

LABORATORY STYLIZATION OF “GAY SPEECH”:
EXPLORING EXPERIMENTAL METHODOLOGIES AS A TOOL FOR SOCIOCULTURAL LINGUISTIC
ANALYSIS

by

ALEXANDER H. BUCHNER

B.A. University of Wisconsin, 2009

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Masters of Arts
Department of Linguistics
2012

This thesis entitled:
Laboratory Stylization of “Gay Speech”:
Exploring experimental methodologies as a tool for sociocultural linguistic analysis
has been approved for the Department of Linguistics

Dr. Kira Hall

Dr. Rebecca Scarborough

Date: _____

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

IRB protocol # _____ 11-0406 _____

Buchner, Alexander Harris (M.A., Linguistics)

Laboratory Stylization of “Gay Speech”:

Exploring experimental methodologies as a tool for sociocultural linguistic analysis

Thesis directed by Associate Professor Kira Hall

In this paper I discuss the results of a study on stylization and stylistic productions of “gay speech.” The paper has three interrelated goals: one experimental, one methodological and one theoretical. The experimental goal was to determine if and to what extent exaggeration prevails in stylistic performances of “gay speech.” Additionally, the methodological goal was to help establish experimental methodologies as useful for sociocultural linguistic analyses. Finally, the theoretical goal was to add to the robustness of sociocultural linguistic theory by providing evidence from experimental and quantitative analyses that support previous theoretical claims. Analysis of /s/ frequency at peak amplitude from 9 speakers performing both base recordings and stylized recordings indicated that exaggeration is likely relevant with respect to this feature and its role in the production of stylized “gay speech.” These findings also suggest that the experimental methodologies are effective in eliciting data for fruitful sociocultural linguistic analysis. Importantly, the data presented in this essay reflect patterns emergent in sociocultural linguistic analysis of identity, namely theories of *adequation* and *distinction* (Bucholtz & Hall 2005) and *neo-minstrelsy* (Bucholtz & Lopez 2012) and thereby suggest that experimental techniques such as the ones presented can be beneficial to the solidification of these linguistic theories. By combining qualitatively oriented and quantitatively oriented methodologies, this essay provides new directions for the analysis of the role of language variation in the production of local meaning while offering new insight to the way researchers might consider this relationship.

Contents

1	Introduction	1	
	1.1	<i>Quantitative Studies on Gay Sounding Voice</i>	2
	1.2	<i>Sociocultural explorations of Style and Stylization</i>	4
	1.3	<i>Predictions and Hypotheses</i>	7
2	The Current Study	9	
	2.1	<i>Participant Selection</i>	10
	2.2	<i>Methodology for Pilot and Experiment 1</i>	11
	2.3	<i>Methodology for Experiment 2</i>	12
	2.4	<i>Rationale for Interpretation</i>	13
	2.5	<i>Data Segregation</i>	15
3	Pilot	15	
	3.1	<i>Results</i>	15
	3.2	<i>Brief Discussion: Pilot</i>	18
4	Experiment 1	20	
	4.1	<i>Results</i>	21
	4.2	<i>Brief Discussion: Experiment 1</i>	23
5	Experiment 2	24	
	5.1	<i>Results</i>	24
	5.2	<i>Brief Discussion: Experiment 2</i>	25
6	General Discussion	28	
	6.1	<i>Adequation and Distinction</i>	29
	6.2	<i>Neo-Minstrelsy</i>	33
7	Conclusion	36	
	7.1	<i>Limitations</i>	37
	7.2	<i>Future Research</i>	38
8	References	40	
	Appendix	43	

Tables

1. Paired comparisons across speaker frames.....18

2. Paired t-test results for stylized vs. unstylized performances by speaker.....23

Figures

1.	Speech-Frame Interactions.....	17
2.	Average Peak /s/ Frequency by Speaker and Frame.....	21
3.	Average Peak /s/ Frequency by Speaker and Frame.....	25
4.	Mean length (in seconds) of sentences for speaker 14.....	27

1 Introduction

In this paper I discuss the results of a study on stylization and stylistic productions of “gay speech¹.” The paper has three interrelated goals: one experimental, one methodological and one theoretical.

The experimental goal of this exploration was to determine whether, and to what extent, feature exaggeration prevails in stylistic performances of “gay speech.” Using quantitative statistical analysis of sibilant /s/ production, specifically frequency of /s/ at peak amplitude (peak /s/ frequency), the essay suggests that in experimental contexts, exaggeration of /s/ peak frequency in stylized productions of “gay speech” is nearly systematically universal. The extent of exaggeration is, however, not systematic.

By uncovering and discussing this fact, this exploration achieves its second goal of establishing a different methodological perspective as viable in a field of study that has almost exclusively been relegated to qualitative analysis. Though the experimental goal of this project does not address a necessarily groundbreaking endeavor, expanding methodological breadth in sociocultural linguistics is vital to the expansion of the field. Additionally, pushing beyond, previous quantitative research on “gay speech,” defined by controlled explorations that simply link (via perception) speech features with sexuality categories, this essay explores how exaggeration in stylization is performed (via production) irrespective of speakers’ sexuality category. The speaker’s self-classification with regards to sexuality becomes relevant in the analysis of his stylized and unstylized performances, but it is not considered with

¹ The term “gay speech” is one I have selected to subsume previous classifications of speech concerned with a synthesis between linguistic structures and gay identity. Previous labels such as “gay-sounding,” “gay English,” etc. often retain specific links to particular linguistic structures (i.e. phonetic structures or

respect to the new methodological goal established for and through this experiment.

Finally, as addressed in the discussion sections below, this quantitative exploration lends further evidence to support the theoretical claims from which the study emerged (see e.g. Hall 2005 and Bucholtz 2011). This endeavor is thus firmly situated within qualitative sociocultural linguistics and has the analytical functionality to support sociocultural linguistic theory. Specifically, the general discussion section to follow engages with sociocultural linguistic theories of identity, specifically Bucholtz and Hall's *tactics of intersubjectivity* (2004 and 2005) and Bucholtz & Lopez' (2012) conceptualization of *neo-minstrelsy* in reflexive identity performance. In so doing, this paper complements qualitative sociolinguistic research and broadly provides new insight to explorations of language ideology and local performances of style and stylization.

It seems appropriate, now, to explore the relevant research that has emerged with respect to this topic. First, in section 1.1, I outline previous quantitative studies on “gay speech.” The focus is mainly on phonetic analysis and perceptual studies that, as I mentioned above, attempt to draw correlations between speech sounds and categorical sexualities. In section 1.2, I explore previous sociocultural studies on style and stylization. Section 1.3 presents explicit predictions and hypotheses, which the pursuant methods are designed to address.

1.1 Quantitative Studies on Gay Sounding Voice

After Gaudio (1994) uncovered a strong link between phonetic variability and perceived sexuality, sociophoneticians interested in “gay speech” began analyzing discrete phonetic variables in search of correlations between speech sounds and sexual

identity. Focusing on variation in the production of vowels (Munson et. al. 2006; Piccolo 2008; Pierrehumbert et. al. 2004; Smyth and Rogers 2002; Zimman 2009), paralinguistic features like speech rate (Linville 1998) and phonation type (Munson et. al 2006 and Podesva 2007), and consonants (Smyth & Rogers 2002; Campbell-Kibler 2007), scholars have attempted to correlate sounds with perceived sexual identities.

However, most of the research in this area has focused on two factors: pitch and sibilant production. With respect to pitch, analyses have looked at mean pitch (Smyth, Jacobs and Rogers 2003; Smyth and Rogers 2002; Linville 1998; Munson et. al. 2006; Munson 2007 and Zimman 2009) and pitch range/variability (Smyth, Jacobs and Rogers 2003; Smyth and Rogers 2002; Levon 2006, 2007 and Zimman 2009). Analyses of sibilant /s/ production have focused on duration (Levon 2006, 2007; Linville 1998; Smyth & Rogers 2002; Zimman 2009), peak frequency (Linville 1998; Smyth & Rogers 2002; and Zimman 2009), spectral center of gravity (Munson et. al. 2006; Zimman 2009), and spectral skew (Munson et. al. 2006; Munson & Babel 2007; and Zimman 2009). These studies have produced varying results, a full review of which is, however, beyond the scope of this paper. A few notable studies on these features, however, warrant further discussion.

