel nucleus, /a/, and a glide toward the high-front vowel, /i/ (Bailey and Thomas 1998). In Southern varieties of American English and in dialects of African American English across the United States, the diphthong /ay/ has undergone a process known as glide weakening or monophthongization (Fridland 2003; Edwards 1997). This refers to the production of /ay/ with a nonexistent or substantially weakened glide. The weakening of the /ay/ glide is part of a broad historical sound change known as the Southern Vowel Shift (SVS) which seems to have begun sometime in the mid nineteenth century (Bailey 1997; Bailey 2001). Labov (1994) suggests that the monophthongization of /ay/ was the earliest change in the Southern Vowel Shift, triggering the other elements of the SVS. The effects of the SVS are still evident in Southern American English dialects today and /ay/ remains a well-reported and salient feature of White Southern English both inside and outside the South.

Glide weakening patterns in two distinct ways: (1) the more common pattern where glide weakening occurs only before voiced consonants and in open syllables (coda), for example tide or tie respectively, but not before voiceless consonants e.g. tight or type and (2) a rarer pattern in which the weakened glide occurs in all phonetic environments. The former occurs throughout the majority of the South while the latter appears in certain areas of Appalachia, the Ozarks, and parts of Georgia and Florida (Thomas 2007). The first variant also seems to be common in AAVE, while the latter variant seems to be unusual for African Americans (Thomas 2001). Aside from the effect of the voicing of the following phonological environment, glide weakening also appears follow a hierarchical ordering pattern based on sonority, with weakening being most likely before liquids (/l/ and /l/), followed by nasals, and finally obstruents (Hazen 2000; Thomas 2007; Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1995).
African American Vernacular English and the Englishes of Southern whites share many similarities but are also marked by clear differences. Thomas (2007) outlines several features that separate these dialects such as the pattern of r-lessness, interdental fricative mutation and consonant cluster reduction. Monophthongization, however seems to be a feature of both AAVE and Southern White Vernacular English (SWVE). Labov, Ash and Boberg (2006) suggest that monophthongization is common among all speakers of Southern dialects but that glide weakening in all contexts (Pattern 2) is a marker of class status, being more common for working class speakers. Other work has suggested that glide weakening of /ay/ in all forms is most common in the speech of working class Southerners. (McNair-Dupree 2000). Research about changes in the pattern of glide weakening among African Americans paints a complicated picture. In some areas, rates of monophthongal /ay/ seem to be decreasing, while in other areas speakers are adopting even less constrained patterns of glide weakening (Edwards 1997; Anderson 2002; Anderson 2008; Fridland 2003). Fridland (2012) maintains that /ay/ monophthongization is still a very salient feature of Southern speech, and it does not seem to have lost the ability to index Southern identity to those both inside and outside the South. Although it is a well-documented feature of AAVE, /ay/ monophthongization remains associated with the speech of southerners and not necessarily African Americans more broadly. It is a feature that is shared by African and European Americans in the South and African Americans in other communities through a shared linguistic history. Regardless, /ay/ monophthongization is strongly associated with a Southern identity and in some contexts, a Southern working class identity. Southern dialects are the most perceptually distinct and carry with them connotations of friendliness, casualness and politeness. These same dialects are also negatively stigmatized as unintelligent and “bad English” (Preston 1997, 2015). Furthermore, Plitcha and Preston (2005)
show that listeners can perceive /ay/ monophthongization in a gradient fashion, with increasingly more monophthongal forms rated as more Southern sounding.

Each of the four speeches was transcribed in Praat (Boersma and Weenink 2018) and then aligned using the Penn Phonetics Lab forced aligner. This automatically assigns a phonetic transcription to each word of the transcript and then time aligns these transcriptions to match the audio file for each speech. Measurements of each vowel token were in Praat using a script that measures the duration of each vowel and measure the first two vowel formants at three points: 25, 50, and 75% of vowel duration. Vowels with a duration of less than 60 milliseconds were removed from this analysis. Taken together, these measurements show the degree of glide weakening for every vowel in each of the four speeches. I measure the degree of glide weakening using Euclidean distance, the absolute distance between the vowel nucleus and vowel glide in F1 and F2 space. Euclidean distance is calculated using this formula: Euclidean Distance \[ \sqrt{(F1_{nucleus} - F1_{glide})^2 + (F2_{nucleus} - F2_{glide})^2} \]. That is, the square root of the sum of the squared difference between the nucleus and glide of F1 and F2 respectively. For Euclidean distance, the value broadly reflects the length of the glide of the vowel. A shorter Euclidean distance means a vowel that has a weaker glide and is more monophthongal. Figure 1 shows the average nucleus and glide plotted in F1-F2 space for the two following phonetic environments separated by speaking context.

