

Place, Politics, and the Southern Vowel Shift in Northeast Georgia

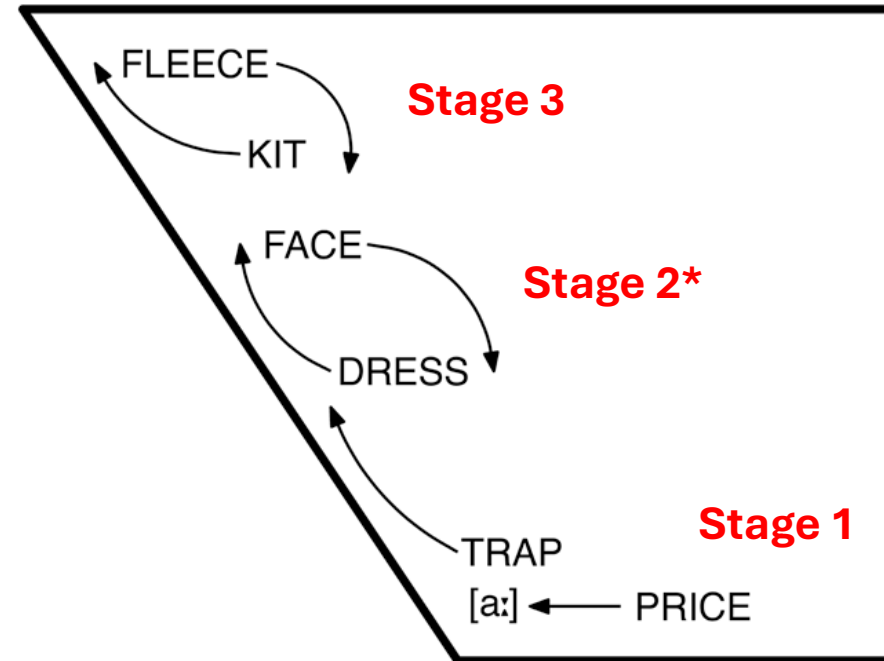
Keiko Bridwell, University of Georgia

New Ways of Analyzing Variation (NWAV52)

Thursday, November 7, 2024

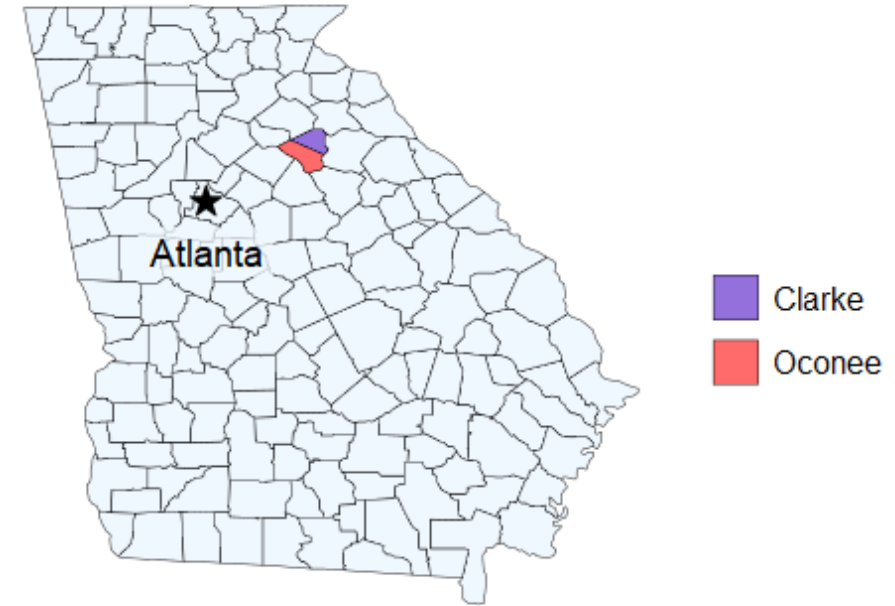
Southern Vowel Shift

- White Southern US English is characterized by the SVS
- Northeast Georgia is in stage 2
 - Monophthongization of PRIZE
 - Lowering of FACE
 - Raising of DRESS
 - Raising of TRAP
- Retreating in urban areas, partially due to migration into the South (Prichard 2010; Dodsworth & Kohn 2012; Renwick et al. 2023)
- Perceived as rural and politically conservative (Preston 2018; Glass & Forrest 2024)
- Attachment to place plays a role in linguistic variation (Labov 1963; Carmichael 2014; Reed 2018)