Linville (1998) and Smyth & Rogers (2002) found a correlation between /s/ peak frequency and subjects self-identification as gay (i.e. gay identity) while Zimman (2009) did not find such a correlation. Though this subset of studies does not conclusively link or unlink particular productions of /s/ to perceptions of gay identity, Zimman (2009) suggests that these discrepancies might in fact be the result of methodological differences between the studies. Critically, how analysts establish their automated measurements

could have unexpected affects on the data that is extracted from the linguistic input. Additionally, recent studies situated in reinterpretations of concepts of style, mainly following what Eckert (under review) has described as third wave variationist analysis, have suggested that discreet studies of these features are problematic. Eckert, and others, suggest that analysts must acknowledge that variable meaning is underspecified and that variables acquire significance in contextual constructions of “personae”.

1.2 Sociocultural explorations of Style and Stylization

Studies on the performances (and also perception) of local styles through the use of phonetic variation have gained traction in third wave variationist analyses and some experimental work that emerged from this sociocultural paradigm. Notably, Campbell-Kibler’s (2007) study found a relationship between pronunciations of ING and perceptions of distinct accents, noting that velar pronunciations were linked with higher ratings of gay-sounding speech and lower ratings of Southern speech, while alveolar productions of ING showed the inverse. Podesva (2007), in a micro-ethnographic analysis of the use of falsetto in distinct contexts, argued that variation in the use of this phonation type allowed for the local construction of gay styles linking more frequent use of falsetto to a “gay diva” style. There are many similar studies outside the realm of “gay speech” as well (see e.g. Eckert 2001, 2008a, 2005, 1998, 1995; Mendoza-Denton 2008; Bucholtz et. al. 2011; Bucholtz 2010, 2004, 2001). These studies on style have contributed to, and continue to construct, a strong foundation for further variationist research. However, for the most part, the studies are not centrally concerned with the role of stylization or “conscious” variation.

Following Benjamin Rampton’s (1995) groundbreaking monograph, *Crossing*:

Language and Ethnicity among Adolescents, studies of stylistic performances of speech varieties began to emerge in greater numbers. Under Rampton's editorial guidance, the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* published an edition (vol. 3 ed. 4 1999) entitled "Styling the Other," which provides several qualitative analyses of the acts of stylization of various speech varieties. More recent sociocultural studies of stylization like Hall (2005) and Bucholtz (2011) have also, through ethnographic observation, linked exaggeration with stylization and the production of stereotypical, temporary identities. From a sociophonetic perspective, Crist (1997) and Gordon (2008) have examined the perception of speech produced under the directive to "sound gay" or to "approximate an extreme gay stereotype", but unfortunately do not draw any links between these productions and the broader concept of stylization. Crist (1997), as with many of the studies that followed Gaudio (1994), focused specifically on finding discrete links between this style of "gay speech" and perceptions of sounding gay. Gordon (2008) was perhaps justifiably critical of such discrete approaches but focused his argument on re-approaching the study of "gay speech" from a holistic phonological perspective. Whereas these studies offer an interesting starting point for analyses of stylization, specifically stylization of "gay speech," the current essay expands on the theoretical or documentary aspects of "gay speech" analysis and provides statistically oriented phonetic analyses of stylized "gay speech." Specifically, this analysis employs quantitative methods in an effort to determine if or how stylized "gay speech" differs quantitatively from speech that is performed without instructions to "sound gay" or "approximate a gay stereotype". Most significantly, this investigation presents quantitative evidence to support claims regarding stylization that have been made in sociocultural linguistic study.

For the purpose of this analysis, I adopt a definition of “stylization” interpreted by and through the lens of Coupland (2001) instead of the more traditional Bakhtinian conception of stylization that emerged from his work in literary and cultural criticism. As Coupland astutely observes, Bakhtin conceptualized stylization as “appropriating the voices of the powerful and reworking them for new purposes” (Coupland: 345). Coupland asserts, however, that, “stylization can be analyzed with a narrower focus: in specific communicative contexts and at specific linguistic/semiotic levels, where its effects are created and experienced much more locally than Bakhtin implies.” (346) Though he does not argue for an abandonment of the Bakhtinian concepts intrinsic to stylization, Coupland calls for a more localized focus on the acts of stylization. This localized focus, one predicated on the analysis of the role of individual variants in stylistic performances, is in stark contrast with a global focus that would require the analysis of stylistic performance as clearly constituted by the interaction of multiple specific and ideological style forms. Rather than adopting a purely holistic perspective, Coupland suggests that the analysis of “linguistic/semiotic levels,” (i.e. the constitutive parts of stylistic performance and not the constituted style that is performed during stylization) is an important part of understanding the intricacies of how stylization is done.

Since the current investigation is, in fact, focused directly on the “hypothetical identities” (Coupland, 349) created through stylized language use, Coupland’s perspective is particularly enlightening. Through his discussion of the variables stylized by his radio announcers, he implies that picking and choosing specific cues of a language variety is indicative of stylization. We might, then, be able to posit that in the hyperbolic

cases of stylization (posited by the sociocultural linguistic analyses cited above and supported quantitatively in this essay), speakers choose particularly salient indexical cues and accentuate them. It is these indexical cues that suggest a specific speech style or, perhaps more broadly, the perceived identity constructed through indexical links to specific aspects of said style. If hyperbole is a key element in the processes of stylization, and if the selection of certain cues over others is a key indicator of stylization, then there should in fact be specific cues that become apparent in phonetic analysis of stylized “gay speech.” To that end, the analysis pursued here focuses specifically on frequency at peak amplitude of the voiceless alveolar fricative /s/, a feature that has been systematically and ideologically linked to “gay speech” through the concept of the “gay lisp” (Munson & Zimmerman 2006). Eckert’s (2008b) theory of indexical fields establishes conclusively that single variables are likely not the impetus for identity construction in speech, but rather that multiple variables work in consort with each other to produce styles that are recognizable. Therefore, although /s/ is probably not the only feature in the speech of the subjects involved in this study that is altered in their stylized performances, it was selected for analysis through careful consideration of previous investigations in this realm and, simply, as an example of the kind of exaggeration that might, in fact, be more systematic in stylized performances of any kind.

1.3 Predictions and Hypotheses for the Experimental Goal

There are several factors that influence the predictions and subsequent hypotheses to be presented in this section. Namely, previous research has helped significantly with respect to general assumptions that can be made about the data. Given the previous quantitative research on “gay speech” presented above, and assuming that correlations

between speech variable and perceived identity ratings create salient ideological indexes ripe for reproduction, we can perhaps safely assume that given an experimental context in which speakers are tasked with performing “gay speech”, similar differences (i.e. variance in /s/ peak frequency) should emerge in speakers between unstylized and stylized performances:

HYPOTHESIS 1: STYLIZED PERFORMANCES OF “GAY SPEECH” WILL EXHIBIT MEAN PEAK /S/ FREQUENCIES THAT ARE STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER THAN MEAN PEAK /S/ FREQUENCIES IN UNSTYLIZED PERFORMANCES.

Additionally, the two previous experiments conducted in Crist (1997) and Gordon (2008) present a problematic conflict in participant instruction, the former requesting performances of an explicitly stereotyped speech and the latter requesting an un(der)specified qualification of a speech style (i.e. “try to sound gay” which, as we will see in the discussion to follow, might not be a completely clear instruction in such an experimental task). Though it could be argued that these are vastly different tasks, and given the fact that Zimman (2009) has suggested that methodological differences could be relevant in the emergence of conflicting results, Crist (1997) and Gordon (2008) do not collectively represent a data set that suggests that “trying to sound gay” and “approximating a gay stereotype” elicit contradictory results. But if they are different, we should expect to see significant differences in production depending on which instructions the subjects receive. Notably, if “trying to sound gay” implies a less ideological or stereotypical performances than “perform a gay stereotype,” we might predict that speakers would exaggerate /s/ frequencies more significantly while “performing a

stereotype” than while “trying to sound gay.”

HYPOTHESIS 2: MEAN PEAK /S/ FREQUENCY IN STYLIZED PERFORMANCES WILL BE STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER WHEN SUBJECTS ARE INSTRUCTED TO “SOUND GAY” THAN WHEN THEY ARE INSTRUCTED TO “PERFORM A GAY STEREOTYPE.”

2 The Current Study

The results presented here comprise three experimental settings: 1) the pilot phase (N = 2) in which the two subjects were a sexually dyadic pair (1 gay and 1 straight), 2) Experiment 1, the larger data collection phase, in which subjects (N = 5) were chosen at random (i.e. without concern for subjects’ sexuality) and 3) Experiment 2 (N = 2) which involves another sexually dyadic pair. Though the pilot study helped frame the data collection for the larger project to be discussed herein, initial concern about the identification of the speakers was abandoned in order to focus more closely on the general process of stylization and its affects on measurable productions of /s/. Preliminary results showed evidence for claims that the production of stylistic performances of speech varieties involves the exaggeration of specific speech variables. The role of speaker identity and how it interacts more concretely with these results is, however, beyond the scope the current exploration and is thus relegated to future studies of the influence of dyadic sexuality friend pairs on exaggeration in such experimental (or perhaps other) contexts. This study will focus primarily on general aspects of stylization and exaggeration. The methodologies for the three experiments are nearly identical and I will outline them briefly below.