I performed statistical analysis in R (R Core Team 2017) using a series of OLS regression models and two mixed effects models to predict Euclidean distance for each of the /ay/ tokens in the dataset. Figure 2 presents a boxplot of Euclidean distances for each of the two following environments separates by speaking context. I constructed a series of models that included first the primary linguistic predictor, voicing of the following phoneme, as well as a
control for duration of the vowel segment. The second model includes the variables from the previous model and in addition, a categorical variable for speech context. The third model attempts to capture differences in the effect of following voicing by speech context, so interactions between the following voicing variable and speech context are included in the model. The fourth model adds random intercepts by word but does not include an interaction effect between voicing and speech context and the final model includes both random intercepts and the interaction effect. Random intercepts by word account for lexical effects, variation in vowel quality due to the vowel’s embeddedness in different words. The results of each of the five models are presented in Table 1. The reference category for speech context in all five models is Barber’s North Carolina speech, and the reference level for voicing of the following phoneme is voiced. I used AIC to assess model fit and select the model that is the best fit for the data. AIC values are included at the bottom of Table 1. The values decrease with the addition of each additional set of variables; therefore, Model 5, the mixed effects models which includes interactions, is the model that I will discuss in the results.

**ANALYSIS OF COPULA ABSENCE**

The second linguistic variable under analysis is called copula absence, also known as deleted or zero copula. This refers to the absence of the copula or auxiliary forms of the verb *is/are*, as in for example, “he Ø walkin to the store.” Contraction of the copula auxiliary is common in many varieties of English, yet for American dialects of English, copula absence is limited primarily to varieties of AAVE (Labov 1969; Wolfram 1974). Copula absence is one of the most well studied variables of AAVE, and its internal linguistic constraints have been well documented. Labov (1969) noted that copula absence does not occur in the past tense, nor does it typically occur for the first person singular, i.e. “I Ø walkin to the store” does not occur. Labov
further suggested that zero copula can only occur when contraction is also possible, which precludes instances when the copula is phrase final or when it is emphasized as in “Yes he is!”

An additional set of linguistic constraints on copula absence are probabilistic rather than categorical, meaning that they influence the likelihood of copula absence vs. presence in an utterance. The strongest of these probabilistic constraints is the grammatical function of the following phrase: copula absence is most likely before (gonna or gon), followed by the verbal participle (e.g. walking, talking, etc.), locatives (he Ø in there), adjectives, noun phrases and other types of phrase (Wolfram 1974; Baugh 1986; Rickford et al. 1991; Cukor-Avila 1999; Mallinson and Childs 2005). The grammatical category of the subject preceding the copula is also important; absence is preferred following personal pronouns (he, she, we, etc.), less preferred following other pronouns (somebody, who, etc.), and zero copula is least likely when it is preceded by a full noun phrase. For example, the copula is much more likely to be absent from an utterance like “we (are) gonna pursue liberty” and much less likely to be absent from the sentence “race is the significant factor.”

Because of its status as a recognizable structural feature of AAVE, copula absence carries considerable social weight. Indeed Rickford and Rickford (2000:125) suggest that copula absence is one of the features, “…where much of what is distinctive and identity-affirming about the vernacular is marked out.” Mallinson and Childs’ (2005) study about two groups of black women in rural Appalachia shows that copula absence is one of a range of linguistic features that can do significant identity work. Although these women share many demographic characteristics and indeed seem to operate within the same social networks, their rates of zero copula vary considerably. The frequent use of the zero copula marks a woman as a member of the ‘porch sitters’ and their “greater acceptance of extra-local norms and affiliation with the ideals of
broader (urban) African American culture” (Mallinson and Childs 2005: 196). Furthermore, it’s possible for rates of copula absence to vary over the life span of an individual (Rickford and Price 2013). Rickford and Price track the speech of two black women at several points throughout their lives and compare their usage of several linguistic variables. As teenagers, the speakers use very high rates of vernacular linguistic features, but the rates fall dramatically when the speakers are adults who have careers and families. Rickford & Price offer that this change across the lifespan may be due to their increased affiliation with middle class norms and the ensuing contact with more speakers of “standard” English. The authors, quoting Baugh (1996: 412) reaffirm his assertion that, “…blacks who have greater day-to-day contact with Standard English are more likely to speak it themselves, particularly if individual blacks find themselves in social circumstances where their professional opportunities and identities are tied to occupations where dominant linguistic norms prevail.” Alim’s (2002) study examines copula variation in the spoken speech and sung lyrics of two Hip Hop artists. Alim locates the use of the copula as indicating an in-group identity and a street-conscious style. Importantly for this paper, Alim’s examination of copula variation in performed speech sheds light on what he, referencing (Traugott and Romaine 1983) calls “the STRATEGIC use of style” (Alim 2002: 300). In the strategic use of style framework, speakers are very conscious of their own language, and can identify and alter the forms that they use to take a particular stance or make particular identity moves. Although this strategy is not possible for every linguistic variable, Alim provides evidence that strategic variation of the copula is in fact possible. The point of this review has not been to suggest a singular social meaning for the use of the zero copula but instead to triangulate its various meanings in the indexical field (Silverstein 2003; Eckert 2008). The social meaning of copula absence is highly dependent on the social position of the interlocutors involved. However,
it almost certainly indexes an association with African American culture broadly and identification with the norms and values of the African American community. As a variable which is nearly absent from all varieties of white Englishes and which is remarkably stable across varieties of AAVE, copula absence is available to speakers as a social tool for identity work. I will discuss the ways in which Barber might use the zero copula to index certain social meanings in the analysis below.