Setting

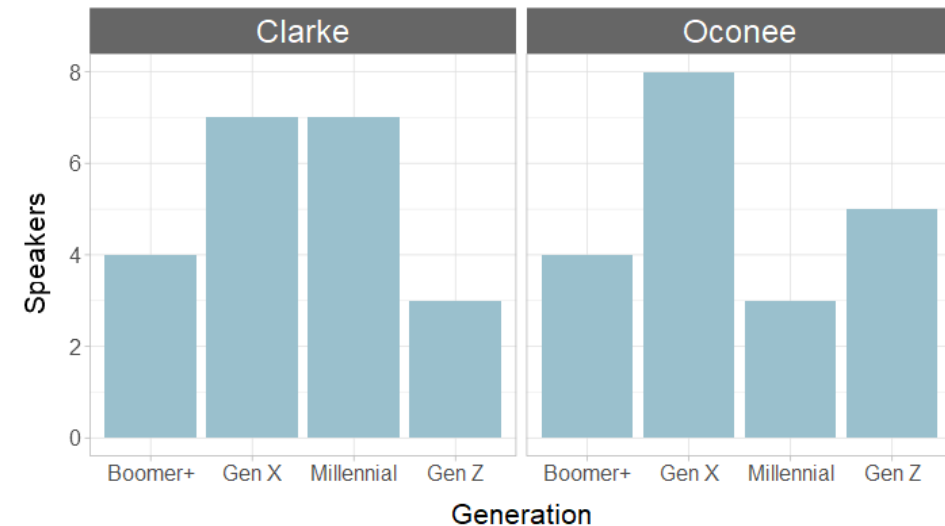
- Two Northeast Georgia counties
- Clarke (Athens)
 - University of Georgia
 - Arts scene
 - Ethnically and economically diverse
 - Liberal politics
- Oconee
 - Historically rural but growing
 - Prominence of agriculture in local hierarchies
 - White, upper-middle-class, conservative
- Goal: Test whether Clarke and Oconee, having such different cultures, also show differences in their use of Southern US phonetic features



