Received: 10 February 2024 | Accepted: 17 October 2024

DOI: 10.1111/jola.70008

Linguistic Anthropology

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

"*And it just becomes queer slang*": Race, linguistic innovation, and appropriation within trans communities in the US South

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Funding information
National Science Foundation, Grant/Award Number: Linguistics DDRI #2116356

Abstract

This article examines how seven transgender South Carolinians drew on racialized conceptions of linguistic ownership during metalinguistic discussion about queer and trans language during ethnographic interviews collected between 2020 and 2022. I explore how participants refer to distinct lexical sets when referring to "Black queer/trans language" and "white queer/trans language." When talking about Black trans language, participants primarily referred to elements of "slang" (e.g., *sis*, *queen*), tying Blackness to informality and "coolness", yet when describing white trans language, they referred to gender-referent terminology (e.g., *demigender*, *nonbinary*, and other "micro labels"), locating this language in relation to processes of gatekeeping and to ideologies of correctness and standardness. I argue that this distinction reflects broader ideologies of race and language, according to which Black communities are recognized for their linguistic cultural influence, while whiteness remains a prevalent, structuring power in debates about trans language.

Resumen

Este artículo examina cómo siete personas transgéneros de Carolina del Sur utilizaron las concepciones racializadas de la propiedad lingüística durante las discusiones metalingüísticas sobre el lenguaje queer y trans durante entrevistas etnográficas grabadas entre 2020 y 2022. Exploro cómo los participantes se refieren a conjuntos

léxicos distintos al referirse al "lenguaje queer/trans afroamericano" y al "lenguaje queer/trans blanco." Al hablar sobre el lenguaje trans afroamericano, los participantes se referían principalmente a los elementos de "jerga" (por ejemplo, *sis*, *queen*), asociando la negritud con la informalidad y "coolness", mientras que, al describir el lenguaje trans blanco, se referían a la terminología relacionada con las referencias del género (por ejemplo, *demigender, nonbinary,* y otras "micro labels"), situando este lenguaje en relación con los procesos de exclusión y las ideologías de corrección y estandarización. Argumento que esta distinción refleja ideologías más amplias de la raza y el lenguaje, según las cuales las comunidades afroamericanas son reconocidas por su influencia cultural lingüística, mientras que la blancura sigue siendo un poder prevalente y dominante en los debates sobre el lenguaje trans.

INTRODUCTION

Mainstream US media representations of trans people and communities often reproduce a homogeneous, white image of transness. Historically, many mainstream representations of trans life have focused on individual white trans people, with figures such as Christine Jorgenson, a white trans woman widely depicted in the 1950s media as one of the first people to have gender reassignment surgery, and contemporary figures such as Caitlyn Jenner, formulating the representation of a legible transgender subject in the public imagination (Skidmore, 2011). Within broader institutional and community contexts in the United States, whiteness is an exclusionary and organizing force. For example, many LGBTQ+ organizations remain overwhelmingly staffed by white people (Ward, 2008), and trans students of color in higher education often face barriers to access presented by educational norms of whiteness (Stewart & Nicolazzo, 2018). As Bailey (2014) points out, "Black LGBT people are largely excluded from or marginalized within gay spaces, such as gay neighborhoods and bars and clubs that are marked as white, and from Black heteronormative spaces" (490).

However, in the mid-to-late 2010s, with the "transgender tipping point," representations of Black trans women such as Laverne Cox and Janet Mock became prevalent in mainstream media, coinciding with increased effort in mainstream LGBTQ+ spaces to recognize and uplift the work of activists of color, especially Black activists, who have historically been erased or left out of documentation about the history of LGBTQ+ activism. Yet, in these spaces, recognition of the experiences of trans people of color has frequently been expressed with an emphasis on the violence and death faced specifically by trans women of color, often as a rhetorical strategy in advocating for legal rights and protections for transgender people. As Stryker and Aizura (2013) argue, the "process of value extraction from bodies of color" functions in the "production of transgender whiteness" (see also Bey, 2017; Puar, 2015). In the introduction to the *Transgender Studies Quarterly* Special Issue, *We Got Issues: Toward a Black Trans*/Studies*, Ellison et al. (2017) argue that "though the popular representation of fabulousness and the crises of the trans subject are represented primarily by Black transwomen and transwomen of color, the field of transgender studies, like other fields, seems

to use this Black subject as a springboard to move toward other things, presumably white things" (162).

To understand the impact of whiteness in trans spaces, it is crucial to explore not only the representation and presence of white *people* but also the centering of whiteness as "an ideological and epistemological perspective that consolidates and promotes hegemony and normalization across various interlocking systems of domination and oppression to further white supremacy" (Stewart & Nicolazzo, 2018, 134–35). In other words, whiteness, as a perspective, controls what is understood as "normal" or "acceptable" to the white listening subject (Flores & Rosa, 2015). Even trans linguistic scholarship has continued to focus on the experiences of white trans communities (see the reflection in Zimman, 2020), as representations of an unmarked "trans language" are often representations of w*hite* trans language, reflecting primarily "the silences in which whiteness operates" (Vidal-Ortiz, 2014, 264). However, emerging trans linguistic scholarship works to address these erasures by highlighting the linguistic practices of trans people of color as well as exclusions within the discipline (Bucholtz & Miles-Hercules, 2021; Hudley et al., 2024; Miles-Hercules, 2022; Steele, 2019, 2022).

In this paper, I analyze moments of metalinguistic commentary across six interviews in which three Black participants, three white participants, and one Latinx participant deployed racialized conceptions of queer and trans linguistic innovation and appropriation. These interviews took place within a social context featuring growing awareness of processes of white linguistic appropriation from African American English into non-Black communities (Hill, 2008; Lopez, 2014). Within queer communities, discussions of linguistic appropriation often attend to how language from Black queer and trans communities is appropriated by non-Black queer people, eventually making its way into broader mainstream usage. In these interviews, participants characterized Black and white trans communities as respectively innovating distinct lexical sets. On the one hand, Black queer and trans communities were presented as originators of "queer slang," which was characterized as containing features appropriated from African American English (AAE). On the other hand, white trans communities were described as originating an array of terms, or "micro labels," that described gender diversity. I suggest that these metalinguistic accounts of lexical origin reproduced ideologies of language and race that circulate widely in US public space: Black language forms were associated with youth culture, slang, and "coolness" (Bucholtz, 1999; Chun, 2013; Rickford & Rickford, 2000; Smitherman, 2000), whereas white language forms were linked to an imagined standard and normativity (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Hill, 1998, 2008; Trechter & Bucholtz, 2001).

