

What Mr. Simmons said: Stylization, pitch, and the voicing of others on the Gullah Geechee cultural heritage tour

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Abstract. This article discusses the use of stylized voicing, specifically falsetto phonation, in Gullah Geechee during a cultural heritage tour in Charleston, South Carolina. Gullah Geechee, a minority creole language spoken by descendants of formerly enslaved persons in the American Southeastern coastal Lowcountry, is analyzed in the study using participant observation and sociophonetic data collection. The research finds that stylized pitch-shifting is a productive component of the guide's ethnolinguistic repertoire, used for multiple indexical functions, including constructing authenticity and performing stylized double-voicing. The data shows the complex social meaning of this feature related to speech genres, performance, perceptions of authenticity and authority, and the ethnolinguistic repertoire of a minority language commodified for outsider consumption. The study also links Gullah Geechee prosodic indexicality with its related variety, African American English.

Keywords. sociolinguistics; sociophonetics; Gullah Geechee; prosody; falsetto; stylization

1. Stylistic performance during the cultural tour. While prosodic stylization and prosody itself is known to play a significant role in the performance and ethnolinguistic repertoire of many varieties, sociophonetic documentation of its utility is less representative than impressionistic and variationist studies of the indexical phenomena. Therefore, more fine-grained analyses of intonational shifts and prosodic variation can help to deepen our understanding of the relationship between segmental and suprasegmental features and their interactions within the indexical field; observations within less-documented and otherwise understudied language varieties may also offer insight into contact varieties or more mainstream language variation as well. This current study examines a specific prosodic feature (falsetto) within a specific genre context (performance register of the cultural heritage tour) of a specific language variety (Gullah Geechee) in order to analyze the indexical range of falsetto in Gullah Geechee and how this indexicality compares and contrasts with its commonly-associated contact variety, African American English (AAE).

1.1. GULLAH GEECHEE AS AN ENGLISH-LEXIFIED CREOLE LANGUAGE. Gullah Geechee is an English-lexified creole language variety spoken by the descendants of enslaved populations of the coastal United States, particularly concentrated in the 'Lowcountry' of South Carolina and Georgia on the historically isolated Sea Islands (e.g. St. Helena, Daufuskie, and Sapelo Islands) (Cross 2008). Opinions differ on its origins and relationship to related varieties (i.e. AAE, Southern American English (SAE) and Caribbean Englishes and English-lexified creoles) along (Neo-) Anglicist, Substratist, and Creolist Hypotheses, but consensus stands on a definitively English

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superstrate and West African and/or West Indies substrates¹ (Hancock 1980; Weldon 2003). These substrates have been associated with much of the ‘marked’ features of the language as perceived by outsiders, at lexical, morphosyntactic, phonological, and prosodic levels; however, the persistence and frequency of these features are in considerable variation based on a wide array of speaker demographics and intent, accuracy, and context of outsider documentation. Much of the discourse around language legitimation, i.e. the recognition of Gullah Geechee as an accent, dialect, or language has been bound up with rhetorics of language endangerment and death (Jones-Jackson 1984), and these discourses have diffused into the community, complicating native speaker orientations to their own language practices (Mufwene 1991). This is only further complicated by Gullah Geechee’s relationship to covert and overt prestige, where the language has been historically marginalized by outsiders and acts as a symbol of resilient identity for its community (Cooper 2017), but also diachronically fractally recursive within the community as an ‘inferior’ way of speaking in terms of social mobility and opportunity (Mufwene 1993). Contemporary attitudes towards the language from both within and outside the community have pointed towards a cultural and linguistic ‘renaissance’, where the language is appreciated in more visible intercommunity contexts and as an emblem of authenticated community belonging (Hamilton 2012; Smalls 2012); however, the language is still constricted in many ways by hegemonic and raciolinguistic (Rosa & Flores 2017) norms of ‘appropriateness’, where its value is curated by outsider perceptions of what it ‘should’ sound like, how, when, and where it ‘should’ be used.

Prosody in Gullah Geechee is generally observed to resemble contact languages, particularly AAE, but remains diachronically and synchronically understudied. Weldon (2018) observes a patterning of high, mid, or rising tones in declarative sentence-final position, compared to the falling tone associated with Mainstream American English (MAE). She also compares earlier observations of yes/no question intonational patterning (associated with level sentence-final tones in Gullah Geechee and a rising tone in MAE) with more modern findings, where younger speakers appear to be switching towards the MAE pattern. Her observations, like many others who work with the Gullah Geechee language and community, are drawn from and supported by Lorenzo Dow Turner’s seminal (1949) study, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, in which he believed that “the intonation and stress patterns of Gullah are influenced by West African tonal languages such as Bini, Efik, Ewe, Fanta, Ga, Hausa, Ibibio, Ibo, and Yoruba” (Bost 2001). This provides an explanation of prosodic markedness of Gullah Geechee compared to surrounding varieties but does little to map the prosodic patterning of contemporary Gullah Geechee. In fact, the existent literature that mentions Gullah Geechee prosody typically either focuses on call-and-response intonational accommodation (Bost 2001; Smith 1999), echoes of Turner’s observations of African linguistic ‘survivals’ (Brown 2005; Butler 2009; Cooper 2012; Weldon 2018), or calls to conduct future studies of prosodic analysis (Bost 2001).

1.2. HETEROGLOSSIA, DOUBLE-VOICING, POLYPHONY. Because the current study focuses on prosodic stylistic variation between Gullah Geechee and English language practices during the cultural heritage tour, it is necessary to situate the performance register (Schilling-Estes 1998) characteristic of the touristic environment within the context of Bakhtinian *heteroglossia*, *double-voicing*, and *polyphony*. Through this perspective, we can position the performance of tour guides as embodying both ‘other-languedness’ and ‘many-voicedness’ (Bakhtin 1986; Park-

¹ In creolist contexts, *superstrate* indicates the variety of overt prestige and power introduced, typically a colonial one, while *substrate* indicates the existent language of the pre-existing local population, typically highly stigmatized by colonial powers (Holm 2000).