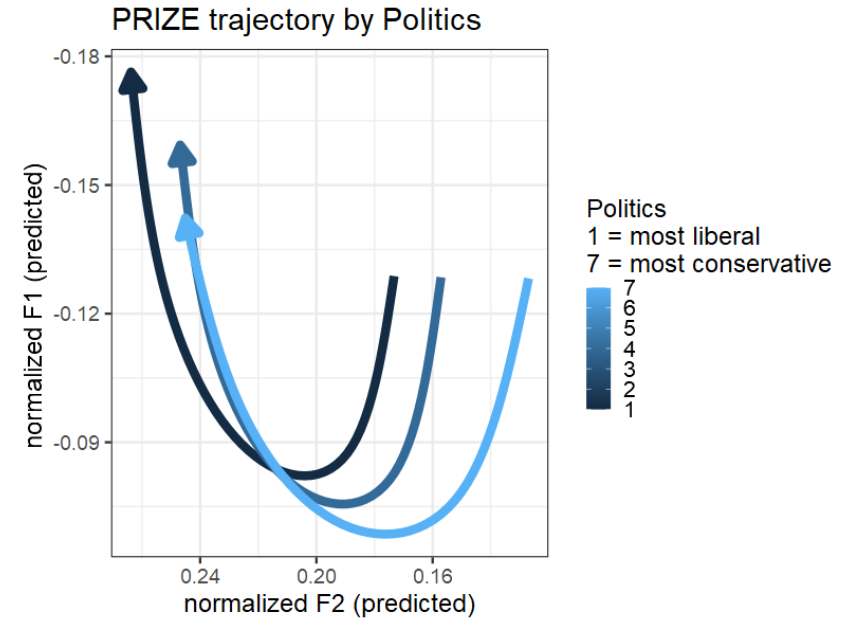
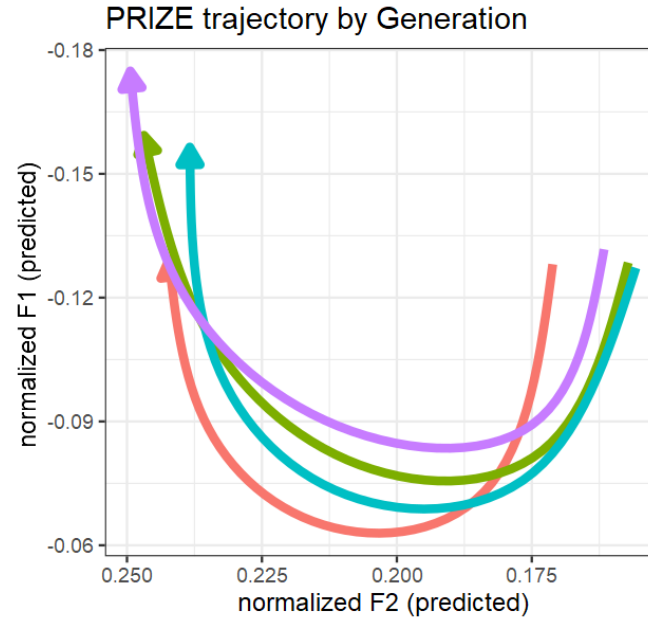
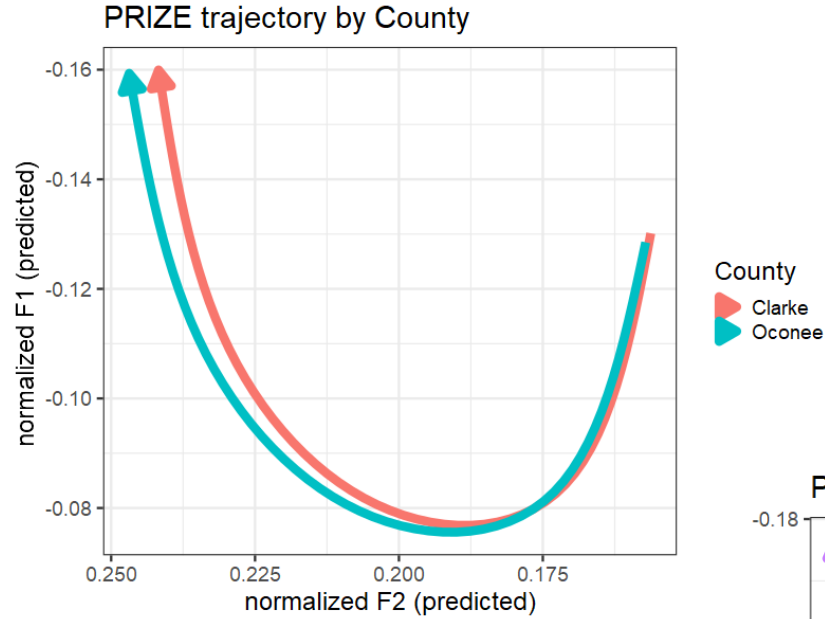
	Clarke	Oconee
Population	~128,000	~42,000
Median age	29.3 years	40.3 years
Median household income	~\$44,000	~\$106,000
Race/ethnicity	56% White, 24% Black, 11% Hispanic, 4% Asian	81% White, 5% Black, 6% Hispanic, 5% Asian
2020 presidential election results	70.1% Democrat, 28.1% Republican	32.4% Democrat, 65.9% Republican