2.1 Participant Selection

In order to control for as many factors as possible, the selection of participants was rigorous. Speakers were selected based on several criteria for both the pilot study and the two subsequent experiments. For the two experiments following the pilot, speakers were selected based on 1) gender (speakers who identified as male), 2) age (speakers between 20-30 years old), and 3) native language (native speakers of Standard American English). These same requirements existed for subjects in the pilot study, with the additional requirement mentioned above, that subjects were recruited in a sexually dyadic friend pair (i.e. one who identified as gay and one who identified as straight). Additionally, speakers with known hearing impairments and speakers with current or previous pathological speech impediments were excluded from the experiments.

Subjects for the pilot study came from the principal researcher's immediate social network. Subjects for the larger project were found through advertisements in local publications and through the network provided by graduate instructors of large undergraduate seminars in linguistics (and additionally from the principal investigator's social network). Neither the subjects of the pilot study nor the subjects of the larger study were aware of the specific research topic until after they had performed their tasks and filled out a brief demographic questionnaire. Subjects were told prior to the experiment that the researcher would be looking at the effects of ideology on language but were not told about the specific variable under investigation until after the tasks were completed. The subjects that emerged from the principal investigator's social network, however, knew generally that the principal researcher's research was focused on the sounds of "gay speech."

2.2 *Methodology for Pilot and Experiment 1*

Materials: The stimulus for this project was a video constructed with PowerPoint presentation software that lasted approximately two and half minutes. Throughout the video, various shapes of different colors moved about the screen. At the end of the two and half minutes, sentences appeared on the screen and the subjects were instructed to read them aloud. Recordings were made in a sound-attenuated booth in the linguistic department's phonetics lab using a Macintosh computer with an Earthworks M30 microphone. Sound files were digitized with a 44kHz-sampling rate. Sound files were recorded in audacity and analyzed in Praat.

Using Praat, the recordings were text-gridded and relevant segments of /s/ and phonetically devoiced /z/ were isolated. Sound files and text-grids were thereafter subjected to a Praat script, which extracted relevant data on peak frequency, spectral center of gravity and duration. Much more data was collected than will be analyzed in the results and discussion to follow.

Methods: Just before the beginning of the video, subjects were instructed to read the instruction page and, with a mouse, click anywhere on the screen to continue. The instructions read as follows:

As shapes appear on the screen, describe, to the best of your ability the color, shape and movements associated with each (as if you are relaying the information to someone who cannot see the screen).

At the end of the prepared video, subjects got another instruction screen with instructions as follows:

Please read each of the following sentences aloud two times before clicking anywhere to continue.

Following these instructions, three sentences (see appendix) were presented one at a time

and subjects controlled the speed with which they read the sentences aloud and controlled the change between screens.

Following this initial recording, subjects were instructed by the principal investigator to repeat the exact same task this time with the directive to “try to sound gay.” At this point, subjects were exposed to the exact same video stimulus and the exact same sentences. Following the second recording, subjects were asked to fill out a brief demographic questionnaire and were then debriefed on the purpose of the study. The only data collected from the demographic questionnaires which will be relevant for this essay is the data on subjects’ self-identified sexuality category. As it currently stands, the rest of the data is superfluous to the analysis to follow which is more directly related to universal phenomena involved in stylization more generally.

2.3 Methodology for Experiment 2

Following data collection and analysis from Experiment 1, a few significant changes were made for the data elicitation process in Experiment 2. Notably, the materials used excluded the animated video for which subjects were expected to provide a narration. Instead, subjects were simply asked to participate in the sentence-reading task. The motivation for this change was simply due to the fact that the analysis had been further specified and these data emerged as the relevant data for continued analysis (see section 2.5 below). Additionally, though subjects were expected to complete the shortened task twice (once without stylistic instruction and once with stylistic instruction), the elaborated stylistic instructions were altered slightly but significantly. For the second experiment, subjects were not instructed to “try to sound gay” but rather to “perform a gay stereotype.” Though the initial project design was aimed at eliciting

stylistic interpretations of “gay-soundingness,” the stylistic direction shift was intended to elicit data that could be compared to the data from Experiment 1. In so doing, this methodological shift provided access to a potentially fundamentally different kind of data. Whereas Experiment 1 elicited data that might have been heavily influenced by personal ideologies of “gay-soundingness,” Experiment 2 allowed for subjects to produce perhaps more highly salient stereotypical models of “gay-soundingness,” which might shed light on the role of certain feature exaggeration in exaggerated/stereotypical stylistic performances.

2.4 *Rationale for Interpretation*

As mentioned above, the implementation of a second experimental condition was necessary for the evolution of this project for several reasons. Firstly, if we consider the conclusions drawn through discrete segment analysis in the study of “gay speech,” that “sounding gay,” for example, is a constitution of multiple indexical cues, interesting data may emerge as contrastive between the two experimental conditions. Secondly, given that certain features may or may not be attuned to in the process of “sounding gay,” since “sounding gay” is a particularly egocentric endeavor, eliciting data that requests “stereotypical” productions of “gay speech” might provide a more ideologically stable target for the subjects. Thirdly, since it is impossible to psychologize about the individual goals of the subjects in the first experimental context, it is unclear whether performers were in fact “try[ing] to sound gay” or rather interpreting the instruction as an *a priori* request to approximate a stereotype. The additional experimental condition is not a perfect solution, but it does control for 1) the possibility that subjects are performing stereotypes in any stylistic performance, and 2) that even if subjects perceive

their own speech as gay sounding, thus resulting in a zero performance in the second task under the first experimental condition, they might be more likely to perform a distinctly different voice in the second experimental condition.

Before turning to the results section, I would like to briefly address two relatively important assumptions that must be made about the data. Dividing the subjects into binary categories (straight vs. not straight) is not an implication that their performances are representational of any specific category. In no way does this paper intend to claim that these are prototypical speakers of a discrete “gay” or “straight” style. The binary distinction is merely accepted for the sake of analyzing the way the systematic variation maps onto local perceptions and perhaps ideological constructs of binary sexual orientation (or more specifically, the ideological presumption that gay and straight are by definition units within contrastive social or linguistic paradigms).

The focus on /s/ in this paper, again, is not motivated by any presupposition that /s/ is a feature uniquely responsible for perceptual identification of sexual identity. It is understood that perceptions of gay- or straight-soundingness is likely possible as a result of multiple social and linguistic indexicalities operating simultaneously and that no single indexical unit can be or is responsible for successful identification of a speaker’s sexual identity. Furthermore, it is not assumed that segment /s/ produced at higher frequency is a distinct feature only between heterosexual and homosexual male speech styles. But, since this measure has been linked in previous studies to higher ratings of gay-soundingness, it is used again here in an attempt to demonstrate the claims about stylization that the paper proposes.

To summarize, for the sake of the current discussion, 1) straight and not straight refer

to distinct entities on an artificial non-continual spectrum of sexual identity, and 2) /s/ is a relevant measure though not the only one that could have been looked at in the process of analyzing variation between gay-sounding and straight-sounding speech.

2.5 Data Segregation

For this analysis, the more free-form data collected in the pilot study and the first experimental condition were excluded and the analysis in all three conditions focused exclusively on readings of the sentences at the end of the stimulus. Measurements of peak frequency were collected at three points in each segment of /s/ and devoiced /z/ amounting to over 1,500 measurements divided between the speakers and the stylistic conditions. Demographic data collected post experiment were tabulated and anonymized but retained for potential future analysis. Given the focus on speaker specific variation, statistical analysis focused on paired t-tests. Additional statistical analyses beyond the ANOVA run in the pilot were not completed. Alpha values for identifying significance were set at the standard 5% and p-values of 0.05 or below were considered statistically significant. Since multiple t-tests multiplies the potential for error, conclusions about statistical significant in this essay were based on highly significant results. Thus, the lowest p-value was recorded for each test presented if $p < 0.05$. P-values less than 0.001 were presented as $p < 0.001$. P-values that did not indicate significance were presented to three digits beyond the decimal (e.g. $p = 0.829$).