Fuller 1986), infusing discourse with linguistic ideologies (Irvine & Gal 2000) and stances (Du Bois 2007) regarding subjects, objects, and other interlocutors. Examples of Gullah Geechee language play a large part of many tours (McCullough 2023), and guides are often expected to produce ‘authenticating’ discourses and language practices that are then evaluated by outsiders. Guides produce curated commodifiable ‘moments’ of Gullah Geechee for outsider consumption (Heller, Pujolar & Duchêne 2014) but not always as themselves; rather, they intertwine style-shifting, bivarietalism, and personae-shifting in directed and meaningful ways to position themselves as authentic and authoritative² intercommunity intermediaries and voice others (and different personae of themselves).

As a way of speaking, Gullah Geechee often exists as a discrete entity from English in the minds of native speaker tour guides (McCullough 2023), as opposed to operating along a creole continuum, meaning tour guides view their repertoire as having distinct constellations from which they draw features during performances in either variety and shift between those linguistic entities. Guides are highly metalinguistically and metapragmatically aware and navigate through multiple axes of shifting and stance (Kiesling 2009) as intercommunity intermediaries, negotiating curated models of personhood that serve a variety of indexical, narrative, and discursive functions. In this way, Gullah Geechee represents a complex creole performance repertoire with distinct personae and voices; while this intersection between heteroglossia and polyphony within the semiotic landscape of the tour clearly evokes the genre and narrative motivations of Bakhtin, these performances are also a microcosmic representation of much of the linguistic labor by speakers of a minority variety that goes on in less-curated intercommunity interactions.

1.3. STYLE AND STYLIZATION OF ‘TOUR’ GULLAH GEECHEE. The conceptualization of *style* as ‘intraspeaker variation’ and its role in attention to speech (Labov 1971), audience design (Bell 1984), and identity construction (Bucholtz 2009; Kiesling & Schilling-Estes 1998) is well-represented in the sociolinguistic canon. Permeating all three ‘waves’ of sociolinguistic research, style remains a salient framework with which to observe variation; this is particularly true in the context of conscious styling of language for indexical intersubjective positioning of the self and other (Bucholtz & Hall 2005; Eckert & Rickford 2001) and the movement between styles to indicate shifts in these stances and personae (Rickford & McNair-Knox 1994). *Style-shifting* as movement between distinct ways of speaking provides much intersectional and interactional flexibility for speakers in terms of construction of figures of personhood (Agha 2011), making and taking of stance, and accommodating or distancing one’s speech from the speech of others. Because style-shifting is bound up with conceptualizations of metalinguistic consciousness and control, it can be seen from the perspective of constructing the ‘authentic’ self, i.e. “the real me” (Sharma 2018). However, it is also a significant factor in the unconscious intraspeaker variation that occurs across interaction with regard to interlocuter and topic; particular theme or topics can trigger style-shifting as speakers position themselves in (dis)alignment with a subject and their specific ideological orientation to the topic (Rickford & McNair-Knox 1994; Schilling-Estes 2004; Schilling-Estes 2008). This is further layered with the above-mentioned voicing of the self and others that is often ‘signaled’ by its own style-shifted features that must be salient in some meaningful or marked way from the ‘default’ voice of a speaker; as Gullah Geechee tour guides embody multiple personae and voices that are all tied to stylistic repertoires, their style can also be viewed as part of their commodifiable ‘brand’ (Nakassis 2012) as guide and intermediary.

² I.e. a figure with epistemic authority or expertise about the community (in this case emically).

As Gullah Geechee is closely related to AAE, both in its history and in much of the language regard³ (Preston 2019) discourses around the two varieties, treatment of style in AAE can reveal some foundational patterning of how style and style-shifting emerge as productive phenomena in AAE speaker interaction. For example, Grieser (2013) found topic-based style-shifting among AAE-speaking interviewees was strongly influenced by their indexical links to a specific geographic community, the space's circulating racial ideologies, and the tensions between "ethnoracial marking" of a variant and interpretations of the community as a "racially neutral space." She further observes deployment of African American Language (AAL) stylistic variation as personae- and topic-dependent beyond simple registers of formality, "not one in which interviewees are on a continuum from formal to informal or moving through different imagined audiences, but rather one in which the topics invite them to style different parts of themselves" (Grieser 2019). The relationship between AAE features, educational achievement, and language regard has been observed (Craig & Grogger 2012); however, this relationship is more complicated than depicted in Craig and Grogger's study when considered in the context of AAE as a source of covert prestige, self-identifying pride, and resistance to hegemonic assimilationist norms (Alim 2004).