SLANG AND LINGUISTIC APPROPRIATION

Typically referring to a set of lexical features, slang is contrasted, both in scholarship and in colloquial uses of the term, with technical vocabulary, jargon, or formal linguistic forms and is often associated with quick shifts in usage and popularity. In her classic study of the slang of American college students, Elbe (1996) defines slang as "an ever-changing set of colloquial words and phrases that speakers use to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness" (11). In this, slang can be used as a tool to mark distinct subcultures and social hierarchies and is often associated with the in-group language of young people. Scholars have additionally focused on the types of social moves that slang can be used to achieve, such as marking informality, playfulness, or irreverence (Roth-Gordon, 2020).

Roth-Gordon (2020) argues that we must consider not only "which words, phrases, or discourse patterns are considered slang but also what the consequences and social outcomes are for different users of this marked speech style" (8). How ideologies of slang

shape understandings of a group and shape social outcomes has been of interest to linguistic anthropologists, because, as Agha (2015) notes, "ideologies of slang typically convert slang repertoires into systems of stereotypical social indexicals" (308). Through this, slang repertoires become indexically linked to specific personae, and thus determine which uses of slang are ideologically valued or devalued. In many cases, slang is devalued and seen as unprofessional, and not prestigious, associated with social stigma, taboo language, or "a lack of dignity" (Dumas & Lighter, 1978). However, in other cases, slang is a tool for demonstrating in-group community identity, what is often considered *covert prestige* (Labov, 1972). Within the American context, slang is also racialized (Bucholtz, 2010). For instance, Reyes' (2005) study of Asian American teens demonstrates that some of the teens understood "racialized slang as belonging to African Americans," linking the use of such forms to social capital and signaling participation in urban youth subculture (512).

In this paper, I show how these two issues—both what is considered slang and how there are differing social consequences for different users—are interrelated. In fact, though participants connected both Black and white trans communities to linguistic innovation, only Black trans language was characterized as "slang." Within broader discourses about trans language innovation, the forms that emerge from white trans communities are frequently connected with youth language and online language, both of which are often considered slang; yet, in these interviews, participants did not refer to them as such.

Further, as participants discussed the use, uptake, and spread of innovative forms, some participants demonstrated an awareness of the processes of linguistic appropriation at play. Linguistic appropriation is hardly a new topic in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, as researchers have long been interested in what it means for certain linguistic forms to "belong" to specific communities and what happens when groups use forms that are seen as not belonging to them. Some of this work builds on the notion of *crossing*, which Rampton (1995) proposed based on his observations of multiracial friend groups of Afro-Caribbean, Indian, and Anglo students in England. While he did not specifically refer to crossing as a form of appropriation, as he viewed these practices as contributing to an urban "multiracial vernacular" that was important in the creation of a youth community, his attention to the use of language that was not "straightforwardly" one's own parallels scholarship on linguistic appropriation.

In contrast to Rampton's view of crossing in the United Kingdom, scholars in the United States have tended to take a more critical perspective, noting how racialized linguistic appropriation contributes to the reproduction of racial stereotypes. Ronkin and Karn (1999) demonstrated how uses of "Mock Ebonics" in online spaces upheld and circulated the racist stereotypes that frame AAE as an "incorrect" or "deficient" form of standardized English. Additionally, research has noted that the use of AAE in practices of youth masculinity among white boys (Bucholtz, 1999) and Korean Americans (Chun, 2001) can implicitly link Blackness with racist tropes of hypermasculinity. In other cases, the uptake of African American English by Asian American youth can create indexical links between AAE and urban youth identity (Reyes, 2005) or function to contest stereotypes of Asian masculinity (Chun, 2001, 2013).

Scholarship on appropriation has further demonstrated how the commodification of Black cultural and semiotic resources such as hairstyles, clothing, and language leads to the favorable uptake of such forms when they are used by non-Black people. Linguistic analyses of appropriation within mediatized contexts have addressed the use of African American English by non-Black media figures, including characters in movies (Bucholtz & Lopez, 2011; Lopez, 2014), YouTube personalities (Chun, 2013), white emcees in rap and hip hop (Alim, 2009), and other high-profile white performers like Iggy Azalea (Eberhardt & Freeman, 2015). These performances are often successful in using AAE forms to index

"coolness," co-opting forms when they bring advantages in the marketplace, at the same time that they reify negative stereotypes of Blackness. As E. Patrick Johnson writes:

> History demonstrates that cultural usurpation has been a common practice of white Americans and their relation to art forms not their own. In many instances, whites exoticize and/or fetishize blackness, what bell hooks calls "eating the other." Thus, when white-identified subjects perform "black" signifiers—normative or otherwise—the effect is always already entangled in the discourse of otherness; the historical weight of white skin privilege necessarily (2003, 4).

The appropriation of forms of African American Language by white communities constitutes one form of "eating the other" (hooks, 1992), as white speakers commodify, exoticize, and value these forms, yet do not receive the pushback or criticism that Black speakers face for using the same forms. Smitherman (2000) also addresses this double standard: "whites pay no dues, but reap the psychological, social, and economic benefits of a language and culture born out of a struggle and hard times" (21). Despite these critiques of processes of appropriation, Hill (2008) notes that "African American English is the single most important source for new slang (and, eventually, unmarked everyday colloquial usage)" (169).

Discussions about the use, appropriation, and commodification of African American English specifically within LGBTQ+ communities are particularly salient to my participants. Forms originating in African American English are often utilized in the performance of various "gay" styles. In many cases, the appropriation of AAE forms by gay men draws on stereotypes of Black women's speech, particularly performances of "sassiness." For example, Ilbury's (2020) study of white British gay men on Twitter explores how gay men's unsystematic uses of AAE features draw on stereotypes of Black womanhood to index "fierceness" or "sassiness" through an "essentialized imagining of the 'Black Other'" (260).

Barrett's (1999, 2017) work has explored performances of styleswitching by African American Drag Queens, highlighting the ways in which Black drag performers index polyphonous identity through the use of a "white woman style" in their drag acts. Studies of communities of drag queens have also investigated the use of AAE by non-Black drag artists. Kontovas (2023) addresses how the white drag queens on RuPaul's Drag Race use AAE to develop rapport with other queens on the show. However, beyond rapport building, these performances demonstrate that AAE is utilized to the benefit of white queens in commodified performances. Mann (2011) analyzes the linguistic performance of Suzanne, a white drag queen, who is a member of a predominately African American drag show cast. Mann argues that Suzanne's styleswitching and use of AAE is a way for her to attend to different interlocutors and to show membership within the cast. However, Mann's analysis focuses on Suzanne's linguistic performance and does not attend to the uptake of the African American queens in the cast or consider the social effects of this appropriation. Like Suzanne, Kelly, a white drag queen in McCleary's (2023) study, reports that she uses AAE during her drag performance as a way to "appeas[e] their audiences and establish[] community language norms" (163), though she says she would not use AAE outside of the performance context. McCleary importantly contrasts Kelly's rationalizations of her styleswiching linguistic performance with commentary from two queens of color, Foxxi and Gizele, who highlight the importance of recognizing the origins of linguistic forms that have been taken up within drag communities and critique caricatured performances of AAE.