The data for this analysis were collected from the same four speeches analyzed for the analysis of /ay/. From the four speeches, I impressionistically coded each token of the copula as absent, contracted, or full. Impressionistic coding refers to the researcher coding each token based on the researcher’s auditory impression, i.e. the researcher listens to each token and decides whether it is realized as full, contracted, or absent. At the same time, I recorded information about the grammatical category of the following phrase, the grammatical category of the subject, and whether the subject was singular or plural. Tokens that occurred in environments where contraction and deletion are not possible were excluded from this analysis. The literature has explored many different ways of calculating the rates of zero copula (see Rickford et al. 1991). For my analysis, the models are structured to compare absent forms against both full and contracted form; this is referred to as “Straight Deletion.” I constructed two logistic regression models in R to test the strength of the linguistic constraints and to determine any effect that the speaking context has on the prevalence of the zero copula form. (R Core Team 2017) Both models include the linguistic constraints and a categorical variable for speaking context. Due to a lack of tokens for each category, the following grammatical variable has been collapsed into four categories, gonna, V + ing, noun phrase, and other/miscellaneous. The first model is used to predict the probability of copula absence only, compared to the combined category of contracted
and full forms. The second models predicts the presence of either deleted or contracted forms, compared to full forms of the copula. The reference speech for these models is the speech in Detroit, Michigan. This is selected as the reference category because I predict it will have the fewest copula tokens due to the audience and speech context; it therefore provides a useful baseline for reference.

**CONTENT ANALYSIS**

For the content analysis, I imported transcripts for each of the four speeches into Nvivo and coded them using an open coding scheme. Each speech is approximately the same length with the exception of speech in Selma, Alabama, which is approximately half the length of the others. As themes emerged from the text, they were added to the coding schema and themes from each speech were compared against one another and consolidated. I also conducted a rudimentary quantitative content analysis examining and comparing the most frequent words in each of the four speeches. My analysis focused on broad themes in each of the four speeches including, (1) religious references, (2) historical references, (3) rights framing, (4) coalition building language, and (5) the use of a black preaching style (Britt 2011).

**HYPOTHESES**

/əʊ/ **MONOPHTHONGIZATION**

Given the previous literature and Barber’s linguistic socialization, I expect that Barber will produce weakened glides before voiced consonants and in open syllables, and will produce generally weaker glides in this context in the speeches that were given in the South. Though monophthongal /əʊ/ is common in varieties of AAVE across the United States, I do not expect higher rates of monophthongal /əʊ/ in front of black audiences because of the variable’s stigmatized association with a regional Southern identity.
COPULA ABSENCE

Zero copula is a linguistic variable that is highly stigmatized; speakers who use it are often characterized as uneducated and lazy. I therefore expect that Barber will use generally low rates of the zero copula as overuse might negatively impact Barber’s status as a figure of authority. Nonetheless, I expect Barber will use higher rates of copula absence in speeches where audiences are primarily black and almost no deletion in speeches with primarily white or racially diverse audiences.

RESULTS

/ay/ MONOPHTHONGIZATION

The linguistic constraints, voicing of the following phoneme and duration, are significant for each of the five models. This suggests that generally Barber’s glides before voiced tokens are significantly weaker than the glides before voiceless tokens. Barber’s speech follows the most common pattern for Southern and African American speakers, who have weakened glides before voiced and pre-pausal environments but not preceding voiceless contexts. Duration patterns in all the models as I expect, with a longer duration predicting a more diphthongal realization of /ay/. This confirms the first part of my hypothesis, that Barber will produce weaker glides before voiced environments and stronger glides in the pre-voiceless environments. The second part of my hypothesis is not confirmed: Barber’s monophthongization shows a more complicated social patterning than I predicted.