As a subset of style and style-shifting, *stylization*⁴ (Coupland 2001) draws from outsider perceptions, language stereotypes, and marked language forms as a way to draw attention to particular language practices and associated language ideologies through performance. Although Coupland archetypally illustrates stylization as a "strategic inauthenticity" (Coupland 2001) by outsiders that nonetheless requires substantial cultural and semiotic competence by speaker and listener in order to 'work', in the case of the current study we can modify the Gullah Geechee participant's recontextualized language display as *self-stylization*, i.e. the production of a curated, "emphatic and hyperbolic realization" of a way of speaking associated with their own native speaker community. In this way, stylized speech re-authenticates the language and speaker rather than de-authenticates, it de-accommodates from outsider speech norms, and it entextualizes (Bauman & Briggs 2003) and enregisters (Johnstone 2011) a type of 'tour Gullah Geechee', i.e. reconstitutes language and links it to a place and figure of personhood through performance. By foregrounding this stance towards the language as a salient entity that is recognizable in part due to the inability of outsiders to comprehend it (and positions guides as epistemic authorities and language brokers), stylized language acts as a robust resource of commodifiable language for both identity demarcation and extracommunity consumption. This use of stylized speech acts as a stereotyping of curated language through conscious intraspeaker variation, where the self-stylized speech performance indexes authenticity and fulfills tourist expectations. There are many features that can be drawn from the performance repertoire of Gullah Geechee speakers and hyperbolized for purposes of stylization; as prosodic markedness is a stereotypical aspect of the language noticed, evaluated, and commented on often by outsiders, it should come as no surprise that a specific mode of pitch-shifting and intonational pattern emerges during stylized Gullah Geechee performances.

³ Defined as bringing "together the evaluative notions typical of language attitude study, the beliefs about language more often discussed in folk linguistic and ethnographic studies, and the ideologies elaborated on by both sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists" (Preston 2019).

⁴ Defined as "projection of 'personas, identities, and genres other than those that are presumedly current in the speech event, where 'projected personas and genres derive from well-known identity repertoires, even though they may not be represented in full'" (Coupland 2001).

2. Falsetto as part of the stylistic persona repertoire. As a highly marked stylistic phonation, falsetto can be clearly linked to stylized language practices that are also emblematic with specific figures of personhood—if not associated with ‘mocking’ a way of speaking or persona, then often ones associated with minoritized (e.g. AAE) or a less-overtly valorized language variety (e.g. ‘gay men’s speech’). Falsetto is generally conceptualized as the “rapid vibration of the vocal folds in which the fundamental frequency, or F0, ranges from 240 Hz to 634 Hz for men compared to a modal F0 of around 100 Hz” (Nielsen 2010; Podesva 2007). As indicated above, because there exists little to no sociophonetic analysis of Gullah Geechee falsetto functions, the current study instead scaffolds from previous research on falsetto in men’s speech (Podesva 2007), again using observations made concerning falsetto in AAE-speaking men (Alim 2004; Nielsen 2010; Nielsen 2012) as a foundation from which to examine commonalities across stance and stylization contexts.

2.1. EXPRESSIVENESS AND PERSONAE. Podesva (2007) identifies five falsetto functions: 1) to yell; 2) to express surprise or excitement; 3) to offer evaluative commentary; 4) to enliven a direct quotation; 5) to engage audience when telling a narrative. These five discourse functions fall under Podesva’s “semantically underspecified” connotation of ‘expressiveness’, in which various social meanings are invoked and personae are constructed through the use of this feature specifically in interaction. Although expressiveness (denoted in the current study as ‘emphasis’ below) connotatively subsumes the first two functions (*yell* and *express surprise or excitement*), here the interaction between structural, indexical, and discursive functions of falsetto better illustrates the variability of falsetto in constructing social meaning outside of acoustic emphasis. While in the current study the participant exhibited iterations of all five of the discourse functions, the final two functions (*enliven a direct quotation* and *engage audience when telling a narrative*) are particularly relevant here in the narrative genre of the touristic performance; these contextual patterns highlight additional falsetto functions of voicing, reported speech, and ‘signaling’ of stylized moments that emerged as part of the speaker’s performance repertoire.

2.2. DRAMATIC EFFECT: EXPRESSIVENESS AND DECLARATIVE EMPHASIZER. Compared with Podesva’s observations of expressive and emphatic falsetto usage in gay men’s speech, the phonation patterns quite similarly in studies of AAE speakers (however, some important contrasts are identified in Section 2.3). In terms of AAE-speaking men’s repertoires, important functions of falsetto include building up suspense and establishing strength of one’s own feelings (Nielsen 2010; Tarone 1973), again pointing towards a typology of this pitch-shifting as expressive or emphatic. Earlier studies tend to regard falsetto function in “overgeneralized and unidimensional” (Nielsen 2010) ways, i.e. language play or excitement; further, other studies overrepresent prosody’s co-occurrence with structural features such as wh-interrogatives. However, there has been a shift in falsetto research towards discourse, speaker alignment, and interactional goals (Nielsen 2010; Tarone 1973), i.e. indexical functions affected by social situation and interaction in the conversational setting for specific communities of practice.

2.3. CHANGING STANCES: CHALLENGE, RESIST AND REPOSITION. Nielsen (2010; 2012) conceptualizes the interactional and indexical functions of falsetto with Harré and Lagenhove’s (1999) framework of *positioning theory*.⁵ These social positions can be subdivided into *performative positioning* (*deliberate*) and *accountive positioning* (*forced*) of *self and other* (Harré & Lagenhove

⁵ Defined as “the study of local moral orders as ever-shifting patterns of contestable rights and obligations of speaking and acting” (Harré & Lagenhove 1999; Nielsen 2010).

1999; Nielsen 2010); positioning subdivisions here represent differing axes and performances of agency and voicing. Nielsen goes on to identify the extension of forced self-positioning in *repositioning*, the “most extreme positioning type” that indexes a stance of ‘indignation’ that signals “persistence for information of inappropriate line of questioning” (Nielsen 2010; Nielsen 2012). This is corroborated by Alim’s identification of falsetto used in the *interrogative challenger* role (Alim 2004), and discursive constructions of protest, contestation, and oppositional alignment. While Nielsen’s participant did not seem use falsetto to co-construct opposition and solidarity, Tarone (1973) and Alim both observe this co-construction function in the AAE community (as “*competitive and communal*”), where there is a repositioning of the self based on audience and interactional context (Bell 1984; Nielsen 2010; Nielsen 2012).