While scholars have long been interested in tracing these processes of crossing, borrowing, and appropriation, there has been emergent mainstream discussion about appropriation within the United States, suggesting an increasing flow of discourse between scholarly and popular critiques of appropriation practices (Brennan et al., 2024; Chun, 2021). Popular discussions of cultural appropriation range from addressing the use of indigenous styles

of dress as costumes and sports team mascots to critiques of white people in the United States wearing clothing or hairstyles that are not from their cultural heritage (e.g., dreadlocks, saris). However, a growing contingent of discussions about cultural appropriation focuses on elements of linguistic appropriation, such as the use of African American English by white Americans. There has been a growing awareness of African American English and commentary on linguistic appropriation in mainstream public spaces, likely happening in tandem with and facilitated by the Black Lives Matter Movement and broader critiques of anti-Black racism, which garnered increased public attention following the murder of George Floyd in May 2020. For some of the white participants in this project, demonstrating awareness of processes of linguistic appropriation also functions to signal awareness of broader anti-racist social projects.

Further, this increase in mainstream awareness may also have been shaped by the rise in popularity of the online communities such as Black Twitter (Smalls, 2018) and TikTok, in which conversations about appropriation have been prominent (Ayanna, 2021). In some cases, Black queer people have created educational YouTube or TikTok content discussing the origins of linguistic forms that have undergone "indexical bleaching" (Bucholtz, 2010; Squires, 2014) to be thought of as a racially unmarked "youth language" or "queer language." In many of these videos and posts, the variety is often referred to as *AAVE*. Linguists typically use *AAVE* to refer to a variety used among urban, working-class African American communities with particular features, often understood as part of broader *African American Language* or *Black Language* practices (King, 2020). However, in many of the comments made by my participants, they take up and use the term *AAVE* to refer to the linguistic practices of Black communities more generally, potentially reflecting practices from these online spaces.

METHODS AND PARTICIPANTS

This paper draws on ethnographic research and interviews with trans individuals from South Carolina. Despite mainstream discourses that frame queer and trans life as primarily existing in large, coastal urban centers in the United States, a growing body of research explores how trans people have chosen to stay and make their lives in the US South (Abelson, 2019; Rogers, 2020). Nevertheless, while resources have been increasing for trans people in South Carolina over the past decade, many trans people remain isolated with overt homophobia and transphobia, barriers to healthcare, and threats to safety in ways that may be palpably different from other regions of the United States (Barton, 2012; Griffin et al., 2019).

While living in South Carolina from 2017 to 2023, I attended local community events and groups for transgender and nonbinary people, and I became familiar with groups in other regions of the state via connections with local activists and advocates. Between 2020 and 2022, I conducted 20 group and individual interviews[1] with 41 trans individuals across the state. When recruiting participants, I encouraged people to sign up for an interview with their friends in order to elicit more casual in-group conversations. However, this was not always possible, and many of the interviews included people who had little-to-no familiarity with the others present.

Recruitment for the interviews began in the summer of 2020, during which most in-person community events had moved online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I circulated a recruitment flyer on email listservs, Facebook groups, GroupMe chats, and Discord servers of various organizations for transgender people across South Carolina that I had connected with in-person prior to 2020, including support groups, university-based trans student organizations, and advocacy and activist groups. Additional recruitment continued with a snowball sampling method, with interviewees passing on information to other trans individuals in their

networks, both in-person and online. Due to COVID-19 precautions, all the interviews took place via Zoom; interviews lasted between an hour and an hour and half, and participants were compensated $20 for their time and expertise.[2] While online interviews allowed for COVID safety precautions, this method meant that all participants had to have consistent access to computer technology and internet access, which reproduces an ongoing issue in academic research about trans communities that relies on subjects with access to computer technology (cf. Reisner et al., 2014). Recruiting via these networks meant that participants were generally already connected to the same kinds of communicative networks; therefore, these findings are situated within English-speaking trans communities across South Carolina that have access to computer technology.

At the time of the interviews, 39 of the participants were living in South Carolina, while 2 participants had lived there for significant portions of their lives but had recently moved away. Participants ranged from 19 to 69 years old, with a median age of 25. My methods of online recruitment and interviewing influenced the demographics of people who participated, skewing toward younger participants. The participants had a wide range of genders, with participants identifying as nonbinary/genderqueer/genderfluid (16), trans man/male (14), trans woman/female (8), and other (3). I am also a trans person, and I had met many of the participants through local trans groups and at community events. With the interviews consisting of all trans participants and myself, a trans researcher, it is likely that participants felt comfortable sharing ideas and reflections that they might not talk about in front of cis participants and researchers.

The 41 interview participants identified their race in an open-ended pre-interview survey. In this survey, 27 (65%) labeled their race as white or Caucasian, 8 (19%) as Black or African American, 3 (7%) as Hispanic or Latinx, 1 (2%) as Asian American, and 2 (4%) as bi-racial or multi-racial. While the group interviews often had participants of various racial and ethnic backgrounds, in all the group interviews there was at least one white participant present in the space. Since I, a white researcher, was present in both the group and one-on-one interviews, my racial positionality likely shaped the type of discussions that emerged and what participants felt comfortable sharing, further reifying norms of trans spaces as also white spaces.

A brief description of the racial demographics of South Carolina will help to situate my interviews and participants. In the interviews, discourses of race most commonly addressed Blackness and whiteness, though other racial and ethnic identities were sometimes brought up, typically by people talking about their personal experiences (e.g., a Brazilian participant describing their experiences as a Latinx person). Racial discourses reflected ideologies of race in the United States, and in the South particularly, which often conceptualize race along a Black/White binary (Pereat, 1998). While the US South is home to communities of other racialized minorities, histories of slavery, segregation, and anti-Black racism in the region make this racialized binary highly salient. Further, this set of participants resides in a state where the majority of residents identify as either white or Black; according to the 2020 US Census, out of a population of five million in South Carolina, 63.4% identified their race as white alone and 25.0% as Black alone. Other racial groups were significantly smaller, with 1.8% identifying as Asian alone; 0.5% as American Indian and Alaska Native alone; and 5.8% as two or more races. Additionally, 6.9% of the South Carolina population identified their ethnicity as Hispanic/Latino. Although these categories cannot capture the complexity of racial identities, they give a general sense of why categories of Blackness and whiteness might be salient for the participants in my interviews.