Methods

- Sociolinguistic interview
 - Participants: 18 from Clarke (14 women, 4 men), 15 from Oconee (11 women, 4 men)
 - Born 1943 to 2005
 - Ranked politics on a Likert scale (1 = very liberal, 7 = very conservative)
 - 17 hours of audio manually transcribed, forced-aligned with DARLA (Reddy & Stanford 2015), and vowels extracted with FAVE (Rosenfelder et al. 2014)
- Analysis of PRIZE/PRY (n=1806) and FACE (n=4640)
 - Filtered out pre-sonorant tokens
 - Normalized using log-means (Barreda & Nearey 2018)
 - AY: F1 and F2 at 20%, 35%, 50%, 65%, 80%, GAMMs
 - $DV \sim \text{generation} + \text{county} + \text{gender} + \text{politics} + \log(\text{duration}) + (1|\text{speaker}) + (1|\text{word})$
 - EY: Position on the front diagonal (F2 – F1) at peak of nucleus, mixed effects linear regression
 - $DV \sim \text{generation} * \text{county} + \text{gender} + \text{politics} + \log(\text{duration}) + (1|\text{speaker}) + (1|\text{word})$



PRIZE model predictions

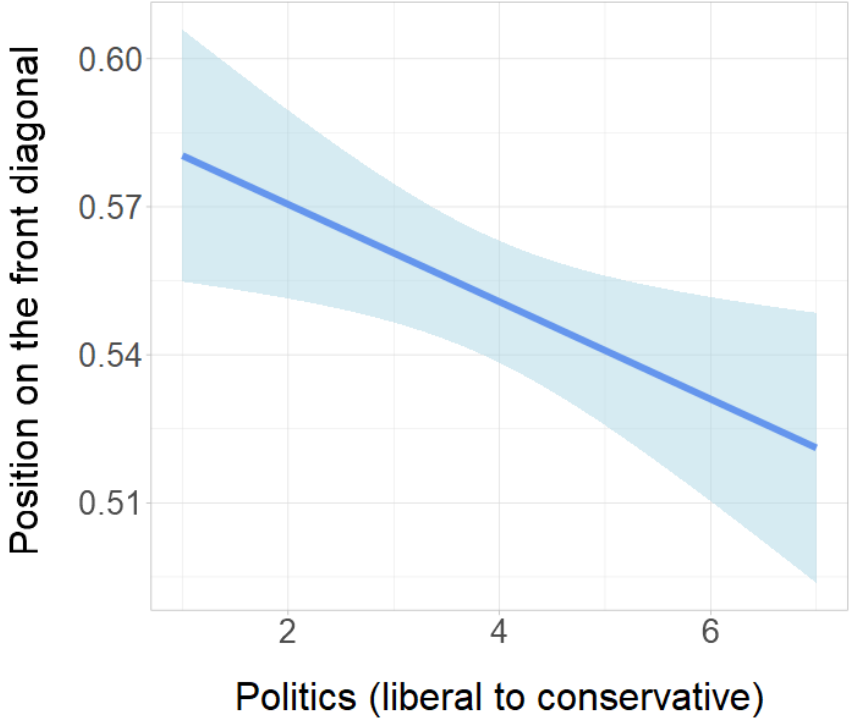
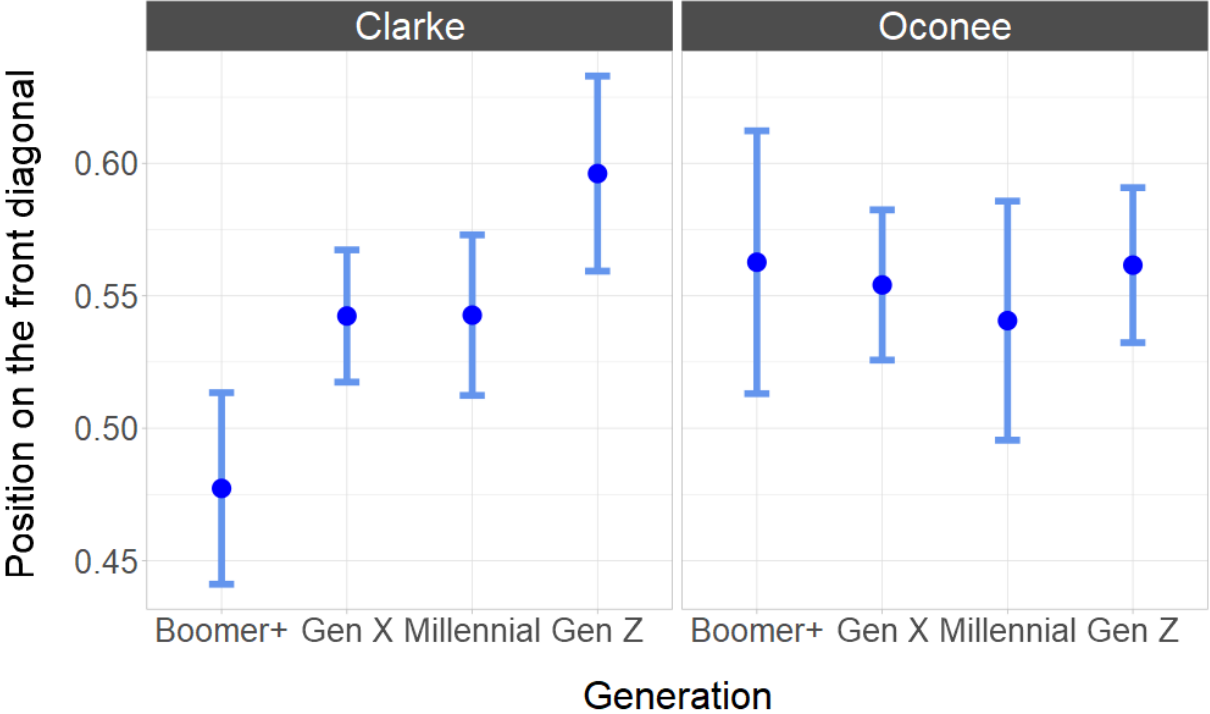