3. Research questions and methods. The current study asks two main questions. 1) How, when, and why is falsetto utilized during the Gullah Geechee cultural heritage tour? This provides a typology of pitch-shifting and its acoustic baseline for this speaker in this context. 2) How does the use of falsetto interact with the intersections of creole language continua, stylization, and code-switching differently than other nearby language varieties (e.g. AAE and SAE)? Although not fully explored in this study, this provides a comparison to the indexical and discursive functions of AAE falsetto in performance.

3.1. PARTICIPANT, STIMULI, AND TEXT. The participant of the single-speaker study is Alphonso Brown, tour company owner and guide of Gullah Tours in Charleston, South Carolina. Brown is a self-identified *binyah*, i.e., authenticated local and Gullah Geechee speaker. The stimuli and text is a repeated standard 2-hour bus tour. Brown is the only tour guide for his company and this tour, and performs narrative, historic, and language-sharing genre functions throughout the tour. The tour covers a wide range of topics concerning Charleston, Black, and Gullah Geechee history and culture, interspersed with anecdotes, catchphrases, and moments of stylized language production. The tour is largely a non-interactive performance, with some limited intercommunity tourist participation.

3.2. PROCEDURE AND MEASUREMENTS. The speech data was recorded using a cellphone and an H4n mic placed near the participant during the tour. Intonational phrases (Ladefoged & Johnson 2011) and phrases assigned to topics/types of conversation were extracted, as well as discursive frames signaling genre, theme, or voicing shifts or turns. Falsetto was first identified impressionistically, then analyzed in terms of max F0 (Hz), F0 range (Hz), and duration (s) (Nielsen 2010; Podesva 2007). Typology emerged from stylistic resource, discursive frames, and patterns that emerged during analysis; two main indexical voicing functions were found (stylization and reported speech), with an additional sub-function (reported speech of Gullah Geechee gatekeeper and community icon, Phillip Simmons) and previously established emphatic function also observed. Data was digitized at sampling rate of 44.1 kHz and visualized in Praat (Boersma and Weenink 2021, Version 6.1.16). Baseline average of speaker modal phonation was established through mean pitch calculation, for this speaker a measurement of 162.06Hz, which falls within acceptable boundary established by other falsetto studies (i.e. ~100Hz, taking into account variation by demographic features). Acoustic measures were illustrated in Praat, displaying height (Hz), duration (s), and range (Hz) of falsetto. Total range of pitch by speaker established the y-axis of 50Hz to 655Hz.

4. Results. Table 1 displays a sampling of representative falsetto utterances, their measured maximum, minimum, range, and duration, as well as the typological function of the falsetto. The

following subsections further analyze and describe the characteristics of each typological function.

utterance	f0 max	f0 min	f0 range	f0 duration	type
<i>we ran dem chirrun from</i>	590.6972	340.0832	250.614	0.354814	stylization
<i>if I ain dea I ain dea</i>	583.0672	408.0395	175.0276	0.319204	stylization
<i>kam witchu</i>	518.5807	306.8925	211.6882	0.268513	stylization
<i>he'll tell ya I don't deal in</i>	653.8246	301.4503	352.3743	0.146	reported speech; stylization; Phillip Simmons
<i>deal in no cast iron</i>	629.9486	485.0144	144.9343	0.1771	reported speech; stylization; Phillip Simmons
<i>sei e na we don mount</i>	614.536	396.7821	217.7539	0.612	reported speech; stylization; Phillip Simmons
<i>fuh dey tiefn um</i>	387.1386	170.3795	216.7591	0.182	reported speech; stylization; Phillip Simmons
<i>ain no man wan no gyal</i>	547.2766	535.8668	11.40974	1.098465	reported speech; stylization
<i>what else y'all gon do</i>	453.5349	425.8539	27.68096	0.136249	reported speech; stylization
<i>dem old folks said mind</i>	402.2109	397.9618	4.249052	0.079582	reported speech; stylization
<i>Mr. Simmons said Ms.</i>	627.2233	483.7692	143.4541	0.471	reported speech; Phillip Simmons
<i>he said if you see it curled</i>	549.5166	525.3966	24.12	0.1637	reported speech; Phillip Simmons
<i>I said well lady we all pay</i>	584.733	485.8544	98.87863	0.052331	reported speech
<i>I said well yeah</i>	453.253	408.6866	44.5664	0.154861	reported speech
<i>Joseph said when ya buy</i>	385.0027	298.8676	86.13503	0.769342	reported speech
<i>iron</i>	653.9312	349.911	304.0201	0.343769	emphasis
<i>take it with you</i>	552.3904	243.8082	308.5822	0.1321	emphasis
<i>you take a hammer, can't</i>	417.1695	222.3799	194.7896	0.178527	emphasis
avg	533.557	377.055	156.502	0.31331	
median	550.953	397.372	159.981	0.18026	

Table 1. Utterance, pitch, duration and type of falsetto

4.1. REPORTED SPEECH. The *reported speech* falsetto function had an average maximum of 409.65Hz, an average range of 114.36Hz, and an average duration of 0.337s. This function exhibited the lowest average max pitch of all functions and resultingly had the lowest average range. The reported speech falsetto function was also the discursive falsetto frame used most often during tour. Figure 1 provides a reported speech example of the utterance *he'll tell ya I don't deal in no cast iron*.