Trans experiences are likely also to be shaped by the specific racial demographics of trans communities within the state. According to a 2016 Williams Institute Report on *Race and Ethnicity of Adults Who Identify as Transgender in The United States* (Flores et al., 2016), an estimated 56% of the transgender-identified adults in South Carolina are

TABLE 1 Estimated percentage of the population by race and ethnicity for the Adult General Population and transgender-identified adults in South Carolina (Williams Institute 2016).[a]

Race	Adult general population (%)	Transgender-identified adults (%)
white, non-Hispanic	67	56
African-American or Black, non-Hispanic	26	35
Hispanic or Latino	4	6
Other Race or Ethnicity	3	3

[a]The "Adult General Population" data represented here generally aligns with the data presented by the 2020 US Census. However, given the different collection years as well as the distinct racial categorizations used by the US Census and the Williams Institute Report, each data set reports slightly different percentages of racial demographics within the state of South Carolina.

white, non-Hispanic, while an estimated 67% of the Adult General Population is white, non-Hispanic. Additionally, the report estimates that 35% of transgender-identified adults in South Carolina are Black, non-Hispanic, while 26% of the adult general population is Black, non-Hispanic (see Table 1).

Collecting demographic data about transgender populations remain difficult due to continued stigma regarding being out as trans and survey questions that inadequately offer gender options for transgender and nonbinary people. However, these figures can give a sense of the general distribution of trans people across various racial categories in South Carolina.

The interviews focused on several topics: participants' backgrounds and experiences within trans communities, participants' experiences with language about transgender identities, and participants' beliefs about their own and others' language practices. In this last topic, I asked questions about disputes and debates regarding language within trans communities, which often elicited discussion concerning in-group debates about terminology. The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed for a balance between predefined questions and the emergence of additional topics and insights from the participants during the discussion.

I transcribed the interviews and coded them in NVivo for metalinguistic evaluations of community language practices. I focus this analysis on metalinguistic commentary that occurs during "conscious native-speaker explanations of appropriate language behavior" (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1998, 58). Linguistic practices have important implications for trans people, as trans people on one hand use language as a means to acquire accurate and affirming ways to describe the self, while on the other hand must navigate social identities in the context of labels imposed by others (Crowley, 2024). Because of the saliency of language for trans people, there is abundant discussion about language within transgender communities.

In the interview guide, I did not pose a question that explicitly asked the participants about race; however, if the topic was raised by participants, in some cases I would pose follow-up questions. The focus of this paper is the explicit discussion about issues of race, racism, and appropriation that emerged in 6 of the 20 interviews. In these instances, reflections on race and racism emerged in relation to the personal experiences of Black and African American participants and a non-Black Latinx participant, as well as some reflections on privilege by white participants. The infrequency of race being explicitly raised as a topic of discussion could be due to a variety of factors: perhaps the participants did not think I (as the researcher) would find it relevant as it was not an explicit question, or they thought they might be judged in some way for bringing up race, or perhaps participants of

TABLE 2 Participants (organized alphabetically[a]).

Name	Pronouns	Gender	Age	Race/ethnicity	Interview #
Elias	He/him	Nonbinary, trans, genderqueer	20	Latino/Brasilian[b]	3
Fredd	He/him	Male	56	African-American	17
Jane	She/her	Transgender woman	23	white	2
Kamau	They/he	Transmasculine	29	Black	20
Makia	She/her	Transsexual, female	27	Black, Afro-Caribbean	19
Rickie	He/him and they/them	Nonbinary, genderfluid	22	white	8
Rosemary	They/them	Nonbinary, trans	21	white	2

[a]Pseudonyms were chosen by the participants during the interview process.
[b]I maintain the spelling provided by the participant on the pre-interview demographic survey.

color did not feel safe discussing the topic with white people in the space. Despite the fact that these explicit metalinguistic discussions occurred in only a minority of interviews, they provide a look into how these participants conceptualize debates about language and race within transgender communities. In this paper, I specifically analyze examples from seven participants (Table 2) across six interviews.

In an effort to attend to the experiences of Black trans people, who are historically underrepresented in trans linguistic work as well as a minority in my participant pool, in this analysis I pay particular attention to the contributions of Black trans participants throughout the interviews. I analyze reflections from three Black participants, three white participants, and one Latino[3] participant across the six interviews. First, I turn to how participants describe Black queer and trans language and innovation, and then explore how they describe white queer and trans language.

BLACK COMMUNITIES AS INNOVATORS OF "QUEER SLANG"

In this section, I highlight the different ways in which participants discursively oriented to Black queer and trans people and communities as innovators of "queer slang." In a one-on-one interview, Makia (she/her), a Black trans woman, and I discussed at length issues of racism in queer communities as well as processes of linguistic and cultural appropriation. In this moment, she described her awareness of how "Black queer and trans AAVE is seen as a currency for cool," specific narrating a moment where the racist double standard, according to which white youth are cool for using this linguistic register but Black people are told *not* to use it, becomes apparent (Example 1).

Example 1. "*AAVE is now seen as like white youth culture*" (see Appendix for transcription conventions).

Makia (she/her)—Interview 19		
1	Makia:	and the way that it *circulates* as this like curr-
2		and Toni Morrison wrote a lot about this in *Playing In The Dark*
3		about like how Blackness is arbiter of like *coo::l*.
4		and like um- in so like the way that Black trans and queer AAVE is like seen as a currency for like *cool* in *youth*

[lines removed where Makia talks about AAVE on social media]	
9	and there was like a really interesting tweet that I saw the other da:y
10	where someone mentioned like how they was- like someone- like they are a Black queer person and like was told by someone
11	like you need to grow up and like stop using like like *youth sla:ng*.
12	while like they were just like engaging in their normal like speech practices?
13	because too many folks now- dominant society-
14	like Black queer and trans AAVE is now seen as like, *white youth culture*:.
15	so yeah it's a lot.