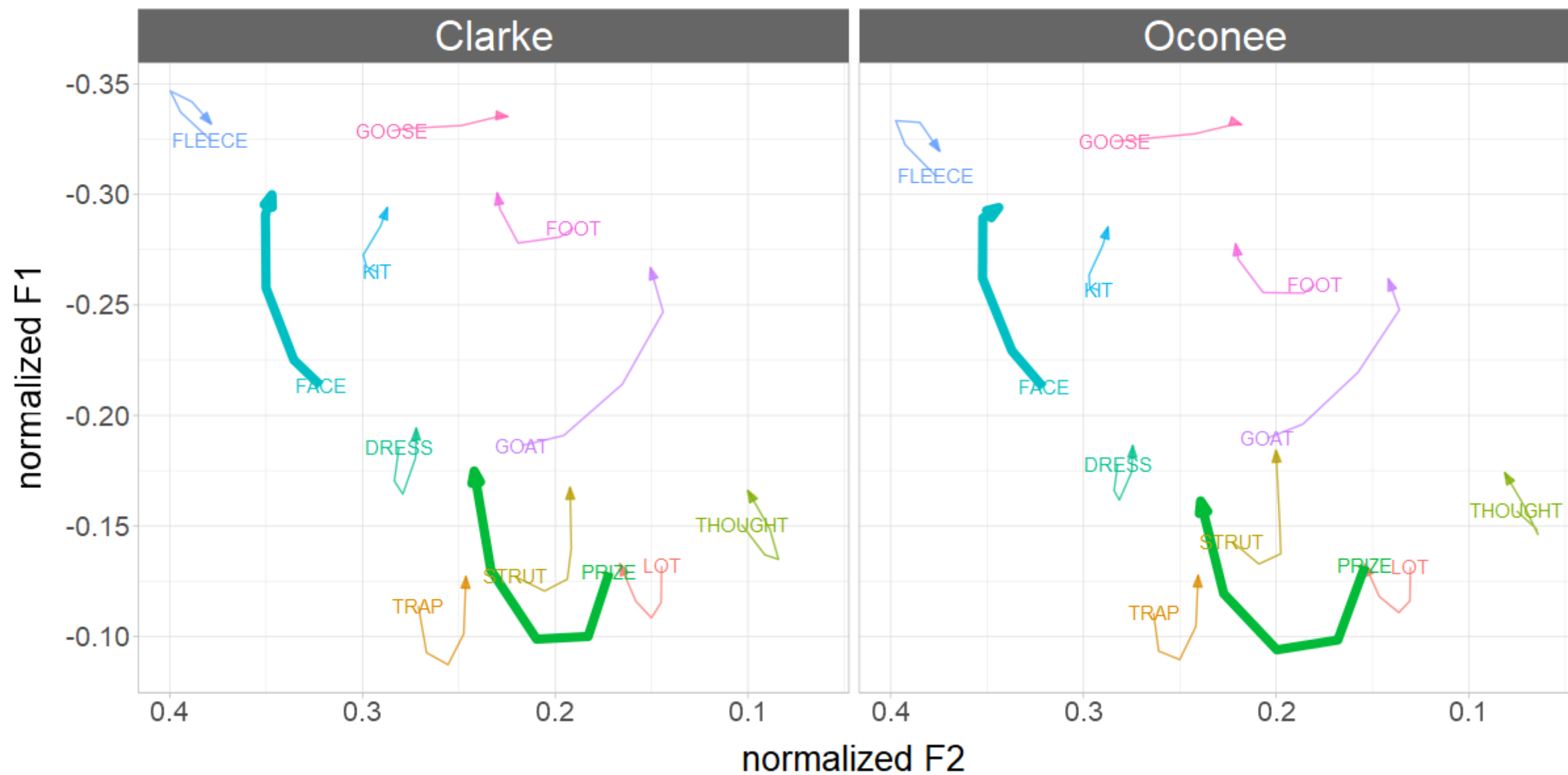
FACE model predictions

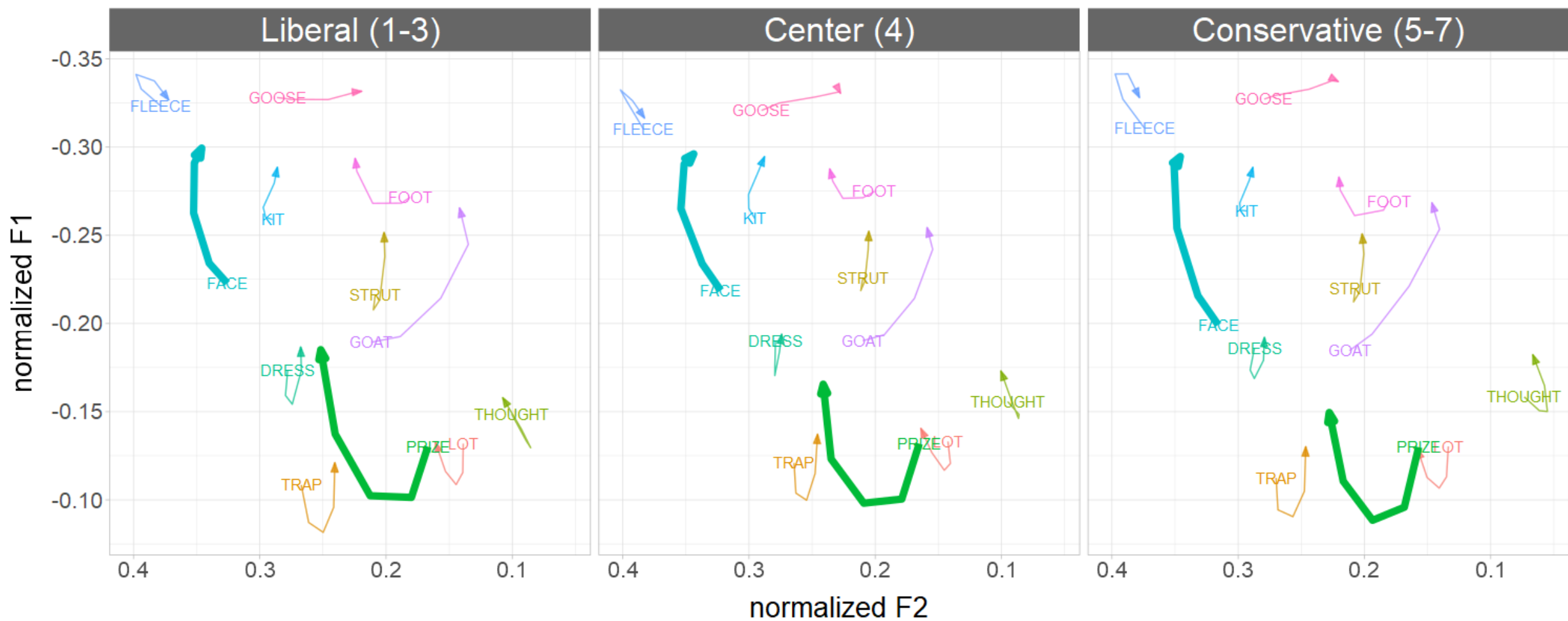
less Southern



more Southern







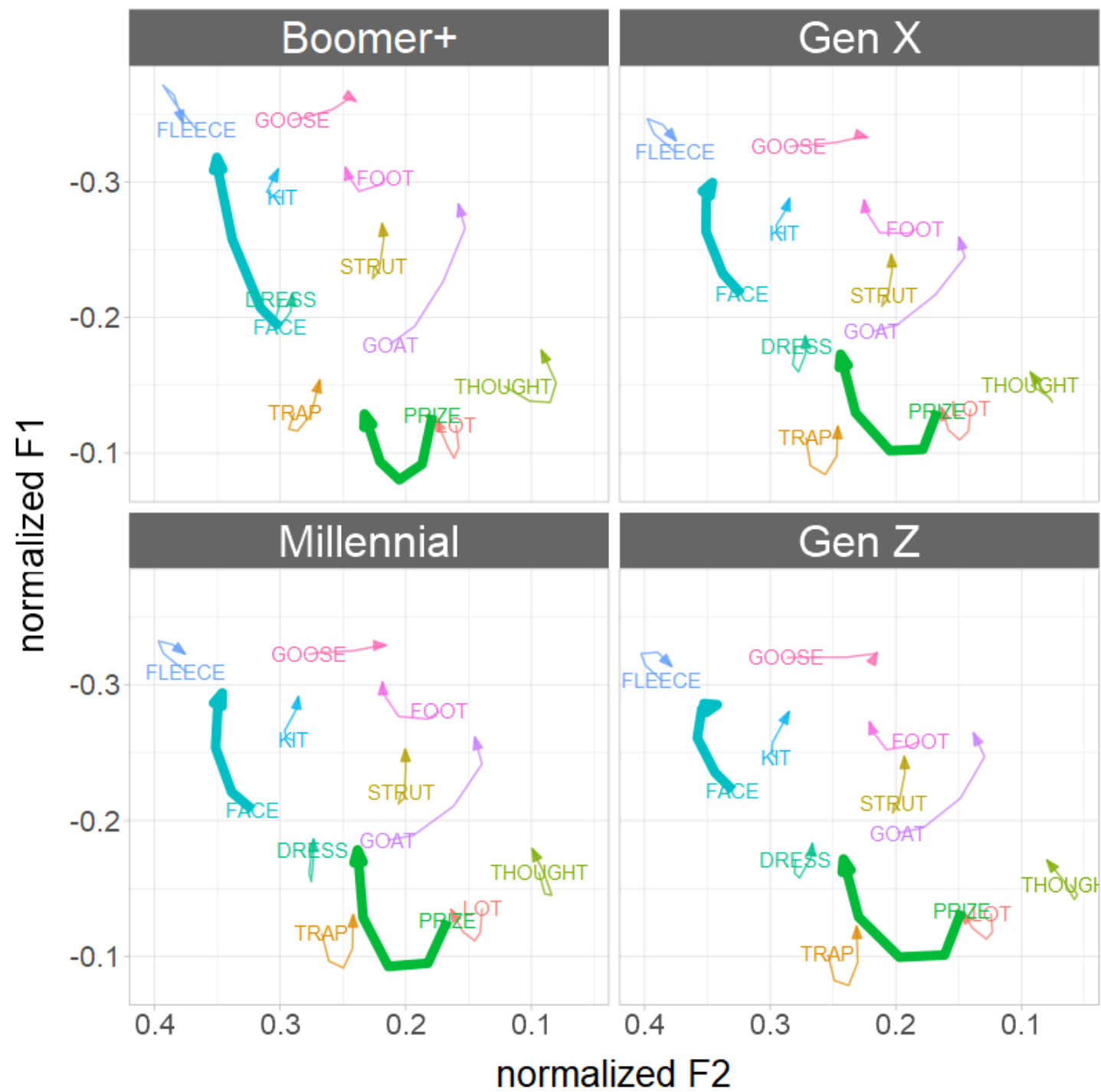
Discussion

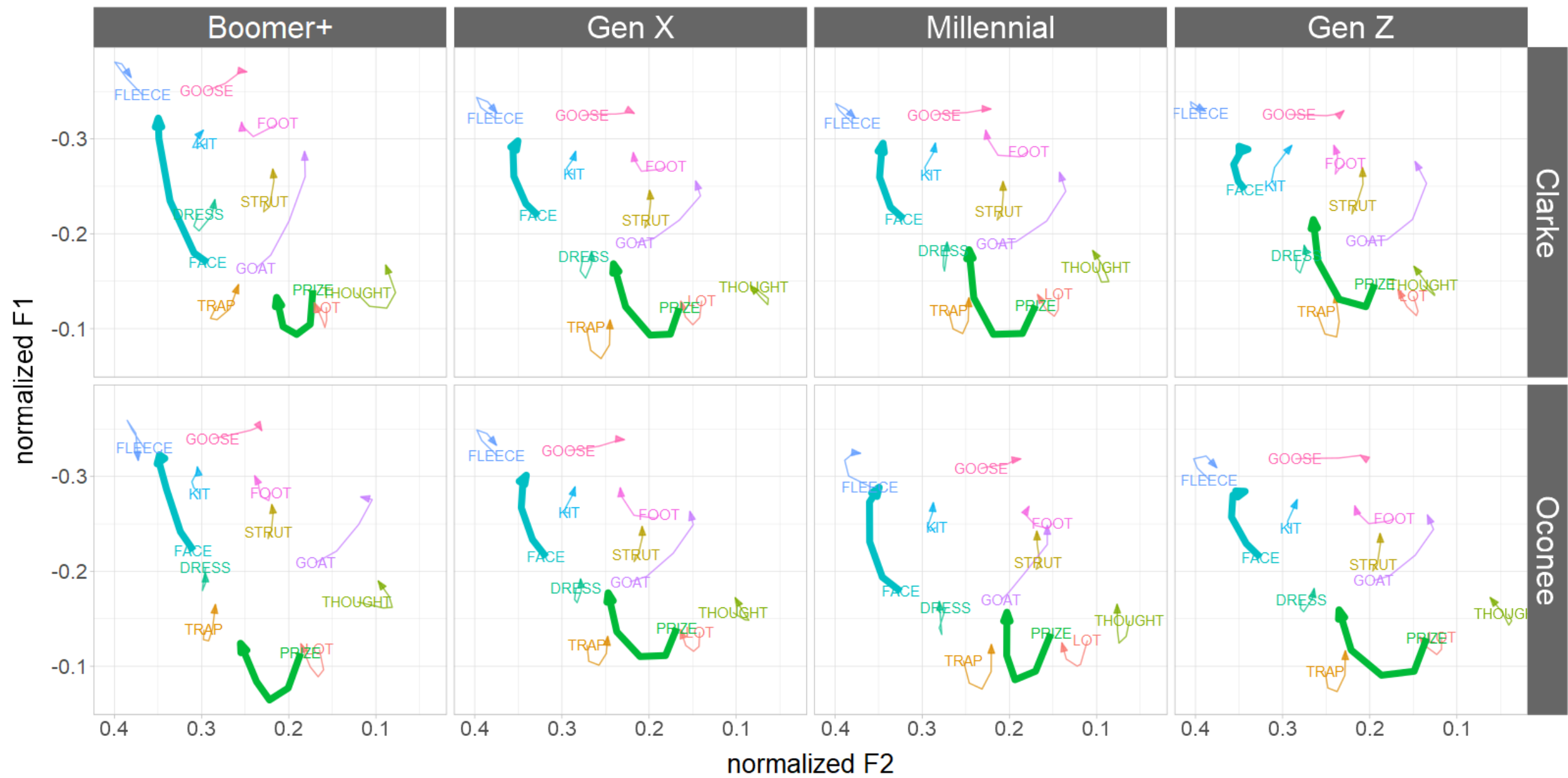
- Findings
 - Expected results for age: SVS retreating among younger speakers (in Clarke)
 - No overall difference between counties
 - Significant effect of political rating
- Agrees with the perception of Southern accents as more Conservative, though not necessarily more rural
- Unclear whether this variation is due to stance-taking or underlying factors that correlate with political beliefs
- Future directions
 - Stance-taking: speech about politics
 - THOUGHT vowel
 - Rootedness variable