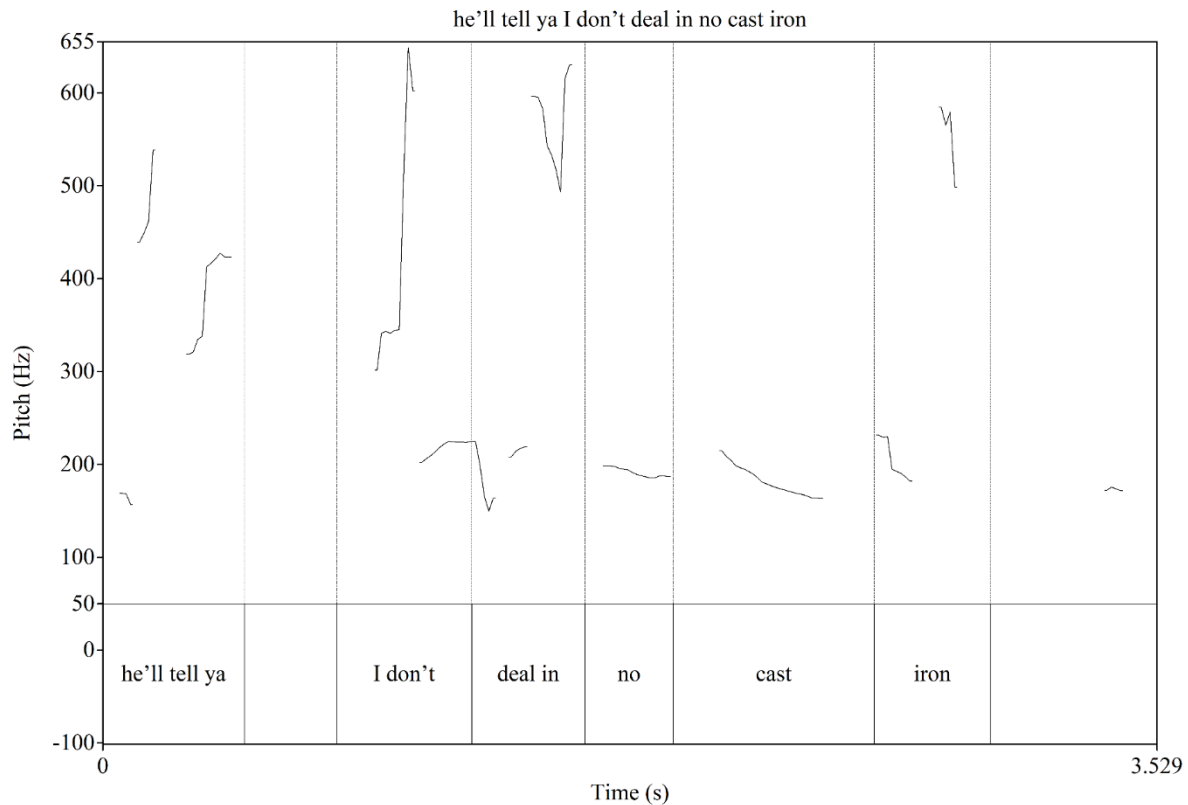


Figure 1. Reported speech: *he'll tell ya I don't deal in no cast iron*⁶

This instance clearly shows a falsetto peak (653.82Hz; range 352.37Hz) for the reported speech *I don't* after the discursive marker indicating the reported speech turn *he'll tell ya*. Here the marker is co-constructing the voicing of another with the following falsetto function, with rapid downshifting before the next falsetto peak in *deal in* (629.95Hz; range 144.93Hz). This example is similar to others in the study in that there are overlapping falsetto functions all co-occurring simultaneously, which contributes to multiple falsetto peaks in the same utterance, with resultant pitch-lowering in between to make the pitch-shifting more distinct. In Figure 1, there is *stylization* and *Phillip Simmons's speech* function occurring as well; the *he* here refers to Simmons and the negative concord *don't...no* is a marker of stylized speech by Brown, who elsewhere uses the *don't...any* negative construction. Note that although the initial portion of the reported speech introduction and discourse marker is relatively high pitch, after the falsetto peaks there is consistently low prosody (~200Hz), with a final emphatic falsetto function on *iron* (653.93Hz).

4.2. SELF-STYLIZATION. The *self-stylization* falsetto function had an average maximum of 538.08Hz, an average range of 161.25Hz, and an average duration of 0.337s. This function exhibited the median average max pitch of all functions and resultingly had the median average range. The self-stylization falsetto function was used most often during tour in order to highlight the greatest disparity between Brown's English and Gullah Geechee speaking styles, drawing from linguistic stereotyping to co-construct his community belonging and fluency, positioning tourist out-grouping through inability to understand native speaker utterances, and distinguishing

⁶ Audio of this utterance can be found here: <https://osf.io/fxbpj/files/osfstorage/64127aa28604900cc608704b>

Gullah Geechee as a salient and separate way of speaking. Figure 2 provides a self-stylization example of the utterance *we ran dem chirrun from ya* ('we ran those children from here').