3 Pilot

3.1 Results

A three-factor analysis of variance (factorial ANOVA) was performed testing the effect of speaker sexuality, speech frame, and time point on peak frequency of /s/. The analysis revealed a significant main effect of speaker sexuality [$F(1,432)=19.8, p<.001$] with the gay-identified speaker producing higher peak /s/ frequencies than straight-identified speaker: $t(215) = 4.369, p<0.001$. Another significant main effect was speech frame [$F(1,432)=127.1, p<.001$] with stylized performances exhibiting higher peak /s/ frequencies than unstylized performances: $t(215) = 11.709, p<0.001$. There was also a main effect of time point [$F(2,432)=3.7, p<.05$]. With respect to the three time points, there was no statistical significance between time points 1 and 2 ($t(143) = 0.325, p = 0.746$) but there was significant difference between time points 1 & 3 ($t(143) = 3.392, p<0.001$) and 2 & 3 ($t(143) = 3.711, p<0.001$)². Finally, there was also a significant interaction of speaker sexuality and speech frame [$F(1, 432) = 18.163, p<0.001$]. Figure 1, below shows the significant interaction between speech frame and sexuality.

² This finding will not be discussed in this paper because of space and because of the likelihood that this affect is purely the result of articulatory processes of sibilant production and unlikely to be related to any sociolinguistic factor.

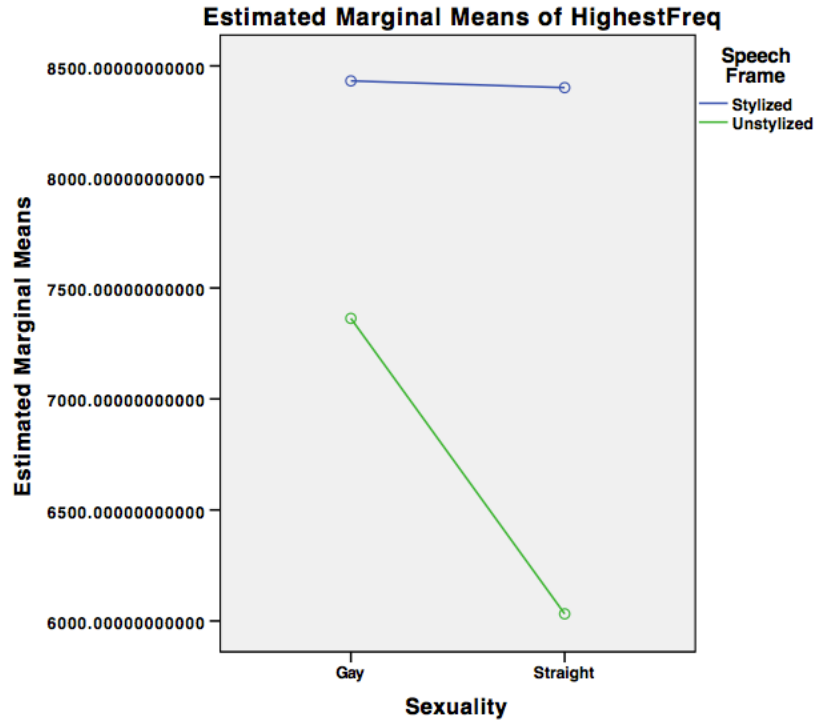


Figure 1. Speech-Frame Interactions

As relevant to the discussion that follows, *post hoc t-tests* (Table 1 below), indicated that identity difference was significant only in unstylized performances such that $t(107) = -6.596, p < 0.001$ and not in stylized performances, $t(107) = 0.137, p = 0.891$. This result is particularly interesting not because of the finding of significance in the difference between gay-sounding and straight-sounding unstylized speech but because of the finding that, in stylized performances, the significant difference disappears. As is evidenced in the table below, all other paired t-test indicated significance across and between the four conditions described above.

	“gay”	“straight”	“gay” + stylized	“straight” + stylized
Mean /s/ peak	7362.860	6032.038	8432.442	8402.086

“gay”	-	t(107) = -6.596, p<0.001	t(107) = 5.359, p<0.001	t(107) = 3.597, p<0.001
“straight”	t(107) = -6.596, p<0.001	-	t(107) = 15.375, p<0.001	t(107) = 12.006, p<0.001
“gay” + stylized	t(107) = 5.359, p<0.001	t(107) = 15.375, p<0.001	-	t(107) = 0.137, p = 0.891
“straight” stylized	+ t(107) = 3.597, p<0.001	t(107) = 12.006, p<0.001	t(107) = 0.137, p = 0.891	-

Table 1. Paired comparisons across speaker frames

3.2 *Brief Discussion: Pilot*

If we assume that identity performance is agentive and that “linguistic variables ... can ... be deployed as part of deliberate and reflexive identity performance” (Bucholtz 2012: 681), we might safely assume that under the instruction to “sound gay” a non-gay identified speaker might alter the way he speaks. Interestingly, when the speaker who identified as gay and, based on my own intuition as an in-group speaker, was heard as having a gay-sounding voice, was asked to “try to sound gay” he too altered his speech, which resulted in a shift in /s/ to a mean frequency that was slightly higher than the straight speaker’s stylized mean but not statistically significantly so³. The fact that, in both stylized productions, the speakers approached a very similar mean peak frequency, suggested that their stylized performances were designed to approximate a generalizable

³In this case, the gay speaker already had some metalinguistic knowledge about his speech (i.e. he already knew that he was perceived as gay sounding) and as a result was slightly confused by the imperative. In order to preserve as much experimental control as possible, the instructions were simply reiterated.

stereotype, or perhaps more cautiously, in their attempts to approximate a specific style, they were equally successful in exaggerating this feature perhaps because of the feature's ideological links with perceived gay identity.

These findings are particularly interesting because 1) they support sociocultural linguistic claims about the processes of exaggeration in stylization by providing quantitative evidence that is in accordance with previous qualitative evidence and 2) they hint at the possible existence of a stereotypical “gay-soundingness,” which both participants, regardless of their own identities, can attempt to perform in instances of stylization. Though research in queer linguistics has recently been concerned with addressing gay “styles” instead of simply assuming that there is a singular gay “style” (Podesva 2007) this analysis shows that, perhaps ideologically there exists a style of speech that people orient to in the process of stylization. Indeed, if this were the case it would be even stronger support for Bucholtz’ and Hall’s position that exaggeration is intricately linked with stylization because it connects these exaggerated performances with a potentially unified perception of a stereotypically gay-sounding style. In any case, the fact that the straight-sounding speaker, while stylizing, produced segments with a mean closer to 8500 Hz indicates that he was successful in showing awareness of some appropriate signal that such a performance should highlight. This awareness helps justify focusing at least in this case on discrete segments and their relationship to stylistic performances.

But, given the preliminary nature of these data, it became necessary to determine whether this pattern was consistent. Experiment 1 was designed with no control for the subjects’ sexuality and instead a focus was placed on establishing whether or not a

pattern in /s/ peak frequency in stylized performances could be uncovered. If speaker sexuality were ignored pre-experiment and their stylized peak /s/ frequencies patterned at or near 8500 Hz we would be able to argue that the pattern indicated a potential engagement with a culturally salient and influential stereotype of gay-soundingness that highlighted this manipulation of /s/ frequency.

Analysis of the data gathered in the pilot study lead me to question the role of an ideologically oriented stereotype in the production of stylized “gay speech.” Though Figure 1 indicates a significant difference in baseline recordings between the gay and straight-sounding (and identified) speakers, it was the erasure of significant difference in their stylized performances that stood out as interesting. From this data, I predicted that the data collected in Experiment 1 would pattern similarly, supporting a claim that acts of stylization of “gay speech” generally keyed into ideologies of gay-soundingness and would relevantly exhibit similar patterns in the production of /s/ segments. Specifically, I predicted that stylized performances of “gay speech” would exhibit average /s/ peak frequencies around 8500 Hz. If, in fact, the data supported this prediction, we might be able to make an argument for existence of an idealized gay soundingness partially constructed and reproduced through the highly controlled manipulation of /s/.

4 Experiment 1

As mentioned in Section 2.2, the methodology for the Pilot and Experiment 1 were nearly identical. Subjects were recorded without stylistic instruction while reading several sentences. They were then rerecorded with the directive to “try to sound gay.” Measurements of /s/ peak frequency were collected from both the base and stylized recordings. The only difference between the pilot and Experiment 1 was that the sexual

identity of the speaker was not known until after the recording had been completed. The demographic questionnaire was completed by each of the speakers in Experiment 1 and all but one identified as either straight or heterosexual. The only subject to identify as anything other than straight or heterosexual was subject 10, who identified as “queer.” Subjects 5, 7 and 8 in this round of production were disqualified for either failing to complete the task or failing to follow the directions resulting in data that were not analyzable.

4.1 Results

As the data were gathered, the expected pattern did not emerge, namely, it was not clear that stylized performances would always elicit average peak /s/ frequencies around 8500 Hz.