Drawing on Toni Morrison's work in *Playing in the Dark*, Makia highlighted the commodification of AAVE, describing how African American language features have become "currency for cool" (Line 4). Makia then described an example of how lack of awareness about African American linguistic practices in the mainstream leads to Black people's own variety being dismissed as unprofessional or simply "youth slang" (Lines 11–15). Reflecting on this double standard, Smitherman and Alim note that "there is a multi-billion-dollar industry based around the crossover of Black Language and Culture while at the same time, there is continued underdevelopment and deterioration among the people whose genius produces the innovative, dynamic cultural phenomenon of African American Language and Culture" (2021, 120). Crucially, in addition to the uptake of African American linguistic features by white communities without recognition or attribution, there are uneven material impacts for people who use those forms. For Makia, it is crucial that white queer and trans communities recognize the impact that linguistic appropriation has, as forms of African American English are seen as valuable "currency" for white queer people yet are criticized when used by Black people.

In several cases, white participants also interactionally deployed their knowledge of processes of appropriation. Some of these reflections demonstrated awareness of the process of language borrowing and appropriation, characterizing, in their view, how language moves through communities. One particular instance (Example 2) of this is when Rickie (he/they), a white nonbinary trans person, described the movement of linguistic forms from "the gay community" (Line 2) to "the mainstream" (Line 4).

This moment occurred in an interview which included five participants: one Black participant, three white participants, one Latinx participant, and me, a white interviewer. The conversation had begun by focusing on various identity labels that participants used to describe themselves, and some participants discussed the terms *butch* and *femme*. Two participants, Elias and Rickie, described seeing *butch* and *femme* used outside of queer communities in ways that they felt were misuses of the terms. I followed up by asking if there were *other* terms that they felt were misused when taken up outside of queer communities. Rickie, who is white, responded.

Example 2. "A lot that's been removed from its original context."

Rickie (he/they)— Interview 8		
1	Rickie:	words specific to like gender and sexuality?
2		because there's a lot of (.) there's a lot that's removed from the gay community
3		in particularly like the Black gay community hhh
4		that gets thrown into *main*stream like
5		and then used- and then used to death on Twitter: hhh

6	it's like no::: that's not what these things-
7	and a lot of it's like from- some of it's from *ballroom* culture in particular
8	I think a lot of *that's* been removed from its original context

Here, Rickie traced their understandings of where language comes from and how it moves. They addressed the ways language travels through various marginalized communities into the "mainstream." In this case, the term "mainstream" is likely referencing a move into predominantly non-queer white spaces and online spaces such as Twitter (Line 5). His explanation gives a sense of how categories are imagined, with language moving in a trajectory from one group to another (see Figure 1).

Interestingly, Rickie was primarily working to trace the movement of words from (racially unmarked) gay communities (Line 2) into the mainstream. However, they immediately backtracked and respecified (Line 3), noting these linguistic features emerge and are used within *Black* gay communities and the Ballroom scene (Line 7). This correction interactionally served as a move to demonstrate Rickie's awareness of the current discourses about recognizing the origins of linguistic features that come from African American Language. Rickie's representation, as illustrated in Figure 1, provides a commonly circulated, if simplistic, representation of language spread.

While Rickie pointed to the origin of these linguistic forms within Black gay communities, it is from the broader imagined "gay community" that this language is then "thrown into [the] mainstream" (Line 5), or taken up by non-queer communities. Rickie linked the temporal steps from mainstream usage to eventual overuse within *online* communities such as Twitter as the crux of the problem (rather than the appropriation by white communities). Rickie's description of these moves used various passive constructions regarding who exactly the agents of appropriation are. He noted that "there's a lot that's removed" (Line 2) "that gets thrown into the mainstream" (Line 4) and "a lot of that's been removed" (Line 8), without saying *who* is doing the removing and the throwing. In this interaction within a group of trans people of various racial backgrounds, Rickie signaled their knowledge of the appropriation of linguistic features from Black communities, yet their description of the processes functioned to obfuscate white queer and trans people as agents in the process of appropriation.

Whereas Rickie primarily focused on how language from gay communities was taken into the "mainstream" and then "used to death" (Line 5), or overused, other participants did primarily focus on the appropriation of African American English by white people *within* queer communities. In another interview, two participants (Example 3), Rosemary (they/them), a white nonbinary transmasculine person, and Jane (she/her), a white trans woman, discussed the "co-option" of "AAVE slang" or "Black slang" within queer communities. The conversation had moved to a discussion of words used within queer communities that the participants "didn't like," such as slurs. I asked the participants if there were any other terms

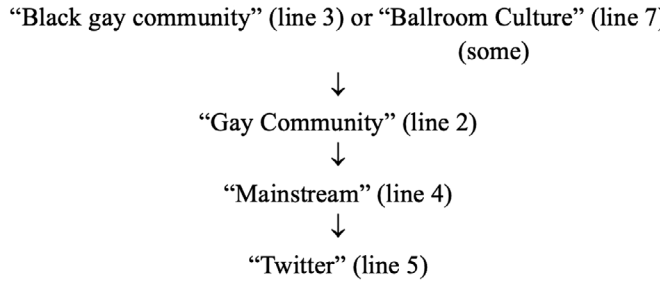

FIGURE 1 A representation of Rickie's imagined trajectory of language across communities.

that they felt that people within queer communities should not use, to which Rosemary responded: "any co-option of AAVE slang."

Example 3. "A huge problem with Black slang being co-opted."

Rosemary (they/them) and Jane (she/her)—Interview 2		
1	Rosemary:	for me:? it's like um any co-option of like uh AAVE *slang?*
2		which is something that *I*:
3		Having been in some sort of queer community since I was like eleven or twelve?
4		have encountered so much that was part of my *vocabulary?*
5		and then um um also- being super- trying to be the best person I can be: in terms of um supporting Black liberation.
6		it's like you don't- like *you:* have been saying these words that are just like Black slang that has been *taken* and worked by all- uh often like white cis gay people?
7		um and other people.
8		and it just becomes like queer slang?
9		but I don't think it's queer slang as more of it's like *Black* slang or *Black queer* slang.
10		so I've been like actively reworking all these different like slang terms that are like just like things like *sis* (.) *quee:n*
11		like all of those terms that I don't- I don't want to be part of my vocabulary anymore
12		Because I don't think that that's my community to be using those te:rms for.
13		SO that's one thing that I'm uncomfortable-
14		and I see a *to::n* of like white queer people- white trans people u:se um that-
15		I don't know- either have not had that reckoning yet are just ignoring it.
16	Jane:	oh yeah, I definitely agree with that like-
17		that's definitely a huge problem of like *Black* sla:ng and like Black queer slang being co-opted by like *white* people::
18		especially like- you know- like you said- like white cis gays
19		there's been like a lot of *appropria:tion*.
20		and in general a lot of like *erasure* of like um like the *history* of like uh people of color and Black people::
21		like within that movement.