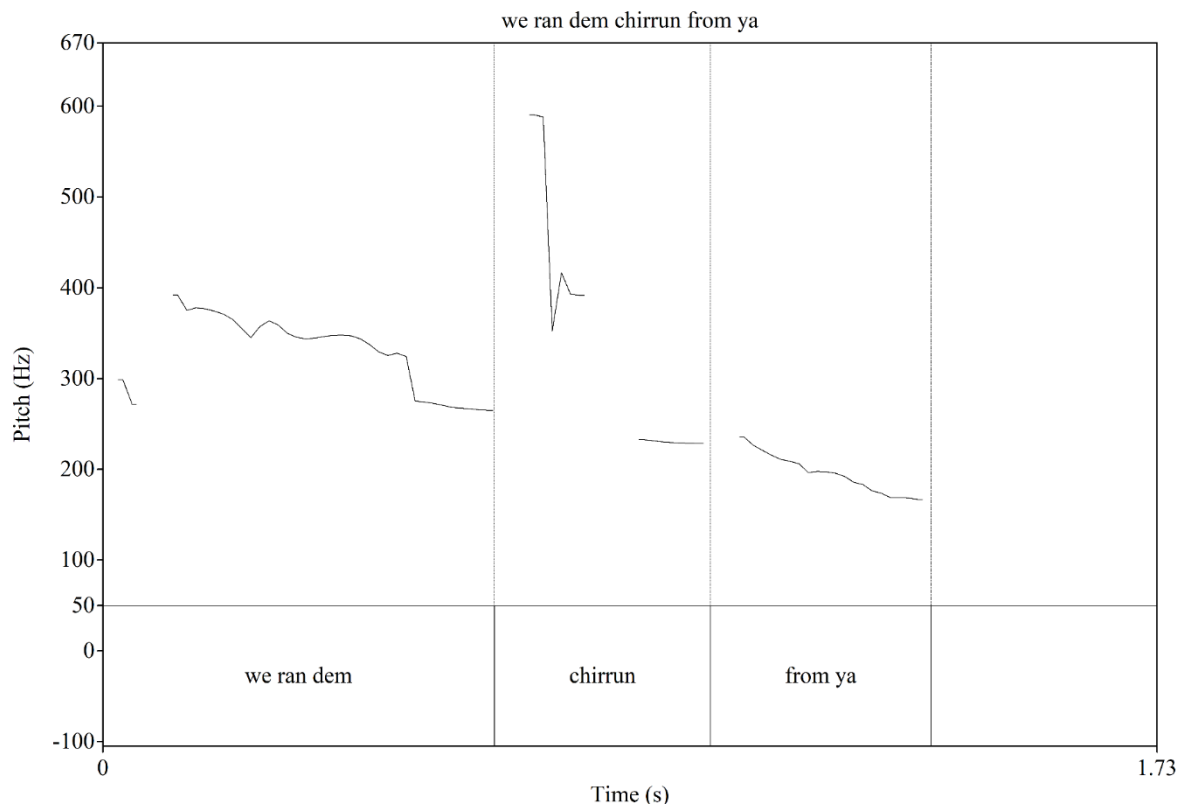


Figure 2. Self-stylization: *we ran dem chirrun from ya*⁷

This instance clearly shows a falsetto peak (590.7Hz; range 250.614Hz) for the stylized term *chirrun* within the larger stylized utterance. Here a consistent lowering of pitch can be seen, decreasing from utterance-initial *we* (~400Hz) to utterance-final *ya* (~200Hz). This example lacks co-occurrence of other falsetto functions, representing in isolation the stylization of Brown's own speech as opposed to the voicing of others. Rather, multiple features of stylized Gullah Geechee are co-occurring in this utterance, including deictic nominalization (*dem* 'those'), lexicalized phonetic-variation forms (*chirrun* 'children'), and locative marking (*ya* 'here'); these operate in indexical constellation with prosodic features of both falling tone and falsetto. This further emphasizes that stylized Gullah Geechee performance cannot be indicated by a singular feature or feature type, especially one that may be shared with contract varieties). Instead, the enregisterment of multiple features within a repertoire is needed to both make recognizable a way of speaking even in a curated context, as well as provide linguistic stereotyping tied to language ideology and regard that make moments of (self-)stylization themselves recognizable to listeners.

4.3. PHILLIP SIMMONS'S SPEECH. The *Phillip Simmons's speech* falsetto function had an average maximum of 577.03Hz, an average range of 183.23Hz, and an average duration of 0.292s. This function exhibited the highest average max pitch of all functions and resultingly had the highest average range. The Phillip Simmons's speech falsetto occasionally occurs without significant

⁷ Audio of this utterance can be found here: <https://osf.io/fxbpj/files/osfstorage/64127aa68604900cc6087055>

stylization, but more commonly co-occurs with stylization. Figure 3 provides a Phillip Simmons’s speech example of the utterance *Mr. Simmons said Ms. Stoney, that’s a piece a iron, you fraida iron?*, in which it occurs without significant stylization.