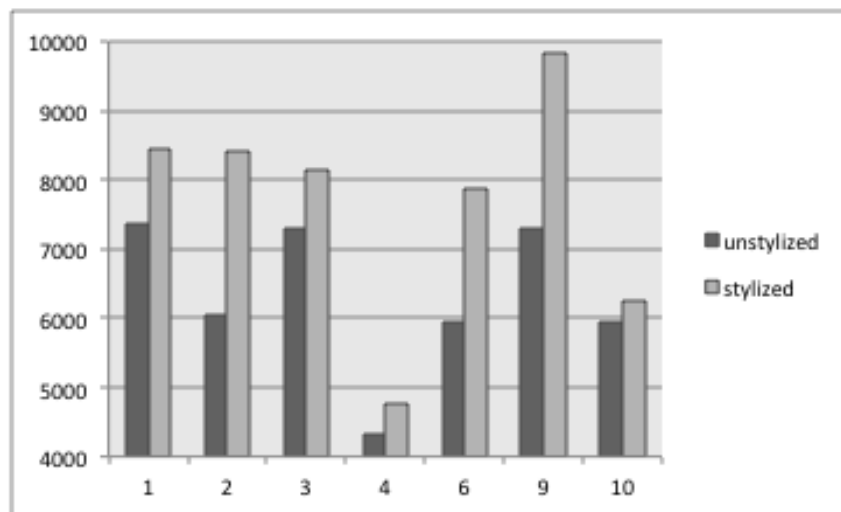


Figure 2. Average Peak /s/ Frequency by Speaker and Frame

In figure 2, above, we see significant interspeaker variance in both stylized and unstylized performances. Namely, speakers 1, 3 and 9 exhibit unstylized averages above 7,000 Hz while speaker 4 exhibits unstylized average /s/ peak frequency below 4,500 Hz. Additionally, though speaker 9 exhibits stylized average peak /s/ frequencies at nearly

10,000 Hz, speaker four exhibits peak /s/ frequencies in his stylized performance that average below 5,000 Hz. It is hard to say why some of these speakers vary so significantly from the others without considering the possibility that intraspeaker variation is highly relevant, perhaps more relevant than interspeaker variation. Such a determination might suggest that it is the intraspeaker variation between stylized and unstylized performances that is more illuminating and thus requiring further consideration. Critically, stylized performances do not always result in average peak /s/ frequencies hovering around 8,500 Hz, an explanation for which we will return to in the discussion.

For the sake of creating an aggregate analysis of the variation between stylized and unstylized performances the two speakers from the pilot were included in the statistical analyses as well as in Figure 2 above (they are represented by speakers 1 & 2). Though aggregate numbers indicate through a paired t-test that there is a highly significant difference between stylized and unstylized performances, such that $t(833) = -18.0469$, $p < 0.001$, the prediction based on the data collected in the pilot were not supported by the rest of the production data. Thus, it became relevant to discuss each performance within the context of its own base recording. Critically, interspeaker variation between speech frames for each speaker was significant, namely mean stylized /s/ frequencies were statistically significantly higher than mean unstylized /s/ frequencies (see Table 2 below). These data quite clearly support the first hypothesis presented above.

Speaker 1	Speaker 2	Speaker 3	Speaker 4	Speaker 6	Speaker 9	Speaker 10
$t(108) = -5.038,$	$t(108) = -12.007,$	$t(125) = -3.438,$	$t(125) = -3.610,$	$t(120) = -9.891,$	$t(125) = -12.545,$	$t(119) = -2.635,$

p < 0.01	p < 0.001	p < 0.001	p < 0.001	p < 0.001	p < 0.001	p < 0.004
----------	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------

Table 2. Paired t-test results for stylized vs. unstylized performances by speaker

4.2 *Brief Discussion: Experiment 1*

From these data we can suggest that there is no single stereotype to which performers aspire when trying to “sound gay” but simply that they are effective in differentiating their stylized performances from their unstylized performances. Though the data collected from the pilot study lead to the suggestion that performances of stylized “gay speech” were organized in a way that allowed for the suggestion of a general gay-sounding stereotype that stylizers could aspire to, the significant variance in the data from Experiment 1 suggested that this is an unrealistic picture of the phenomenon more generally. Instead, we must consider what is happening between the two speech frames and, if there is no common target to which stylizers can aspire, why each speaker was “successful” in producing variation between speech frames.

Given the data that did not conform to the prediction, it became relevant to determine if the data collected in Experiment 1 was actually addressing the question it was designed to address, namely are the subjects “trying to sound gay” or trying to do something else in their stylized productions. If we presume that speakers variably interpreted the directive to “sound gay” as either specifically that or perhaps more dramatically to “perform a stereotype,” we might be able to explain the extreme interspeaker variance that emerged in the data. Critically, if we assume that a distinction can be drawn between “trying to sound gay” and “performing a gay stereotype” and that that distinction might lead to less or more exaggeration of stylistic features, the extreme variance between, for example speaker 4 and speaker 9, might be explainable as a result

of variable interpretations of the task. Thus it became relevant to test this new hypothesis and therefore Experiment 2 was designed to determine whether the distinction in instruction between “try to sound gay” and “perform a gay stereotype” might elicit distinct kinds of intraspeaker variation. If intraspeaker variation between these two tasks revealed a pattern that was different from the pattern emergent in Experiment 1, we might conclude that Experiment 1 did not carefully control for interpretation of instructions. This would then support a claim that the interspeaker variance in the data from experiment 1 could be accounted for by the fact that some speakers were simply “trying to sound gay” and that other speakers were interpreting these instructions *a priori* as a request to reproduce a stereotype.

5 Experiment 2

In order to determine whether the instruction to “sound gay” elicited different results from potential instruction to “perform a gay stereotype,” a second smaller experiment was attempted in which speakers were given the more specific stylistic production instructions. Four subjects were run but, due to some unfortunate technical problems, data from only two speakers was available for analysis. Though these two speakers were not selected based on knowledge of how they identified their sexuality, we were left with a pair of subjects, one of whom identified as straight and the other who did not. Thus, the data collected from Experiment 2 occupy an experimental space that mimics the pilot experiment, though this was not intentional. These data thus provide for a very interesting comparative discussion, which we can return to shortly.

5.1 Results

Similar to the data collected in Experiment 1, the data that emerged in Experiment

2 was particularly surprising. Speaker 11 (see Figure 3. below) exhibited a pattern like the subjects in the pilot and the subjects in Experiment 1, and subsequent t-tests indicated that the mean stylized /s/ frequency was significantly higher for speaker 11 than mean unstylized /s/ frequency such that $t(113) = -7.472, p < 0.001$. Needless to say, speaker 14 has the most unique data, being the only speaker whose mean /s/ peak frequency was lower in his stylized production than in his unstylized production (see Figure 3. below). Though this inverse pattern emerged in the data for speaker 14, the difference was not significant, $t(113) = 0.899, p = 0.370$.

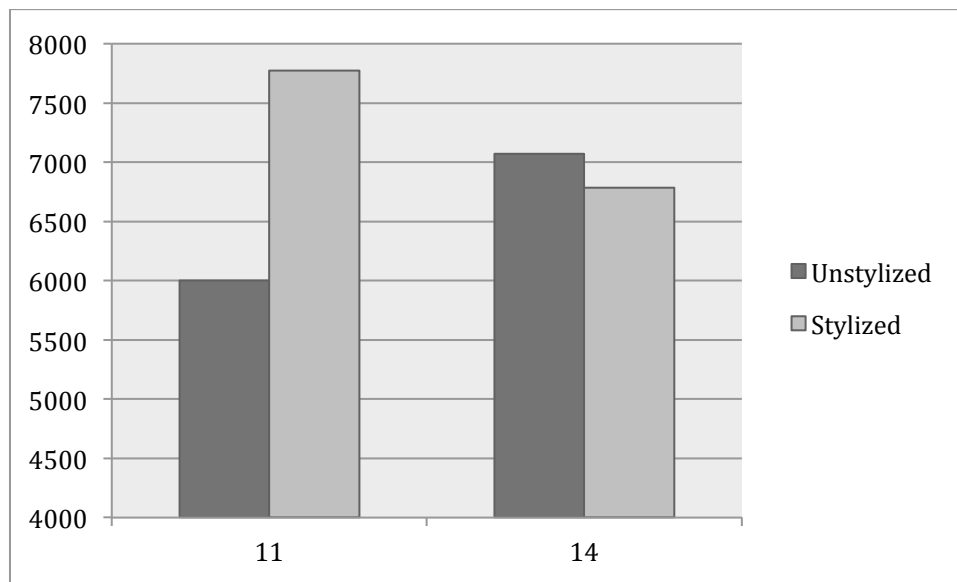


Figure 3. Average Peak /s/ Frequency by Speaker and Frame

5.2 Brief Discussion: Experiment 2

Though preliminary and sparse, the data provided from Experiment 2 bring up two important issues for discussion. Though we cannot conclusively claim that these data eliminate the potential that trying to “sound gay” and trying to “perform a gay stereotype” are different tasks, they do suggest that subjects in Experiment 1 and subjects in Experiment 2 might be interpreting the instructions in a similar way. In Experiment 1, there were speakers who produced mean /s/ frequencies significantly higher and

significantly lower than the speakers in Experiment 2, thus nullifying the second hypothesis presented above. Though other anomalies emerged in the data from Experiment 2, specifically with respect to speaker 14, it seems fair to suggest that the data from the two experiments do not support a claim that the differing instructions elicit categorically different kinds of performances. Thus, we might consider that subjects across tasks are interpreting the instructions as an invitation to perform a stereotype, but without any way to know for sure, this is simply cautious speculation.