Both Rosemary and Jane recognized that white queer people use language that is from Black queer communities, and both view it as a moral problem, calling it "co-option." Rosemary detailed how they have been a participant in "queer community" for many years (Line 3) and have witnessed the use of African American English linguistic forms by white queer and trans people within those communities (Lines 6 and 14). They further noted that "it [AAVE] just becomes like queer slang" (Line 8). By using the unmarked "queer slang," they traced the shift from "Black queer slang" (Line 9) to being used by white and other non-Black queer people. However, Rosemary disputed the legitimacy of this shift in linguistic ownership, saying "I don't think it's queer slang as more of it's like, Black slang or Black queer slang" (Line 9), suggesting that these forms of language do *not* belong to queer communities broadly but to Black queer communities specifically.

Furthermore, Rosemary acknowledged that they had themself, at one point in their life, used various linguistic forms that they now recognize as coming from Black communities, but they have since worked to remove them from their vocabulary (Line 10). As a white

person, Rosemary situated themself as not licensed to use terms originating in African American queer communities, noting, “I don't think that's my community to be using those terms for” (Line 12). Their claim reflects an ideology of racial linguistic ownership and use that prioritizes the racial community of origin. However, given long histories of appropriation of language from Black communities and the prevalence of AAE forms throughout the English lexicon, (e.g., the word “cool”), it is unlikely that Rosemary in fact does not use any terms with origins in Black language. This stance, then, is also doing interactional and identity work within the group interview space, functioning in part as *virtue signaling*, or “the action or practice of highlighting one's morality through the use of language and other signs that index superficial alignment with progressive sociopolitical values” (Miles-Hercules & Muwwakkil, 2021, 268). In fact, this signaling is common within transgender communities, particularly as white trans people are quick to name the disproportionate rates of violence and death impacting trans women of color. As Ava L.J. Kim notes, this type of “performative declaration seemingly combats the problem of invisibility but instead reifies trans of color objecthood: articulation solely through death, abjection, and unmanageability” (Zhang et al., 2023, 338). With the case of language, these declarative recognitions of linguistic ownership also seemingly combat processes of erasure, while primarily functioning to highlight the speakers' own progressive values.

In this interaction, Rosemary grounded their objection to linguistic appropriation in terms of an ideology of linguistic ownership. Jane responds to Rosemary adding that appropriation is problematic because of the racial hierarchies that are reflected and reproduced. Jane built on Rosemary's stance, echoing their words that Black language had been “co-opted” (Line 1 and Line 17), which suggests that it had been taken without permission and used in a way that it was not originally meant to be used. Jane then also tied broader processes of erasure to why this specific progression of linguistic appropriation from Black queer communities is so contested; they recognize that there has been an “erasure of…the history of …people of color and Black people like within that movement” (Lines 20–21). Recognition of historical figures and education about processes of linguistic appropriation has been increasingly used as strategy within white communities to, as Rosemary says, “support Black liberation” (Line 5).

These strategies for countering erasure via representation brought up by Rosemary and Jane contrast with the issues brought up by Makia (Example 1). First, the white speakers took stances of expertise regarding the source and ownership of Black queer language, whereas Makia is immediately seen citing Black elders such as Toni Morrison as having already worked through the problem she described. Further, instead of rightful possession or even erasure, Makia oriented to *harm*. She recognized the material impacts on Black speakers who are told that their language is considered unprofessional due to it being seen as part of “white youth culture.”

The white participants, Rickie, Rosemary, and Jane, demonstrated some awareness of the appropriation of African American English by white queer communities (Example 3), and by white cis and “mainstream” communities more generally (Example 2). They each pointed to different issues with this process: that language is removed from its original context, that it is used by people outside the community of linguistic origin, and that it leads to the erasure of queer and trans people of color. Yet they nevertheless tied Black language forms to a casual register of “slang” that is associated with youth, casualness, coolness, and ephemerality, reproducing hegemonic ideologies of language and race that circulate widely in US public space. As I will explore in the next section, this contrasts with how linguistic forms and practices of *white* trans communities are described by participants.

LEXICAL INNOVATION AND GATEKEEPING PRACTICES IN WHITE TRANS COMMUNITIES

The examples in the previous section demonstrated how interviewees traced the origins of various aspects of trans language to Black communities. However, when it came to discussions of the development of new gender labels and maintaining the borders of the distinctions between these identities, these discussions were associated with white trans communities. In contrast to the characterization of slang as originating in Black communities, new terminology for gender identities, or "micro labels," as some of my participants called them, tended to be described in interviews as created, used, and debated online, primarily by white trans people and communities. The phrase "micro labels" refers to the idea that these terms describe very specific experiences of gender. From both within and outside of trans communities, there is critique of this type of lexical innovation, but it often is located in discourses of respectability politics. For instance, Konnelly (2021) analyzes a Reddit post that places trans people who use neopronouns such as "cat/catself" as a target of mockery. However, while these types of linguistic innovations *do* get connected to both young people and online culture (communities often associated with slang), in the interviews I conducted, these linguistic forms were not referred to as slang. In considering why this might be, we must first attend to the absence of anti-Blackness operating on words understood to be created by white people. Second, I argue that the types of practices surrounding these words (e.g., creating taxonomic lists, debating and dictating "correct" usage) place these linguistic forms within a schema of standardized language practices.

Even when the innovations of new gender terminology by white communities were characterized by some participants as confusing or unnecessary, they were still generally understood as needing to be learned or understood. For example, in a group interview, Fredd, a Black trans man in his 50s, described his experience with being exposed to new terminology to talk about LGBTQ+ identities. Earlier in the interview, Fredd discussed his desire to learn new terminology through taking classes and being involved in community-based projects at a local university. Through his experience engaging with the local university and younger queer people in that community, Fredd described being exposed to new terminology, specifically gender identity labels and neopronouns. During the interview, Fredd joked that other Black people in his community would react to new terminology by wondering "why [white kids] keep adding letters?" (Example 4).

Example 4. "Why they keep adding letters?"

Fredd (he/him)—Interview 17		
1	Fredd	they be like what is these white kids keep doing
2		why they keep *adding letters*?

Fredd (he/him) used elements of AAE (verb neutralization, auxiliary absence) to voice other Black community members ("what is these white kids," and "why they keep"), whom he described as regularly confused or frustrated by the new terminology of "white kids," as indicated by the use of the habitual be ("they be like"). He distinguished himself from these linguistic innovators not only in term of age but also race, specifically linking the proliferation of new "letters" (added to the initialism *LGBT* such as versions like *LGBTQQIAAP*) to white queer youth spaces. At another point in the interview, Fredd reflected on feeling criticized for not knowing the appropriate terminology and struggling to learn what is considered "correct." Fredd related the struggle to keep up with these linguistic developments with a joking tone

about the "white kids" who "keep adding letters," linking the process of terminology development with white trans communities.