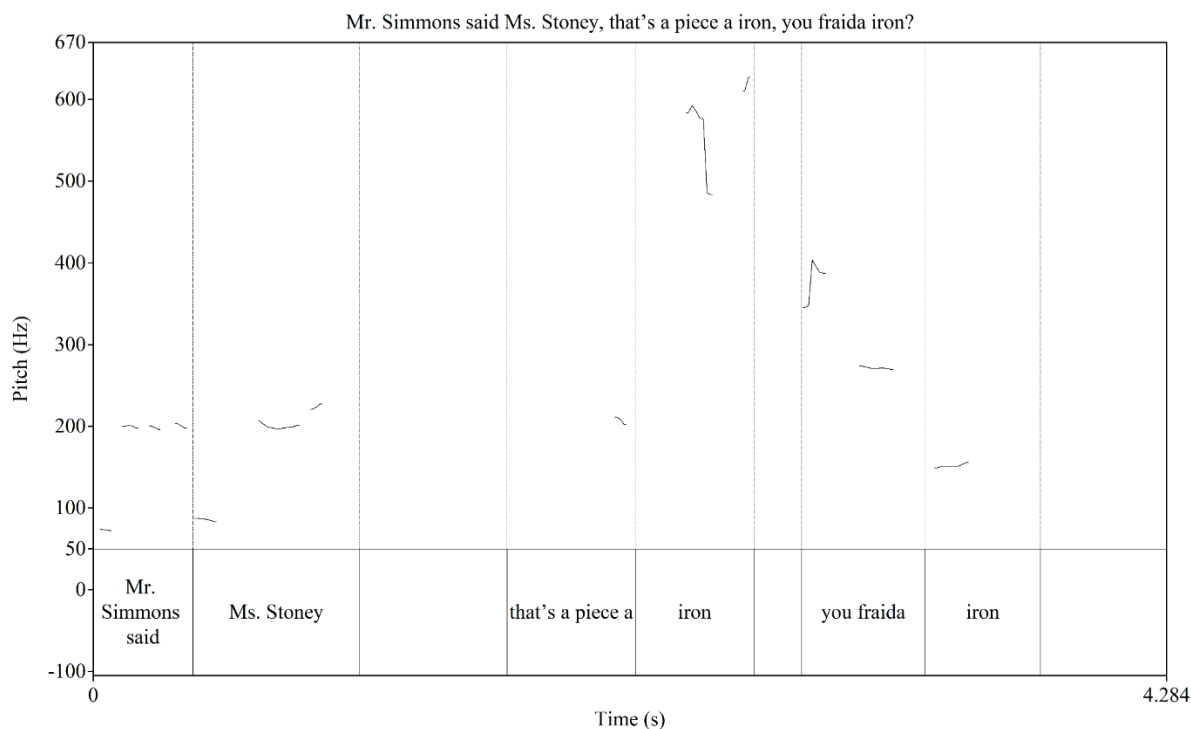


Figure 3. Phillip Simmons’s speech: *Mr. Simmons said Ms. Stoney, that’s a piece a iron, you fraida iron?*⁸

This instance shows a falsetto peak (627.22Hz; range 143.45Hz) within the reported speech of Simmons for the utterance *iron*, after the discursive marker indicating the reported speech turn *Mr. Simmons said*. Here it can be seen that the discursive frame and beginning of the reported speech are at a consistent pitch (~200Hz), but the falsetto occurs with a large shift before falling back to the >200Hz range. In this particular example, although there is some stylistic variation, e.g. reduction (*a* for ‘of’) and apheresis (*fraida* for ‘afraid of’), it lacks the persistent stylization in the final example and instead better visualizes the sub-function of specific reported speech in relative isolation. This isolation of discursive function does not necessarily indicate a mitigation of the height of the intonation, as the peak displayed here is one of the highest, but also does not correspond with range difference of a pitch shift within an intonational unit (cf. the starkest difference of the non-emphatic examples being *he’ll tell ya I don’t deal in no cast iron* with a falsetto range of 352.37Hz). This example also illustrates the need for further examination of the indexical and/or sociophonetic interactions between falsetto maximum *height* compared with surrounding intonation, and relationship to falsetto *range*, i.e. is pitch height versus pitch difference a more salient sociophonetic variable, or do they operate with similar social meaning in Gullah Geechee and other varieties. Figure 4 provides a Phillip Simmons’s speech example of the utterance *sei e na we don mount dem gate on da pin like dat no mo* (‘he said now, “we don’t mount those gates on the pin like that anymore’’), in which it occurs with significant stylization.

⁸ Audio of this utterance can be found here: <https://osf.io/fxbpj/files/osfstorage/64127aa6e256360d212317f8>

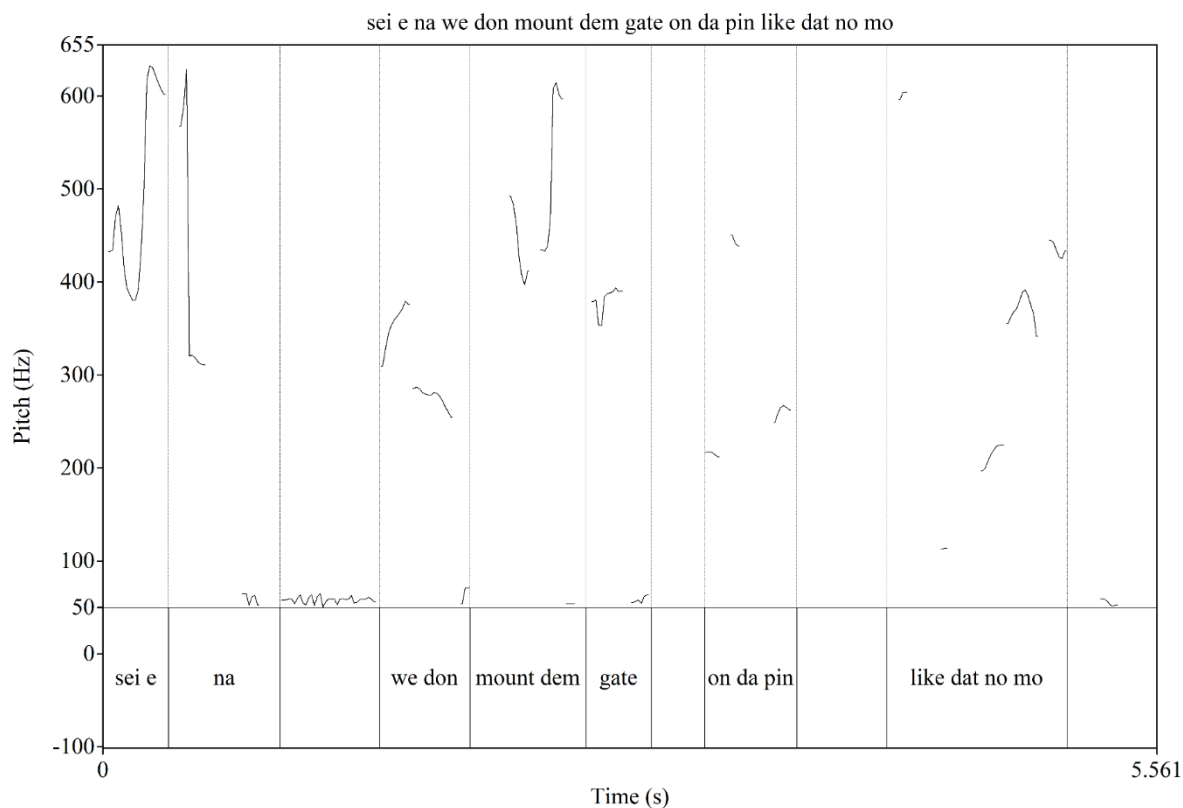


Figure 4. Phillip Simmons’s speech: *sei e na we don mount dem gate on da pin like dat no mo*⁹