The results for speech context and the interaction between speech context and following voicing are more nuanced. The main effect for the Selma, Alabama speech is significant. In the models without the interaction between speech context and following voicing, this suggests that Barber produces generally weaker glides in this speech, even before voiceless tokens.
Interpreting the interaction in Model 5, the significant negative coefficient for the Alabama speech suggests that the difference between the voiced and voiceless contexts is smaller in the Selma speech than in the other speeches. In Selma, Barber adopts something akin to the geographically restricted, non-AAVE pattern in which the glide is weak in all phonological contexts. Broadly speaking, Barber’s speech, at least in regard to this one variable, takes on a more specifically Southern quality than in any of the other speeches. There are several plausible explanations. First, Bell’s (1984) audience design model predicts that Barber would desire to reduce the Southernness of his speech when speaking to audiences in the North, who are perceived to have a different set of linguistic norms. Indeed there’s some evidence of this; the positive coefficient of the interaction between speech and following voicing for the New York speech suggests that Barber’s glides are stronger for voiceless tokens in that speech. However, this does not explain why Barber’s glides are weaker when speaking in Alabama than in North Carolina.

Another possible explanation is that Barber’s role in the North Carolina speech is considerably more formal. He is delivering a speech as president of the North Carolina NAACP and giving an official ‘state of the union’ to a large audience of organizational members. In comparison, the speech in Alabama is given to commemorate the 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery. While the event retains an official kind of status, Barber is not operating in his capacity as head of an organization. Furthermore, the event being commemorated is rooted in a movement which was historically Black and Southern and in that case, Barber might seek to emphasize linguistic variables which emphasize his identity as a Southern Black man. Another possibility is that Barber uses a more monophthongal /ay/ to index a kind of ‘insider’ Southern identity when speaking in Alabama. When speaking to a racially diverse audience in the South
and one to whom Barber’s status might be unknown, Barber might feel it necessary to emphasize his Southern dialect to lay claim to a more authentic-seeming Southern identity. Such an identity move is not necessary during the North Carolina speech because of Barber’s official capacity within the organization and his relative familiarity with his audience. Emphasizing Southernness in speeches that occur outside the South makes little sense for Barber, particularly given that Southern accents are often perceived as indicating a lack of intelligence or education (Fridland 2008; Preston 2015).

COPULA ABSENCE

The results of the model regressed on deleted tokens are presented in Table 2. As the literature predicts, both following grammatical category and subject have a strong effect on the probability of copula absence. When the copula is followed by gonna, absence is much more probable than in any of the other contexts. The subject of the clause also has a strong effect on the probability of absence; personal pronouns are nearly twice as likely to condition absence as either other pronouns or noun phrases. Whether the token is are or is seems to have no effect in these models. Of the speaking contexts, the speech in North Carolina strongly predicts the presence of zero forms relative to the Detroit speech. The second model, the model which predicts both deletion and contraction, shows similar results for the linguistic constraints with some subtle differences. For following grammatical context, gonna remains the category with the highest probability of contraction, followed by V + ing, followed by the other two categories. Personal pronouns predict a higher likelihood of contraction, followed by other pronouns and finally noun phrases. Interestingly, the models predicts that contraction is more likely for is than for are. This contrasts with previous research that finds that contraction should be more likely for
are. (Rickford et al. 1991) For speech context, contraction is more likely in the Detroit speech than in any of the other speaking contexts.

These models provide evidence that contraction and deletion, as linguistic variables, carry significantly different social meanings. Typically, increasing rates of contraction have been associated with increasing informality of context. Contraction is not necessarily associated with a regional or racial identity. It’s interesting then that the speech in Detroit has the strongest probability of contraction, since Barber is speaking to a relatively unfamiliar audience. However, compared to the speaking contexts, Barber occupies a much less fixed role. Barber is not acting as president of an organization, nor as a preacher but instead as an invited speaker to a conference about political activism. It could be that Barber’s informality in this regard is intended to suggest a closeness to the audience with whom he shares political goals. In contrast, the results of the model predicting copula absence seem clearer. The zero form is strongly predicted by the speech in North Carolina where Barber is giving a speech to members of the NAACP. In contrast to contraction, copula absence is a strong racially coded linguistic variable. Barber’s greater use of zero copula forms in his speech in North Carolina can be seen as indicative of his attempting to claim an authentically black identity and as an insider within the black community generally. The stigmatized nature of the variable means that it is less available to claim in-group identity when Barber is speaking to a white or racially diverse audience. Barber’s use of this variable also signals familiarity to his audience and the vernacular nature of the specific variable means that it is likely discouraged in formal settings. The specific contexts in which Barber uses the zero copula form will be explored in greater detail in the qualitative analysis of the speeches.
Barber’s speech is variable across speaking contexts, even when he is performing rehearsed speeches. The nature of this variation is highly determined by the context of the speech and Barber’s role as speaker. The two variables in this analysis occupy two different areas of Barber’s linguistic system and carry significantly different social meanings. Nonetheless, both are available and useful for stance-taking identity work. Barber manipulates /ay/ glide weakening to index and mark a Southern identity and uses zero copula forms to index a Black identity. Broadly, the results of this analysis bear witness to the range of variation that is available for speakers to use and the range of meanings that linguistic variables can carry.