Elias (he/him), a Brasilian/Latino transmasculine person, described his experience with observing spaces where people have created terminology for "overly specific genders" (Line 1, Example 5).

Example 5. "The spaces where I see most of this discourse running is very white."

Elias (he/him)—Interview 3	
1	I've seen this critique ((high pitch))
2	just with like people who critique overly specific genders
3	which like (.) there's nothing really wrong with that
4	to the point where like *we:* create such a clunky language sometimes
5	that people who *just* came into the community get *super* confused and alienated?
6	I've seen that befo:re
7	and some people also will like be *jerks*
8	and make like a moral um like judgments on people who don't know terms as well.
[Lines 9–11 removed]	
12	because I do have to say tha:t
13	the spaces where I see most of this discourse running is very *whi:te*.
14	so I don't know how it's running- in like other communities that aren't white centered- but *yeah*.

Although Elias noted that "there is nothing wrong with new terminology for specific genders" (Line 2), he said that he often noticed people who act as gatekeepers when new community members do not understand terminology (Lines 3–4). He then concluded by remarking that the communities in which he has witnessed this type of discussion regarding new terminology have been "white centered" (Lines 9–10).

Responding to Elias's comments in the interview, Percy (he/him), a white trans man in his 20s who attends the same university as Elias, aligned himself with what Elias has reported about the process of gatekeeping terminology within trans spaces. He specifically noted that "I think I see it the most…in…the Twitter sphere and…YouTube Tumblr spaces…most often with *younger white trans boys* [emphasis added]." These debates are tied to online spaces and white communities, where people will "be jerks and make…a moral judgment on people who don't know terms as well" (Line 4). Elias and Percy both emphasized that white trans communities are associated with the development of gender-referent terminology, which leads to processes of gatekeeping; white trans people then act as arbiters of who knows the proper terminology and who does not. These participants rejected an ethos of white ownership over linguistic terms. In both appropriating Black queer terms and engaging in gatekeeping of "correct" gender-referent terminology, white trans communities exert linguistic control—undeniably an extension of white privilege and entitlement that Percy and Elias disalign from, albeit from very different positionalities. As a non-Black person of color, Elias critiqued these "white centered" community spaces as exclusionary, whereas Percy disaligned from the practices of "younger white trans boys" as a member of that category.

Makia, a Black trans woman, also distanced herself from the types of practices that were assigned to white trans communities (as seen in Examples 4 and 5). Earlier in the interview, Makia was critical of the appropriative practices of white trans communities (Example 1). As

the interview continued, she described the ways that white trans communities were tied to gatekeeping of terminological use, a practice that she did not want to be part of (Example 6).

Example 6. "Black trans women [are] defecting from the categorization."

	Makia (she/her)—Interview 19
1	I have noticed that there is um a hypertax- hypertaxonomic *impulse*
2	and the technology of categorization increases um
3	every single year there's new te:rms- there are more *specific* te:rms there um
4	so there's and *individuation* of subjectivity I think that's attached to tha:t?
5	and once again- these are not um *moral* claims or charges
6	and I'm not saying like um- I'm not saying it's *preferable* for people to operate um under some kind of like *grand narrative banner*
7	and not opt for more specificity- more *individuation* or anything like tha:t
8	I'm just making an observation ((high pitch))
9	but I have noticed that *impulse*?
10	um and I have noticed as well not just with myself but a lot of Black trans women specifically?
11	kind of um (.) *defecting* from the- from the uh- categorization-
12	categorization slash taxonomy industrial complex um-
13	myself included.

Makia noted that she has observed an increase in attention to creating a taxonomy of gender identities and labels within (white) queer and trans communities (Line 1). While she does not necessarily think that it is a bad thing (Line 5), or that all trans communities should instead opt to use one umbrella term (Line 6), she pointed to the tendency of hyper specific identity terms to reproduce a hyperfocus on the individual though the "individuation of subjectivity" (Line 4). This echoes Zimman (2019)'s analysis of the language of self-identification and neoliberal selfhood, which recognizes that *who* has such agency to define the self is not evenly distributed. In the written dialogue "A Tranifesto for the Dolls: Toward a Trans Femme of Color Theory" (Zhang et al., 2023), æryka jourdaine hollis o'neil considers the implications of such linguistic choices: "as a Black, nonbinary trans femme, I am aware that each of these identifications, however politically invested I am in them to varying degrees, also entails a kind of necessary misrecognition… However, this acknowledgment of misrecognition is not equal to a complete disavowal of their imbricated *feltness*" (342). These reflections mirror the nuance that Makia articulates, balancing the downfalls of a "grand narrative banner" (Line 6) versus "specificity and individuation" (Line 7), recognizing the possible political utility of such choices.

Additionally, Makia pointed to herself and to other Black trans women (Line 2) who reject such a focus on "the categorization/taxonomy industrial complex" (Lines 11–12). By describing the practices of creating identity categories as such, she likened the practice with other systems of power and control, such as the military industrial complex and prison industrial complex. The linguistic moves made by Makia and the other Black trans women she describes echo LaVelle Ridely's theorization of trans women of color as knowledge producers of a "critical trans* imagination." Ridley, like Makia, points to how trans women of color creatively "utilize imagination as a way to craft self and freedom in their life writing, art, and public engagement…[making] significant advancements in how we think about politics, capitalism, the prison industrial complex and its complete abolition" (Zhang et al., 2023, 337). For these Black trans women, creatively defecting from various industrial complexes allows for resistance.

Beyond commentary on specific linguistic innovations and gatekeeping practices within white communities, the normative status of whiteness in trans communities, as reflected in these excerpts, is a reality that Black trans interviewees encountered in their daily lives. For example, when Kamau (they/he), a Black transmasculine person, described the experience of coming out to their mother as trans in the early 2010s, he said that her primary response was that being trans was a "white thing" (Line 1, Example 7).

Example 7. "This is a white thing."

Kamau (they/he)— Interview 20		
1	Kamau	but when I came out ((at college)) and I came back home
		Um (.) *my* (.) *mom* explicitly was just like this is a white thing.
2		and so you know we talked a lot about- talked a lot about *race*
3		and talked a lot about *gender* and just the ways in which-
3		but I think that thinking about how *my mom* thought that I was appropriating white culture?
4		by coming out as trans is interesting:
[lines removed where Kamau talks more about his mom's use of 'appropriation']		
8		coming home and saying that this is how I felt
9		was something that was so: synonymous with whiteness power access (.)
10		and Chaz Bono hhh.

