

MY QUEST FOR MY (SOUTHERN) VOICE IN NARRATIVE WRITING

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ABSTRACT

A writer's voice creates the relationship between readers and the page. It's a conversation that the writer has with readers. And it's a writer's signature, a personal identifier. Because voice is rendered by the collective application of multiple writing techniques, it's influenced by many things — some known to the writer, some unknown and some unexplored.

I set out to find if narrative nonfiction writers from the South could trace their voices back to their Southern roots. And I asked them if a distinctive Southern writing voice existed, and what it sounded like.

My theoretical framework was social identity theory. The theory describes how people feel the need to belong to certain groups, and how group membership becomes a classification they use to set themselves apart from others and elevate their social standing.

I interviewed four accomplished narrative nonfiction writers from the South. Some interviewees had trouble or shied away from defining their voice. Some were able to explain how their roots influenced their work. And I learned that "Southern writer" is a nebulous label that can be stereotypical, presumptuous and ill-fitting.