**FRAMING STRATEGIES, SPEAKING CONTEXT, AND SPEECH CONTENT**

Broadly speaking, the structure and content of each of the speeches is quite similar. Barber uses similar framing techniques in each of the speeches to problematize certain policies instituted at the federal and state level. Though Barber’s characterizations of the movement emphasize its diverse goals and members, Barber nevertheless links his movement to the civil rights movements of the 1960s with invocations of Martin Luther King Jr.’s name and the names of other prominent figures of the civil rights era including Rosa Parks, Emmett Till, Medger Evers, and other prominent black activists and figures. Barber’s invocation of Martin Luther King Jr. is particularly common and indeed the speech at Selma, Alabama is a commemoration of the march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965 in which King was a prominent figure. Barber emphasizes how the modern movement uses the same tactics employed by the civil rights movement of the past, calling attention to the strategy of civil disobedience by alluding to Henry David Thoreau by name. Oliver and Johnston argued that the civil rights movement of the 1960s utilized a frame of “rights” which emerged from legal battles engaged in by various actors. This rights framing was, “...picked up by other racial/ethnic movements and the women’s movement,
and diffused to gay rights, animal rights, abortion rights, fetal rights, and student rights” (Oliver and Johnston 2000: 4). Morris (2000) argues instead that the movement engaged in a framing process that centered justice and freedom, themes that emerged from the liberation theology of the black church. Generally, Barber engages the “rights” framing in order to connect the various issues covered by the movement. However, he places emphasis on moral duties and justice in some speaking contexts. Morris’ (2000) further suggests that the black church provides an ideology from which social movement actors can lift frames to apply to social problems, granting these frames moral legitimacy. Given this and his position within the church, it is logical that Barber’s speeches also contain a significant number of religious references. These references include biblical figures, anecdotes and aphorisms which center a worldview of liberation theology. Liberation theology is an espousal of Christian values that emphasizes the moral duty of adherents to address oppression in the material world. (The speech where each quote may be found is indicated by abbreviation of the state in which it was given.)

Isaiah said years ago woe unto those legislate evil and rob the poor of their rights. – NY

Psalm ninety four says who will rise up for me against the evildoers? That's a question god put on the lips of the psalmers. In a time of political oppression and systematic injustice who will dissent? Who will challenge what's going on? – AL

But we say to them, if we are leftists in fighting for justice and fairness and all people, then the bible and constitution are the Magna Carta of leftist documents. – MI
Barber uses religious references to associate himself with the church as an institution and to augment his framing of the movement as addressing not just social problems but a *moral crisis*. Barber explains this moral crisis by framing it in terms of actions committed by the North Carolina legislature and suggests that it is reflective of a broader political agenda in the United States.

Deny public education and attack teachers. Undermine public funding of public education and give it to private schools. Deny health care and Medicaid expansion, leave millions of poor people uninsured. Deny earned income tax credit. Deny unemployment, deny labor rights, deny LGBT rights, deny women's rights, deny immigrants' rights and hold a vicious rally against immigrant children when most of you come from immigrants yourself. Cut more taxes for the wealthy and then declare you don't have money for critical investments in America's infrastructure and in programs that uplift America and … then engage in the worst form of voter suppression since Jim Crow. – NY

By framing these issues as a “moral crisis,” Barber explicitly rejects the notion that the movement is aligned with a specific political ideology. Barber appeals to a sense of universal morality that he frames as apolitical. Furthermore, he distances the opposition he has faced in North Carolina from all Republicans by calling North Carolina legislators “extremists.” This framing strategy for establishing in-group and out-group identification establishes the boundaries of group membership (Taylor and Whittier 1992). In this case, the boundaries for group membership are quite inclusive and Barber continues to emphasize an *ideology of inclusion* for the movement.
There are some things that are too big for a liberal conservative conversation, there are some things that must be challenged because they are extreme, they are immoral, they're just wrong. – NY

This kind of agenda can't just be challenged however with a mere left-right debate or a conservative versus liberal debate. That's, that language is too puny. – MI

If we're gonna challenge extreme policies today, it won't happen with a left-right argument, it won't happen with a democrat versus republican argument but we need a deeper argument, an argument that goes deeper in the foundation of the souls and then elevates us. – AL

Barber’s use of this language reflects the movement’s coalitional nature and its multiplex goals. The phrase he uses to describe the coalition is “moral fusion movement.” He is explicit in his description of the movement as not specifically a black movement nor as a single-issue movement. Because the movement sometimes involves the emphasizing of difference between racial groups, it is important that issues are also framed as transcending race. This framing can maintain cohesion between personal identities and the collective identity of the movement (Snow and McAdam 2000).