Kamau highlighted that transness was "so synonymous with whiteness, power, access" (Line 9) for his mother that she did not recognize it as a possibility for him. In contrast to discussions of white appropriations of Black language in queer and trans communities, Kamau joked that their mom thought they were "appropriating white culture" (Line 3) by coming out as trans. His recollection of his mother's reaction to the possibility of him being transgender underscores a crucial aspect of the discourse: the entanglement of trans identity with notions of whiteness, power, and access. Kamau framed this view of transness as whiteness as stemming from representations of transness that were salient at the time, namely a wealthy white trans man celebrity, Chaz Bono, the son of Cher and Sonny Bono who had been featured on the US broadcast television show *Dancing with the Stars* (line 10). While there are more diverse representations of trans people in mainstream US media today than in the early 2010s, conceptions of transness as shaped by whiteness are still prevalent (Vidal-Ortiz, 2014).

Kamau's account highlights the persistent influence of historical perceptions that continue to shape ideas of trans life and language, revealing an ongoing struggle to disentangle transness from its historically entrenched association with whiteness. This connection is complicated by Steele's (2022) analysis of the production of phonetic features such as /s/ by Black nonbinary speakers, in which they found that "Black nonbinary speakers are not approximating whiteness (as often claimed in Black and white communities alike); rather, they are performing a Black nonbinariness that distinguishes them from their white counterparts *and* from normative stereotypes of Black cisgender women and men" (17, emphasis in original). Both Kamau and Makia's reflections on Black trans life demonstrate how "trans of color critique disrupts…the racializing logic through which white gender-variant bodies become—more often than not—the only gender-variant bodies recognizable as legitimate subjects" (Stryker & Aizura, 2013, 10).

In moments of metalinguistic commentary from trans participants of color, white trans communities were connected to power, access, and gatekeeping of terminology, which these participants considered complicated, exclusionary, or undesirable. Some trans participants

of color, like Fredd, endeavored to understand the terminological innovations associated with white trans communities, while others, like Elias and Makia, separated themselves from those discussions. The trans participants of color shared a recognition that discussions about language within white trans communities often functioned to shape understandings of trans identity, as poignantly captured by Kamau's reflection. Further, the practice of "gatekeeping" terms, described by Elias, reinforces the idea that white trans people are the true arbiters of proper gender terminology, an epistemological stance taken by white trans people to construct the image of legitimate ownership. Makia's reflections not only critique this stance but reject the individuating linguistic moves taken up by white trans communities as potential turns away from the collective responsibility of shared liberation for trans people.

CONCLUSION

When race emerged as a point of discussion alongside trans language practices in the interviews, participants oriented to Black and white trans communities in distinct ways. Black queer and trans communities were recognized as originating many elements of what participants understood to be current queer and trans "slang." To some extent, participants recognized that these linguistic innovations emerged from Black communities and that white queer and trans people should recognize these origins. However, the reasons for objecting to white people's use of terms emerging from Black communities were varied: Rosemary objected to the use of language that was not one's own, Jane viewed such acts as co-options that reproduced racist power relations, and Makia critiqued the racist double standard for Black as opposed to white queer users of "slang." These distinctions reflect various language ideologies that are evoked in the rationalizations of who should or should not use certain linguistic forms.

White trans communities were also described as innovating language, but within a distinct lexical set. These innovations included gender terminology (such as identity labels) and debates about who could "claim" certain terminology. While the innovations happening within Black trans communities were described as "slang," which often indexes informality or even unprofessionalism, the innovations happening within white trans communities were described as "terms" that were part of a "taxonomy," indexing a professional or academic register. These distinctions reproduced long-documented ideologies of Black language being tied to youth identity and "coolness" (Bucholtz, 2010). In turn, white queer language was understood in relation to processes of gatekeeping and to ideologies of correctness and standardness.

These distinctions and stereotypes continued to be upheld, even though some of the white participants were highly aware and critical of the appropriation of linguistic forms from AAE by white people. This raises questions about the limits of the *principle of error correction* (Labov, 1982; Lewis, 2018; Wolfram, 1993, 2007), which posits that linguists should work to share information with the public in order to correct harmful stereotypes. In this case, we might look to the growing public awareness about linguistic appropriation as a positive effect of the spread of awareness about African American English varieties. But participant commentary here shows that even in discussions where there is awareness about these processes, distinctions and hierarchies are smuggled into the new discussions. Even though the white participants are critical of the process of linguistic appropriation and say that they avoid using terms from Black queer communities, the white participants are not discussing the ways in which white trans experiences and language continue to structure the discourses about transness in general, which the participants of color point out. Ultimately, Black communities are superficially recognized for their cultural and linguistic influence,

yet whiteness remains prevalent as a structuring power in debates about language through these manifestations of everyday linguistic racism.

Even if both Black and white trans communities innovate terms, broader discourses reify their unequal status. Within trans communities, discussions about attribution and recognition of language are increasing, leading to discourses about where forms of "trans language" come from and who should use them. In these interviews, participants pointed to Black trans communities as cultural producers of linguistic forms and grappled with the effects of these processes of appropriation. Yet, debates happening both online and in-person about what words were "correct" and who could use them were understood to be structured by norms of whiteness in trans spaces.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to Elaine Chun, Ruthanne Hughes, Lex Konnelly, Samantha Martin, Lal Zimman, and two anonymous reviewers for their comments and feedback on this paper. All remaining errors are my own.

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Endnotes

[1] Nine interviews had two participants, three had three participants, three had four participants, and one had five participants. Due to scheduling constraints and cancellations, four interviews were one-on-one, with just the researcher and the interviewee.

[2] This rate was slightly above the median hourly wage in SC, which in 2021 was $17.91 USD (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).

[3] This participant identified themself in the demographic survey as Brasilian and Latino, and in a follow-up question they also described themself as mestizo. They are a non-Black Latino person who is likely racialized as Brown or non-white in the South Carolinian context.

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How to cite this article: Crowley, Archie. 2025. "*And It Just Becomes Queer Slang*": Race, Linguistic Innovation, and Appropriation Within Trans Communities in the US South." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 00(0): e70008. https://doi.org/10.1111/jola.70008.

APPENDIX

Transcription conventions (adapted from Goodwin 1990 and Ochs and Capps 2001)

.	End of intonation unit; falling intonation
?	End of intonation unit; rising intonation
Italics	emphasize signaled by increased pitch or amplitude
:	Vowel/consonant lengthening
-	Self-interruption; break in the word, sound abruptly cutoff
(.)	Pause of 0.5 seconds or less
h	Outbreath (e.g., sigh or laughter)
(())	Transcriber comment