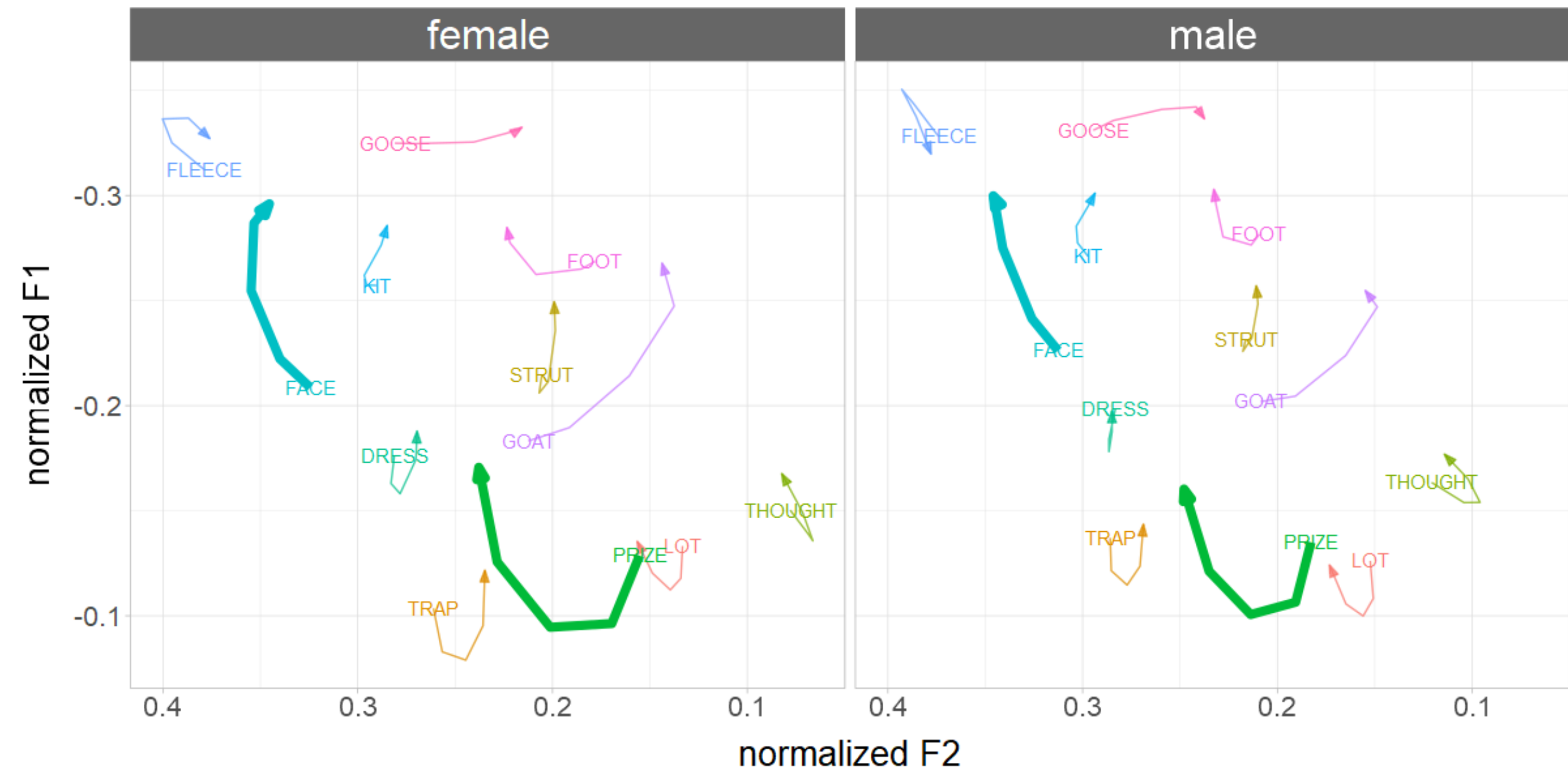
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Additional Slides







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Generation +

County +

Politics +

Gender +

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categorical fixed effects

categorical interaction

smooths

smooths interacted with categorical variables

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random effects