…sometimes there are battles which are more than black and white. – NY

If we gonna pursue liberty we must have fairness in the criminal justice system and address the continuing inequalities in the system that impact black, brown, and poor white people. - NC
When somebody ask me is it race or class I say, “It is.” You really can't separate the two if you are going to have transformational politics in America. - *MI*

Crucially, Barber is a black man involved in a movement that is seeking support from whites and latinos as well as blacks, among others. His emphasis on the “fusional” might serve therefore to make the movement more appealing to whites with diverse interests such as LGBT rights, immigrants’ rights, worker’s rights, unemployment and poverty. The movement is rooted in the South and Barber does not shy away from focusing discussion on Southern states. Barber does not deny the movement’s origin and interest in the South even in his speeches in Michigan and New York.

…”somehow in the south they're so blinded by the southern strategy and old tricks of racism that many southern whites don't even realize that they're in the same boat as black people.” - *NC*

We need a moral movement with a Southern context that has some Northern connections. Lord, have mercy. - *NY*

…”we will not stop challenging our governor and our legislature of extremists who are once again engaging all over the south, particularly in interposition and nullification. - *AL*

Barber’s use of civil rights imagery combined with his awareness of the Southern context of the movement make it clear that he is conscious of his identity within the movement. Though the movement is a coalition, Barber’s identity is rooted in Southern Blackness which is made
clear through the content and style of his speeches. In the speech given in Detroit, Michigan, Barber directly calls out his southern background and his role as a preacher. In each of the four speeches, Barber employs elements of what has called the black preaching style. This style of speaking is marked by a variety of different linguistic features [see Britt (2011) for an overview of some of these features]. The style is also characterized by thematic features including joking, storytelling, biblical references, and call-and-response, among other. Barber uses most of these devices throughout each of his four speeches.

I don't know what Jewish people sing but I want you to sing with me a hymn we sing in the Christian faith… – call-and response - AL

…we must move forward together and declare we're not gon’ take one step back. Yes!
Somebody, somebody, that was home and goes by and … Say tell your neighbor!
Somebody somebody, has got to understand the soul of our country and our world is at stake. – call-and-response, repetition of words, phrases - NY

Now, as we come here to this convention, don't you ever forget what a state conference is about. I loved last night doing the wobble with some of y'all, even though I didn't wobble I just went whoa and went on home. – joking, storytelling - NC

Britt (2011:227) suggests that, “Preaching style emerges as a tool for the speakers in this study to connect their message with their African American audience and perhaps display their ethnic affiliations.” It is likely that Barber uses these stylistic elements to evoke and mark his
Black identity, yet his use of this style of speaking extends even to speeches where the audience is primarily white and about topics that span racial divides. Use of the style links Barber to a long-standing tradition within the black community as well as to his position as moral authority (Vaughn-Cooke 1972). It is also possible that the use of the black preaching style helps to link the Forward Together Moral Movement to the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. with whom the style is heavily associated (Wolfram et al. 2016).

The previous sections outline themes that are basically common to each of the four speeches. As suggested before, the four speeches share much in common both thematically and stylistically. Table 3 provides a list of the 25 most frequent words stems and their counts, in order from most common to least, excluding stop words or common function words e.g. the, a, and, etc. This table helps to give a sense of the similarity of the content of each of the speeches. Words in bold are in the top 50 most common of three or more speeches and words italicized are in the top 50 most common of two speeches. Topping the lists are words like god, rights, moral, need, people, state, these common words underscore Barber’s focus on the movement as an interconnected serious of grassroots movements which focus on civil rights and state governance. Differences between common words in each of the speeches can give us insight into how Barber tailors his speeches to different audiences.

The most common word in the speech in New York is god, and it contains unique words in the top 25 such as lord, jesus, and faith. This speech was given at Riverside Church, and Barber’s primarily role in this speech is that of a preacher. It is not surprising then that in this speech Barber more directly engages with religious language and religious themes. Though religious references are common throughout the four speeches, this speech has a more overt religious message, and in it, Barber emphasizes the need to “seek higher ground”.
God is the second most common word in the speech in Selma, Alabama and the fifth most common is rabbi. In this speech, given at a Jewish Temple in Selma, Alabama, Barber invokes a general religious theme but only directly refers to Jesus once. When he uses the word rabbi, he is very often directly addressing his speech to a rabbi present at the event and forms of direct address like this are very common across all of Barber’s speeches. He also often refers to Selma itself and its historic association with Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

Barber’s speech in Michigan is likely the least religious in content. Indeed, the conference in Detroit is addressed to general issues of left progressive activism in the United States more generally and Barber recognizes that in the contemporary United States, Christianity in particular has been associated with political conservatives. In this speech, he is more aware of a potential difference between his faith and the religious orientation of the audience, acknowledges this, and in fact frames it as a political advantage in some cases.

Whether you believe in Jesus eternally, you oughta at least believe in him historically. – MI

Oh god, let me- can I be a preacher for three minutes? – MI

You need somebody who is a person of faith to challenge the hypocrisy of faith and say to the religious right, ‘you really want a moral debate?’ – MI

Barber leans more heavily on the history of racial oppression in the United States and the political movement that challenged racial policy in the United States and the backlash such
movements faced. In this speech, Barber also directly identifies himself as “country.” He does so in a kind of self-deprecating way, possibly as a way to express humility rather than as an explicit claim of Southern identity.