This instance clearly shows multiple falsetto peaks throughout the utterance. The first falsetto peaks involve the discursive marker indicating Simmons’s reported speech *sei e* (634.72Hz; range 255.83Hz) *na* (665.19Hz; range 355.56Hz); this example is particularly interesting because it illustrates that stylization is not restricted to the reported speech clause and is actually performed with multiple indexical features across the entire utterance. In both of these initial falsetto instances there are large ranges in pitch shift, with the first instance shifting upwards and the second shifting downwards, creating a stark contour that draws attention to the co-occurring function. The second set of instances shift in the opposite direction: high to low in *mount* (480.85Hz; range 101.21Hz) and low to high in *dem* (620.11Hz; range 184.22Hz), illustrating another contour, but unlike the previous instances has a falsetto as its terminus rather than medially. In this case, both intonational contours with falsetto features are occurring at higher-than-average pitch overall, indicating that a higher overall pitch may also be associated with the co-occurring discursive functions and/or voicing performance Brown is producing here. As with the other examples of stylization, there are multiple syntactic, lexical, and phonetic indexical features exhibited within the utterance, including deictic nominalization, negative concord, derhoticization (*mo* ‘more’), the pronoun *e*, adverbial *na*, and interdental occlusion (*da* ‘the’, *dat* ‘that’). Not only are multiple features being used in this moment of stylization, but this indexical constellation is intersecting with multiple discursive falsetto functions.

⁹ Audio of this utterance can be found here: <https://osf.io/fxbpj/files/osfstorage/64127aa28604900cc608704b>

5. Limitations, discussion, and conclusion. Limitations of the current study include the initial identification of falsetto perceptually and impressionistically. No one acoustic measure captures falsetto phonation type; it can still be accurately identified through baseline generalized ranges (Podesva 2007) but overlap exists with other types of phonation, meaning variable socially-constrained criteria exist (e.g. the use of falsetto as an active part of in-group identification), as well as a wide range of demographic features that affect default pitch and voice quality for individuals and any generalized community. Also, only a portion of currently available ethnographic data was analyzed for prosody; as a heterogeneous community of practice, Gullah Geechee tour guides use different amounts of falsetto during tours (if at all) and have different arrays of features within their performance repertoire, meaning further exploration of the feature and its relationship to Gullah Geechee enregisterment, language identification and stereotyping is needed. Single-speaker stylistic studies are useful for capturing individuated intraspeaker variation; however, the incorporation of more participants with varying styles, as well as observing topic-based variation in interaction would provide a much more holistic typology of falsetto and Gullah Geechee intonational features overall. The tour genre elicited robust falsetto instances where clear patterns of use emerged, but negligible amounts were elicited during interviews with guides, as guides viewed those interactions as less performative and more formal. The tour site used for this specific study takes place on a bus with a considerable amount of interfering noise (e.g. engine, fans, mic feedback, tourist chatter) but is representative of the most naturalistic environment of the genre. Therefore, trying to improve acoustic quality (e.g. lapel mics or headsets for guides) would greatly aid in accurate identification of falsetto and intonational contour patterns, as interference disrupted the visualizations in Praat (e.g. the ‘scatter’ of pitch in Figure 4).

This current project represents a baseline first step towards a more fine-grained sociophonetic analysis of understudied prosodic functions, typology, and indexicality in a minority creole language. Falsetto is a highly active feature for this Gullah Geechee tour guide, who uses it in reported speech and stylization with a relatively wide acoustic distribution and for multiple discursive functions. Along with the expected use of falsetto to indicate expressiveness and emphasis, high pitch-shifting was used to perform voice-shifting and co-occur with discursive markers and other stylized language features. It plays an active part in conscious style-shifting, persona-constructing, and stance-taking; as guides construct authenticity through stereotype distinction, falsetto as marked from its presence in contact varieties contributes to the indexical constellation of enregistered language in this case, particularly in the realization of a curated ‘tour Gullah Geechee’. Falsetto was observed to have a high level of co-occurrence with other stylized features, as well as indicating multiple discursive functions simultaneously. This extends its indexical function beyond what is established in the literature for other minoritized contact varieties, especially providing additional context for how falsetto is taken up in Black communities beyond indignation or contestation, acting as a marker of community identity and also as intercommunity stereotype recognition in entertainment and performance contexts. The current study indicates its salience in the (ethnolinguistic) repertoire and indexical constellation, where further observations in other interactional contexts with other community members may reinforce or disrupt the patterns displayed here. Guides curate tour experiences to tourist expectations and imaginaries, creating commodifiable moments of Gullah Geechee that are most positively evaluated when they are at their most recognizable as a variety distinct from MAE, AAE, or SAE (i.e. ‘English’); it is this ‘souvenirization’ (Cordeiro 2011) of Gullah Geechee for extracommunity consumption that requires the metalinguistic and metapragmatic awareness of guides to negotiate how stylized features can enregister, entextualize, and recontextualize to be

taken up by tourists in processes of authentication and legitimation. In this way, the embodied linguistic capital of the Gullah Geechee tour guide is a central part of their ‘brand’, and a brand relies on its distinct elements and their particular assemblages in order to be recognizable and competitive in the symbolic marketplace. In these performances, guides prosodically stylize their language practices and mark the voices of themselves and others; falsetto is just one such way in which these indexical processes can be observed.

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