Though the results from Experiment 2 do not add anything particularly illuminating to the discussion prompted by Experiment 1, the emergence of anomalous data with respect to speaker 14 warrants its own attention. Why, we might ask, does this speaker exhibit a reversal (regardless of statistical significance) of the pattern observed in each of the other subjects? Or perhaps more conservatively, why does this speaker exhibit no significant difference between styles? This question is, of course, not easily answerable. Though throughout this essay we have suggested that even if /s/ frequency is not the only feature being altered in performances of “gay speech,” it is one that plays a significant role and is thus ripe for the exaggeration we expect in parodic or stylized speech. But we are now faced with data that challenge these earlier assumptions and bring back in to question Eckert’s (1996) interpretation of linguistic or stylistic *bricolage* in which stylistic indexes are layered in a way that allows for perception of style to be successful (notably, there is no single feature that we can point to and thus even if this feature is *usually* important it need not *always* be). So how might we explain this specific situation? We might be benefitted by a discussion of what *was* different across styles as opposed to what *wasn’t* different.

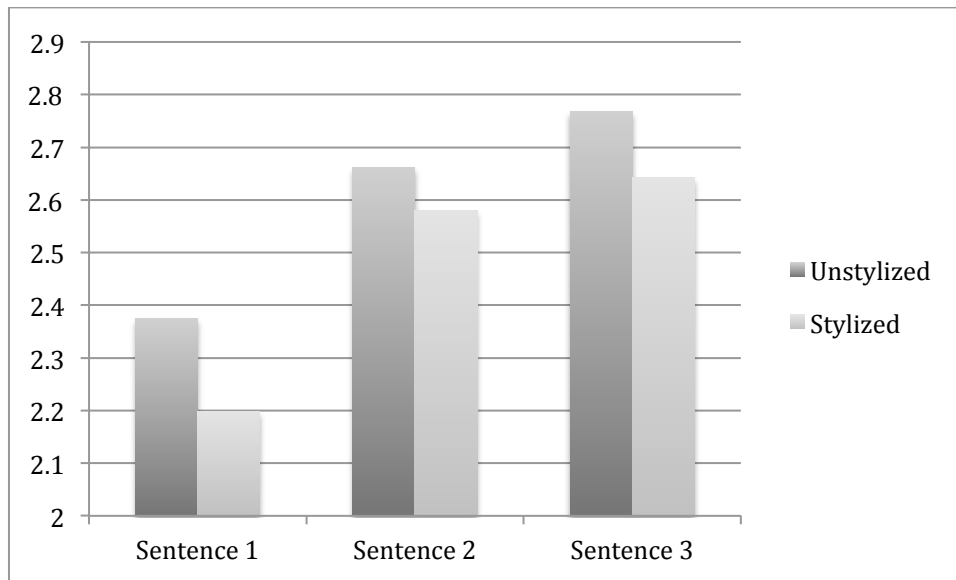


Figure 4. Mean length (in seconds) of sentences for speaker 14

Though speaker 14 does not exhibit the exaggerated /s/ frequencies we predicted and which we found in every other subject, it would be unfair to suggest that there was nothing perceptibly different between his two performances. In fact, one feature of his speech was perceivably quite different in his stylized performance and that feature was speech rate. The rate with which he read the sentences indicates that perhaps his interpretation of performing a gay stereotype involves exaggerating this feature above and beyond the baseline he established in his unstylized recording. Though speaker 14 provided very little data, the pattern that emerges is that the length of his utterances were statistically significantly shorter in his stylized productions than in his unstylized productions such that $t(2) = 4.657, p < 0.05$. Though these statistics are admittedly preliminary, further analysis of his speech might reveal a more regular pattern of accelerated speech rate as a perceptual index of performed stereotypical gay speech. Figure 4. below shows the differences in mean utterance length for the three experimental sentences.

Though the data provided by speaker 14 problematize the trajectory of the

analysis, they do not, independently, nullify the fact that the preponderance of evidence supports larger claims about /s/ frequency exaggeration in stylized performances of “gay speech.” Though, as we have accepted all along, no single factor can be solely responsible for a speaker sounding gay, we suggested that certain features might be more readily accentuated in forced performances of gay speech given conceptual notions of salient “gay speech” indexes. For speaker 14, it is possible that what is most salient about stereotypical gay speech is not /s/ frequency but rather gross speech rate. Additionally, it is possible that speech rate is no more salient to speaker 14 than /s/ frequency in perceived “gay speech” but he was simply unable to adequately perform an exaggeration of /s/ frequency, a possibility that brings up several other issues regarding the entirety of the data and begins to beg the question of why some speakers more dramatically exaggerated /s/ frequencies than others. This is, of course a complicated question, and one that I will attempt to address in the general discussion section, below, as I return to the concepts of *adequation* and *distinction* and *neo-minstrelsy*.

6 General Discussion

The final question that needs to be addressed with respect to this topic is simple. Regardless of aggregate numbers, all of the subjects in the experiment were internally successful at exaggerating some feature of their speech while performing the difference between their unstylized and stylized speech. The question then, is what is the purpose of this near systematic exaggeration of /s/ and more generally, what is the role of exaggeration in these reflexive language performances? In order to begin to answer this question, I turn to the concepts of *adequation* and *distinction* in the next section and finally to the concept of *neo-minstrelsy* in the final section before the conclusion.

6.1 *Adequation and Distinction*

Bucholtz & Hall (2005) use the term *adequation* to account for “the fact that in order for groups of individuals to be positioned as alike, they need not – and in any case cannot – be identical, but must merely be understood as sufficiently similar for current interactional purposes” (599). Thus, in order for people to be able to produce stylistic performances of a speech variety, they must be sufficiently aware of some semiotic resource(s) at their disposal that could potentially work to situate them within the community whose style they are appropriating. Bucholtz & Hall posit that “differences irrelevant or damaging to ongoing efforts to adequate two people or groups will be downplayed, and similarities viewed as salient to and supportive of the immediate project of identity work will be foregrounded” (599). Though perhaps couched more specifically in their interactional framework, this dichotomous presentation of relevant and irrelevant differentiation helps to justify the cautious analysis of discrete features and thus more broadly, the use of controlled experimental techniques to elicit data that support grander claims in sociocultural linguistics.

Through an analysis of the data collected in this study, we can establish that more than likely, /s/ variation is a salient feature of stereotypical gay speech. In that case, though it is not the only feature that can be effected by stylized performances (as we saw from the data provided by speaker 14), it is deserving of a close independent analysis in an attempt to determine whether by exaggerating this feature, subjects were in fact taking control of this indexical resource in an attempt to establish sufficient similarity that allows for their performance to be understood as such. Strikingly, however, the intraspeaker variation in production emerged as perhaps more illuminating than the

interspeaker variation, suggesting that though exaggeration of specific phonetic cues might be an attempt to establish some kind of similarity, the similarity being established is not to a universal style but rather a unique style of stereotypical speech that is determined independently for each subject. Thus we are left questioning what, if any, adequation is actually taking place. It would seem unrealistic in any case to posit that adequation to a “standard gay speech” is taking place.

Since Bucholtz (2011a), Hall (2005) and Bucholtz & Hall (2005) have posited that exaggeration is a part of stylization, there need not be any expectation of adequation to “actual gay speech” in the data for “stylized gay speech” performances. Instead, stylizers take advantage of the knowable semiotic resources (emergent in stereotypes and perhaps their own interpretation of what it means to sound gay) at their disposal to hint at the style they are performing, thus adequating not to an “actual gay speech” but to an internally unique understanding of stereotypical “gay speech.” Since hearers of stylization can also understand broader goals of successful stylization (which does not necessarily imply that the stylization was heard as authentic to the style being stylized) stylizers have no need to “pass” with respect to the style they are performing. They need only cue into some features that hearers can associate with the style in question and from there interpret the act as stylization. Thus, both theoretically and empirically, we begin to see the emergence, most probably, of adequation to a stereotype as a form of active *distinction* on the part of speakers during stylistic performances.