I've been wondering why Nolan would extend an invitation to an old country boy like me. – MI

I'm old country preacher you might have to just back off a little bit [in reference to blowing out the microphone] – MI

This explicit mention of Barber’s rural Southern identity does not seem to have affected his use of the Southern marked linguistic variable /ay/. His patterning in this speech is not statistically different from the speeches in New York or North Carolina. This seems to be different from Barber’s pattern of copula absence in the speech in North Carolina. It could be that copula absence is more consciously available as a stylistic variable to mark identity and /ay/ patterning is more affected by speaking role, regional context and audience.

In his speech in North Carolina, given as President of the NAACP of North Carolina, Barber develops a theme centered on the phrase, “there is no time for foolishness.” The point of this speech is to establish a practical agenda to be implemented by NAACP members and member branches in order to develop the organization and achieve organizational goals. Barber thus argues that member organizations cannot waste time on frivolous matters and must be focused on growing the organization and mobilizing members to political action. Though the speech contains religious reference, they seem to be more implicit than the speeches in Alabama or New York. Among the most common words in this speech is gon, an elided form of gonna
somewhat common in dialects of AAVE (Labov et al. 1968). In fact, though the models used in the quantitative analysis do not make a distinction between the two forms, Rickford and Blake (1990) find that copula absence is more common before *gon* than before *gonna*. Qualitatively, in this speech, it is the use of this form that often follows an absent copula. For example, Barber presents an anecdote about a funeral at a black church in which he frequently uses *gon* without the use of the copula. An excerpt of this story is presented below with examples of copula absence in bold.

Let me tell you how it's gon go, some of **your relatives gon take off work** that day. They never took off work for you while you were living **but they gon take off that day**. **They gon make sure** they ride in that limousine today, the Toyota won't work then. Uhuhh, **they gon tell the preacher**, “Preacher you better preach my funeral, if you don't preach nothing else you better preach my funeral, but don't be long now.” And then after that's over, **they gon roll you down the aisle**. I don't know **they doing so much different stuff** now they might have a saxophone in front of you. The, the funeral directors might walk real slow but **they gon walk you out** and if they put you in the vestibule **they gon open you up** and **people gon come out there** and say Lord have mercy. - *NC*

This story is coded as an explicitly black experience, Barber prefaces the story by saying, “If it's a black church, let me tell you how it's [the funeral] gon go.” Barber is invoking a specifically racial story here and he is using his language to engender familiarity with the audience and authenticity in terms of racial identity. This story is part of a broader trend in which Barber more commonly shows copula absence when joking, storytelling or when directly addressing audience
members. The way in which Barber uses copula absence in this speech speaks to a difference between the two linguistic variables. This variable seems more affected by the content of Barber’s speech and seems to be more consciously manipulated.

These four speeches contain considerable similarities along with subtle differences that may help to explain how Barber uses his language to frame social issues in a way that resonates with each of his audiences. Furthermore, this qualitative analysis informs the kind of processes that can affect stylistic variation and the ways in which these processes are different for different linguistic variables. Copula absence is strongly associated with blackness and carries a strong negative association with both black and white speakers who might view it as “bad English.” Nonetheless, it is available to Barber as a way to claim an authentically Black identity and his usage of it suggests that he is in some way of aware of both its negative stigma and its positive in-group value. Monophthongization of /ay/ on the other hand does not seem to follow such a clear pattern. It certainly marks Southern identity, but it is not as obvious when and how Barber alters his pattern to make identity claims that aid in his framing of social problems.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that linguistic features are available for use in doing identity work in the service of augmenting frame resonance. Specifically, in this case study, I observed that two linguistic variables, /ay/ monophthongization and copula absence, show significant linguistic and social variation in the service of accentuating certain aspects of the identity of a prominent social movement figure, William Barber. These identity moves are agentic actions that are affected by audience racial configuration, speaking role, geographic region and the content of speeches, among other things. Barber’s linguistic behaviors help to establish himself as an authentic, credible and believable frame deployer.
The linguistic findings in this paper are consistent with previous studies that examined the linguistic constraints for each of the two variables. Though nearly all previous studies analyzed spontaneous speech, the results of these previous studies is mostly congruous with the findings of this study which analyzed rehearsed speeches (Rickford et al. 1991; Fridland 2003). The linguistic variation found and analyzed in this study is not random, neither in terms of linguistic constraints nor the social meanings of those variables. Previous research has shown how speaking context and audience (either real or perceived) can affect a speaker’s language use (Bell 1984; Wolfram et al. 2016). The current study corroborates these findings and contributes to the literature by connecting linguistic variation to social movement framing. In particular, the mixed methods analysis in this paper allow us to link linguistic variation to particular kinds of stance taking activities that contribute to identity formation. In turn, the performance of identity contributes to the deployment and reception of frames.

I argue that Barber alters his speech to align his identity with his perceived audience in complex ways. Specifically, in the speech in Selma, Alabama, Barber alters his linguistic patterns in very specific ways to perform a Southern identity. In doing so, Barber links himself to the Southern roots of the civil rights movement that he is drawing explicit reference to. In Barber’s speech before the NAACP in North Carolina, he employs linguistic strategies through which he enacts a black identity. Furthermore, the use of this linguistic variable accompanies rhetorical strategies which serve to establish Barber’s experiences as authentic. This research highlights the link between the variety and possible linguistic variation and the ways in which that variation is constrained by a myriad of factors.

Crucially, this paper provides a link between previous linguistic literature on identity and language variation and sociological literature on collective identity and framing. Barber relies on
“rights” framing that originated with the civil rights movement and has been applied to a broad swath of social issues (Oliver and Johnston 2000). This framing represents an inclusive movement ideology which seeks to address a variety of issues through legal channels. Barber’s framing links together women’s right, immigrants’ rights, and workers’ rights, among others. The movement is organized around a coalitional participants with a range of goals and issues and as a result the language of the movement must remain broad. I argue that Barber’s speech is indicative of a somewhat fluid identity which is beneficial in connecting to audiences that bring with them a broad range of identities and interests.

In this paper, I emphasize agency with the understanding that agency is constrained by structural factors. That William Barber lives in a society where he is racialized as black is unquestionable. Both the linguistic features analyzed in this study carry significant stigma in mainstream society. Yet both features also carry strong in-group association with their communities and can therefore be used to mark an in-group identity, even when a figure is speaking in an official capacity. This case study contributes to our understanding of linguistic variation and their connection to framing processes. Future research could examine the link between language use and framing strategies in a range of movements with different goals and interests. Furthermore, future research should seek to expand the linguistic variables being studied to elucidate their value in the formation of identities.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX
Figure 1. Plot of Mean Nucleus and Glide Measurements by Speech and Phonetic Environment
Figure 2. Boxplot of Euclidean Distance by Speech and Phonetic Environment
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<td>5.338</td>
<td>-2.858</td>
<td>-16.770</td>
<td>-25.655*</td>
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<td>29.450**</td>
<td>18.775</td>
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<td>-68.244***</td>
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<td>-68.874***</td>
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<td>473.806***</td>
<td>460.698***</td>
<td>482.070***</td>
<td>458.177***</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(64.355)</td>
<td>(63.569)</td>
<td>(63.383)</td>
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<td>21.267</td>
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<td>(23.925)</td>
<td>(22.740)</td>
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<td>(26.213)</td>
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<td>(37.738)</td>
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<td>132.795***</td>
<td>137.592***</td>
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<td>0.398</td>
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<td>Adjusted R²</td>
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<td>-8,664.750</td>
<td>-8,542.824</td>
<td>-8,507.882</td>
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<td>Akaike Inf. Crit.</td>
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<td>17,347.500</td>
<td>17,101.650</td>
<td>17,037.760</td>
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<td>17,094.850</td>
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<td>Residual Std. Error</td>
<td>171.214 (df = 1323)</td>
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<tr>
<td>F Statistic</td>
<td>437.124***</td>
<td>(df = 2; 1323)</td>
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*p<0.1       **p<0.5       ***p<0.01
Table 2. Logistic Regression Models predicting Copula Absence

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<th>Zero Copula Only</th>
<th>Contraction Overall</th>
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<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent variable:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Token - Singular</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.682)</td>
<td>(0.409)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subject - Other Pronoun</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>3.502***</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.743)</td>
<td>(0.352)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subject - Personal Pronoun</td>
<td>1.957***</td>
<td>5.505***</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.758)</td>
<td>(0.520)</td>
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<td>Following Grammatical Category - Misc.</td>
<td>-3.342***</td>
<td>-3.784***</td>
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<td>(0.564)</td>
<td>(0.836)</td>
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<td>Noun Phrase</td>
<td>-2.663***</td>
<td>-3.754***</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.630)</td>
<td>(0.844)</td>
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<td>Verb + ING</td>
<td>-4.250***</td>
<td>-2.474***</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.863)</td>
<td>(0.879)</td>
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<td>Speech - North Carolina</td>
<td>2.768***</td>
<td>-0.918***</td>
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<td>(0.289)</td>
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<td>(0.402)</td>
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<td>(0.903)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Log Likelihood</strong></td>
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<td>178.840</td>
<td>588.089</td>
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*Note:*

*p<0.1*  
**p<0.05**  
***p<0.01***
Table 3. 25 Most Common Word Stems and their Absolute Counts by Speech

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<th>Count</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<td>rights</td>
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<td>need</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>people</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>moral</td>
<td>81</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>get</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>together</td>
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