Bucholtz & Hall present *distinction* as the linguistic process that “focuses on the identity relation of differentiation” (600). Essentially, *distinction* is the process through which a speaker might establish his or her identity in relation to an identity not claimed as

his/her own. By presenting himself or herself as demonstrably different, the speaker allows for inferences to be drawn about his/her own identity. As we saw in the results from each portion of this study, speakers under the direction to “try to sound gay” or to “perform a gay stereotype” do not produce a systematically consistent stylized /s/ but rather accentuate the /s/ frequencies at uniquely different magnitudes but statistically significantly so in each case where stylization included significant variation in /s/ peak frequencies. We can thus conclude that the speaker, in producing a relative disambiguation in /s/ peak frequencies between the unstylized and stylized production distinguishes his actual identity from the identity he is performing through stylization. This distinction is not surprising perhaps with respect to the straight identified speakers and perhaps only slightly surprising for the non-straight identified speakers. As we established through Experiment 2, the differences in production dependent on instructions to “sound gay” or “perform a gay stereotype” are not unique enough to suggest that these instructions are interpreted differently. Thus, it is not surprising that non-straight identified speakers also exaggerated their /s/ peak frequencies in the stylized productions. If in fact, and I suggest that this is the case, all speakers were interpreting the instructions to mean provide a stereotypical production of “gay speech,” the act of distinction might be equally productive among non-straight subjects who are also altering their speech in a way to distinguish their unstylized speech/identity from the identity indexed by their stylized speech. The identity they perform in their stylized production is equally as much “not their own” as with the straight subjects and thus the exaggeration that emerges is understandable.

Thus, what we see in each stylized/unstylized production pair, is an individual

processes of distinction being performed by the speaker. These findings are particularly interesting because they provide evidence for the fact that sociolinguistic exploration previously relegated to qualitative research might in fact be approachable through experimental methodologies. More profoundly, these results suggest that the goal of previous quantitative research with respect to style and stylization might have been analytically misinformed. Instead of searching for the elusive “universal” that allows for links to be drawn between linguistic form and the style or styles it indexes, perhaps quantitative and experimental work on stylization should be concerned with analyzing how distinction emerges in performance and how it can be effectively quantified. If, as the data suggest, stylized performances are actively engaged with processes of *distinction*, it is in the *distinction* that analysts should expect to find the socially meaningful variation that allows us to better understand the phenomenon of stylization more broadly.

Additionally, though the ideological style of “gay speech” might vary from speaker to speaker depending on any number of potential influences, the systematic emergence of exaggeration indicates that there is in fact something, non-universal as it may be, to which people aspire when performing stereotypical stylized performances. Said differently, the selected features exaggerated in stylization might approach “universality” but the degree of exaggeration is definitively variable. If this is true, there is no reason to assume that interpretations of “gay speech” are uniquely ripe for the performance of ideological interpretation but rather we might presume that all forms of stereotypical stylization illuminate non-static ideologies of speech style.

Finally, I would like to turn briefly to Bucholtz & Lopez’ (2012) concept of *neo-*

minstrelsy. By situating the data from the current study in the realm of the minstrelsy, we can begin to see how it patterns similarly to other data that have been produced as evidence for the “universality” of targeted stylistic flexibility in stylized performances of other speech varieties.

6.2 *Neo-Minstrelsy*

In a recent article Mary Bucholtz and Qiuana Lopez (2012) analyzed Hollywood performances of the stock “wigger” character in teen cinema of the late 1990’s and early 2000s. Their analysis of this character type drew connections and distinctions between 19th century American minstrel performances and the neo-minstrelsy they claim is being produced by white actors in these Hollywood rolls. In their discussion Bucholtz & Lopez (2012) establish that these neo-minstrelsy performances serve to address two metapragmatic targets through the reinterpretation and performance of linguistic resources. They thereby present two competing and interrelated functions of neo-minstrelsy, the first of which establishes a link between the performer and the stereotype and the second of which establishes a link between the performed and the “authentic”. They provide the example that a “wigger” character in his performances is attempting to perform blackness while the actor portraying the character is attempting to perform “whiteness unsuccessfully imitating blackness” (681-682). Thus, more broadly, we can interpret Bucholtz’ and Lopez’ (2012) use of the term neo-minstrelsy as defining a multi-indexical performance that in one respect operates as an act of adequation (the white character trying to perform blackness) and as an act of distinction (the white actor purposefully unsuccessfully performing blackness). Though they also claim that the social commentary of the neo-minstrelsy is one of its distinguishing features, I would

suggest that the multi-indexicality of a performance is the more valid distinction between neo-minstrellesque and its 19th century counterpart. The question that remains, is whether and to what extent the experimental methodologies of the current study were able to elicit the multi-indexical performance and thus, whether the data from the current analysis *is* neo-minstrellesque.

Given the importance of the multi-indexical nature of these performances, I would suggest that the patterns that emerge do provide evidence that these stylized performances are neo-minstrellesque. As I established in the previous section, the locally exaggerated /s/ frequencies were an act of distinction between the identity of the speaker and the identity of the performed while simultaneously occupying the space of adequation towards a speaker-specific definition of a gay-sounding stereotype. In this sense, though the intentions of the subjects during stylization cannot be known, the performances constitute a dual indexicality that can be ascertained without necessarily knowing what the subjects social motivations were while performing the stylization.

The role of adequation and distinction in the construction of the multi-indexicality of neo-minstrellesque performances is undeniable. Though not scripted, and thus in one respect fundamentally different from the data analyzed in Bucholtz & Lopez (2012), the data from the current study seem to pattern in a way that suggests that they might have been designed to reach a similar dual indexical target. Namely, both the neo-minstrellesque performances described with respect to the “wigger” characters and the performances of stylized “gay speech” across experimental contexts exemplify a dual indexicality that in one respect allows the audience to associate the performance with a performed identity while simultaneously allowing the audience to experience the

productions as highly “inauthentic.” The significant difference would be that in the data presented in this essay, it is unclear whether or not the performances *purposefully* miss a realistic target in order to make some kind of social comment or whether some other factor influenced the exaggeration that emerged across the majority of the subjects.

This brings us back to the issue I raised above: whether a performance’s dual indexicality is sufficient evidence of its neo-minstrellesque nature or whether the social commentary wrapped up in performance plays a more significant role in distinguishing the neo-minstrellesque from the minstrellesque. I have suggested that the dual indexicality trumps the social commentary, since social commentary might not be universally understandable and different audiences might not align with the social commentary thus relegating it to a secondary function of neo-minstrellesque performances. Therefore, if dual indexicality is the hallmark of neo-minstrelsy, the performances analyzed in this essay are neo-minstrellesque. Future production studies, however, might shed light on the social implications and the social impetus of exaggerated speech in laboratory oriented forced stylization tasks. What does seem like a logical conclusion, however, is that the discrete variables and the performances that are constituted by them link language to identities and inevitably result in essentialized reproductions which, though present in both data sets, are much more salient in Hollywood productions of the neo-minstrellesque because for a Hollywood audience to understand them, they must be highly regularized and relatively static. If the audience of forced stylistic performance is an audience of one, perhaps the social commentary might be subtler or even non-existent because the subject has no audience to convince.

A further perceptual study would undoubtedly help solidify these claims because

whereas the data analyzed by Bucholtz and Lopez (2012) can make use of extralinguistic resources to highlight the obviously “inauthentic” performances, gay-identity, as performed by subjects in the current study, is not something that can be read at face value. If these stylized productions are heard as stylizations and not as particularly “gay-sounding” we might be able to conclude that the salience of phonetic variation is sufficient to establish the obvious disconnect between performer and performed. This is a question whose answer lies firmly in the field of experimental sociophonetics, and future exploration is completely warranted. If nothing else, this study has then accomplished its methodological goal of establishing experimental and quantitative methods as potentially viable tools in the analysis of identity and reflexive language use.

7 Conclusion

As I established in the introduction of this essay, the purpose of this project was to test the efficacy of quantitative research in answering questions that have until now been almost exclusively relegated to qualitative sociolinguistic study. By combining insight from these previous studies with experimental laboratory techniques, I was able to unite two divergent paradigms that are, at heart, designed to address a similar goal. Qualitative research on the performance of stylized language and quantitative work on the perception of identity through linguistic indexes has provided a productive platform for the current study to emerge. The current study attempted to unite these two arms of research by providing a quantitative means to explore the phenomenon of stylization through experimental production tasks. Continuing research paradigms that are 1) exclusively focused on how sounds are perceived or 2) exclusively focused on qualitative examinations of performance fails to address how interwoven these two agendas are.

Thus, the current study fills that gap and opens up the field to future experimental exploration of these concepts.

Though at the outset, my goal was to determine simply whether the exaggeration in stylization observed in qualitative studies of performance could be quantified, many other important questions emerged which I have tried to address in this essay. Though I have done a lot of work to support previous claims about the complex nature of performance, specifically with respect to identity, this essay represents the first steps toward a unified quantitative and qualitative domain for research on style, stylistic performance and reflexive language use. Critically, it has been shown that stylization and exaggeration are certainly connected to one another. Additionally, I have shown that reconceptualization of laboratory experimentation can be successful in eliciting interesting data that support grander sociolinguistic claims and finally, I have provided data that add to the robustness of many of these claims. In so doing I have accomplished the three interrelated goals established in the introduction but have left the field wide open for future analyses that intend to tackle this issue. The work is certainly not done but we now have a new proven tool kit to further explore these and related issues.

7.1 Limitations

The most obvious limitation of the conclusions drawn in this essay is one of scope. From pilot, to Experiment 1 and finally Experiment 2, a total of only 9 speakers were analyzed. Additionally these speakers constitute a relatively homogenous background and thus questions about sociocultural breadth and generalizability are not addressed. In order to make any grander claims, it would be well advised to elicit even more data in each of the experimental contexts discussed herein. Though the pilot study

was beneficial as a starting point for further investigation in Experiments 1 and 2, the pilot itself elicited fascinating data from which only very cautious interpretations can be drawn. Though the data provided an impetus for further analysis, the evolution of the study failed to account for the intricacies of the data collected in the pilot and thus such a methodology is worth revisiting.

A second limitation worth discussing is the explicit focus on a single discrete unit of speech in the above analysis. Though the motivation for focusing on this single feature is clear, the results and pursuant discussion only begin to scratch the surface of the interesting reality that exists in the data. This point could not be better exemplified than it was with the emergence of what seemed anomalous with respect to speaker 14. Certainly, analysis of the single feature provided fodder for a fascinating discussion linking quantitative methodologies to previous qualitative research, but the finite scope of this project does not do justice to the intricacies involved in the speech phenomena discussed herein. Further analysis of all the data collected might shed even more light on the subject.

7.2 *Future Research*

Engagement between the qualitative and the quantitative as well as engagement between the experimental and the ethnographic needs to be further considered and freshly operationalized if we expect to understand the larger picture that each of these empirical styles can only partially reveal. Thus, future sociophonetic research could benefit from sociocultural work on variety stylization and uncover not only how “conscious” variation influences ideology, but also how sedimentation of those ideologies re-influences future acts of stylization. For, as Bucholtz and Hall suggest, even laboratory experiments are

subject to interactional influence. Although people may produce language in an experimental vacuum, the perceptions and ideologies they bring with them and the linguistic performances they create are not immune to outside influences.

8 References

- Bucholtz, Mary (2011). Race and the re-embodied voice in Hollywood film. *Language and Communication* 31(3): 255-265.
- Bucholtz, Mary, Elena Skapoulli and Brendan Barnwell (2011). Entextualized humor in the formation of scientist identities among U.S. undergraduates. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 42(3): 177-192.
- Bucholtz, Mary (2010). *White Kids: Language, Race and Styles of Youth Identity*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bucholtz, Mary (2004). Styles and stereotypes: The linguistic negotiation of identity among Laotian American youth. *Pragmatics* 14(2-3): 127-147
- Bucholtz, Mary (2001). The whiteness of nerds: Superstandard English and racial markedness. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 11(1): 84-100.
- Bucholtz, Mary and Kira Hall (2004). Theorizing identity in language and sexuality research. *Language in Society* 33: 469-515.
- Bucholtz, Mary and Kira Hall (2005). Identity and interaction: a sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies* 7(4-5): 585-614.
- Bucholtz, Mary and Qiuana Lopez (2012). Performing blackness, forming whiteness: Linguistic minstrelsy in Hollywood film. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 15(5): 680-706.
- Campbell-Kibler, Kathryn (2007). Accent, (ING), and the social logic of listener perceptions. *American Speech* 82(1): 32-64.
- Coupland, Niklous (2001). Dialect stylization in radio talk. *Language in Society* 20: 345-375.
- Crist, Sean (1997). Duration of onset consonants in gay male stereotyped speech. *U. Penn Working Papers in Linguistics* 4(3): 53-70.
- Eckert, Penelope (under review). Three waves of variation study: The emergence of meaning in the study of variation.
<http://www.stanford.edu/~eckert/PDF/ThreeWavesofVariation.pdf> : 1-32.
- Eckert, Penelope (2001). Style and social meaning. In Penelope Eckert and John Rickford eds., *Style and Sociolinguistic Variation*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 119-126.

- Eckert, Penelope (2008a). Style matters. Theodossia-Soula Pavlidou ed. *Proceedings of the Conference on Language and Society*. Thessaloniki.
- Eckert, Penelope (2005). The stylistic construction of social groups. In Crispin Thurlow and Angie Williams eds. *Communication in Adolescence*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Eckert, Peneolope (1998). Vowels and nail polish: The emergence of linguistic style in the preadolescent heterosexual marketplace. *Proceedings of the 1996 Berkeley Women and Language Conference*. Berkeley: Berkeley Women and Language Group. Eckert, Penelope and Sally McConnel-Ginet (1995).
- Eckert, Penelope (1995). Constructing meaning, constructing selves: Snapshots of language, gender and class from Belten High. In Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall eds., *Gender Articulated: Language and the Culturally Constructed Self*, Routledge, 469-507.
- Eckert, Penelope (2008b). Variation and the indexical field. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*. 12(4): 453-476.
- Gaudio, Rudolph P. (1994). Sounding gay: Pitch properties in the speech of gay and straight men. *American Speech*. 69(1): 30-57.
- Gordon (2008). A non-discrete model of Gay speech. Paper presented at *Lavender Langauges*, American University.
- Hall, Kira (2005). Intertextual Sexuality: Parodies of class, identity and desire in liminal Delhi. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 15(1): 125-144.
- Linville, S.E. (1998). Acoustic correlates of perceived versus actual sexual orientation in men's speech. *Folia Phoniatica et Logopaedica* 50(1): pp. 35-48.
- Levon, E. (2006). Hearing "Gay": Prosody, interpretation and the affective judgments of men's speech. *American Speech*, 81:1, pp. 56-78.
- Levon, E. (2007). Sexuality in context: Variation and the sociolinguistic perception of identity. *Language in Society* 36(4): pp. 533-554.
- Mendoza-Denton, Norma (2008). *Homegirls: Language and Cultural Practice among Latina Youth Gangs*. London: Wiley/Blackwell.
- Munson, Benjamin and Lindsey J. Zimmerman (2006). Perceptual Bias and the Myth of the Gay Lisp. Poster Presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Miami, FL.
- Munson, Benjamin, McDonald, E.C., & DeBoe, N.L., & White, A.R. (2006). The acoustic and perceptual bases of judgments of women and men's sexual

- orientation from read speech. *Journal of Phonetics* 34(2): 202-240.
- Munson, Benjamin and Molly Babel (2007). Loose lips and silver tongues, or projecting sexual orientation through speech. *Language and Linguistic Compass*.
- Piccolo, F. (2008). Perceived sexual orientation and attitudes towards sounding Gay or Straight. *U. Penn Working Papers in Linguistics* (4)2.
- Pierrehumbert, J., T. bent, B. Munson, A. Bradlow & J.M. Bailey (2004). The influence of sexual orientation on vowel production. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 116(4): 1905-1908.
- Podesva, Robert (2007). Phonation type as a stylistic variable: The use of falsetto in constructing a persona. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 11(4): pp. 478-504.
- Rampton, Benjamin (1995). *Crossing: Language and Ethnicity among Adolescents*. London and New York: Longman.
- Rampton, Benjamin ed. (1999). Special Issue of *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 3(4).
- Smyth, R. & H. Rogers (2002). Phonetics, gender, and sexual orientation. *Actes du congrès annuel de l'Association canadienne de linguistique*, pp. 299-311.
- Smyth, R., G. Jacobs & H. Rogers (2003). Male voices and perceived sexual orientation: An experimental and theoretical approach. *Language in Society* 32(3): pp. 329-350.
- Zimman, L. (2009). Female-to-male transsexuals and gay-sounding voices: A pilot study. *Colorado Research in Linguistics* 22(1): June.

Appendix

Stimulus Sentences

Sam the busboy kissed miss Mary the hostess.
--

She was suspicious of her sister but that's why she was so pesky.

The spectacular colors of the rainbow stretch across the sky.
