DOI: 10.1111/josl.12345

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Journal of Sociolinguistics WILEY

The MOUTHS of others: The linguistic performance of race in Bermuda

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Abstract

This paper examines the behaviour of one linguistic feature among one black and one white group of Bermudian men over the age of 50. The acoustic analysis of the MOUTH vowel, one of the most heavily stereotyped sounds of Bermudian English, is used as a window onto linguistic parody observed in the white group, a community of practice known locally for theatrical dialect performance. In combination with contextual analysis, and in light of social conditions in Bermuda, phonetic findings suggest that this linguistic practice is not only a performance of "Bermudian-ness," but also a performance of a racialized stereotype which reflects and reinforces the raciolinguistic hierarchies of contemporary Bermudian society. The paper introduces this under-researched and unusual sociolinguistic setting to the literature on racialized mock language, as well as attesting further to the usefulness of methods that examine highly self-conscious speech.

KEYWORDS

Bermudian English, mock language, MOUTH vowel, performance speech, race, stereotypes

1 | INTRODUCTION

As part of an increased focus on stylization in sociolinguistics, many studies have focused on the use of linguistic features by groups who do not traditionally use them, inspired by Bakhtin's concept of multiple

voicing (1981). In multiracial contexts, this has included studies of overt, racialized linguistic parody (Chun, 2004; Hill, 1995; Mesthrie, 2002; Preston, 1992; Ronkin & Karn, 1999) and studies of "crossing" (Cutler, 2003; Rampton, 1995). While the former highlights the "symbolic power" (Bourdieu, 1991) of white-on-non-white mockery, the crossing literature finds some types of double-voicing to signify a degree of racial integration or identification with the group being voiced (Cutler, 2003; Rampton, 1995). The field of sociolinguistics has also seen "a growing interest in the sociophonetic aspects of segmental variation" in recent years (Podesva, 2007: 478). Despite this, only a small number of studies has used acoustic phonetic analysis to investigate linguistic parody (Pratt & D'Onofrio, 2017; Schilling, 1998). More research using this methodology is needed, since phonetic analysis allows us to give an account of performance in fine-grained detail, which is important in unpacking the meaning of stereotyped features and associated practices. Accordingly, this paper approaches the question of how to interpret a particular set of linguistic performances in Bermuda using a combination of qualitative and quantitative phonetic methods.

The data for this paper come from sociolinguistic interviews with eight black and eight white speakers, selected from a wider corpus of over 80 recordings of Bermudians, aged from 20 to 86, collected between 2011 and 2016. Interviews were conducted at first with the primary research goal of investigating Bermudian English phonology, and, as fieldwork progressed, with the aim of investigating linguistic parody. The speakers included in the present study were chosen from the larger corpus based on the central research goal of this paper, which is to compare the patterning of the MOUTH vowels of two contrasting social groups: elderly black men, who are the most conservative speakers of any local variety, and a group of white, wealthy Bermudian men known for performing Bermudian English in public, who had also done so in one-to-one interviews.

This study focuses on men because both the performers and the persona they construct are male. As a woman, I would not be fully considered a part of the performers' community of practice; however, my positioning as a white "paper Bermudian"—i.e. someone who lacks Bermudian heritage, but was born in Bermuda and has been granted citizenship—meant that the interview setting to an extent reproduced the roots of the white Bermudian performance genre (discussed below); conversations often comprised an "old white Bermudian" educating a "new Bermudian" about the sounds and phrases of the variety. It is likely, and in some cases confirmed in interviews, that I was assumed to agree with the political standpoint on Bermudian status which I will show is deeply linked to these performances—that is, to the idea that Bermudian English, like Bermudian citizenship, belongs to both everybody and nobody.

Throughout the paper, I make a basic distinction between "performance" and "non-performance" speech styles. Of course, style is not so easily delimited; to an extent, the "third wave" considers all speech as performative, and whether a speaker is accommodating towards or actively performing a style may at times be difficult to judge, even in overtly theatrical styles. Therefore, portions of speech identified by the author as performance were treated as such only if they met one or more of the following criteria:

- The speaker was responding to the interviewer's direct request for performance of Bermudian English.
- The speaker announced that they were about to perform.
- The speaker anticipated the performance with a quotative.

Speech judged to be performance based on these criteria was noted to co-occur with increased pitch variability and marked changes in voice quality, as well as many of the characteristics of stylized performance listed by Coupland (2004: 253–254). While these parameters necessarily simplify style, they represent useful boundaries for defining two noticeably different speech registers for the purposes of analysis.

1.1 | Bermuda

Bermuda is a British Overseas Territory with a land area of approximately 21 square miles. Often mistakenly thought to be part of the Caribbean, Bermuda is actually located around 1,000 miles to the north (32.3°N, 64.8°W). Today, Bermuda's primary economic activity is international business; motivated by the island's minimal taxation policies, "exempt" companies have been basing themselves there since the mid-20th century. Discussed further below, this has had a significant impact on Bermuda as a sociolinguistic landscape.

Bermuda makes an interesting case study for the examination of language in relation to identity, race, and nation, in that it is ambiguous in terms of geographical, cultural, and linguistic categories. Despite Bermuda's physical distance from the Caribbean, it is culturally affiliated with it to some extent owing to the heritage of many islanders (Outerbridge, 2013: 61–62; Packwood, 1975). At the same time, as a British dependency that is located much closer to the North American mainland than to the British Isles, Bermuda has been subject to influences from both sides of the Atlantic, with their relative dominance fluctuating over the centuries (Jarvis, 2010); this has resulted in a mixed set of cultural and linguistic norms, although today the supralocal norm is decidedly North American owing to increased numbers of permanently settled American businesses and residents in the last century. Bermudians are primarily descended from enslaved West Africans and Native North Americans; white British settlers; Scottish and Irish indentured servants; and Caribbean, American and Portuguese migrants from the 19th and 20th centuries. Questions of identity, authenticity, and homeland are especially complex in Bermuda because it was uninhabited until British settlement in 1612 (Zuill, 1983). This is at the heart of heated debates about Bermudian identity, discussed in greater depth later on.

Linguistically speaking, Bermudian English (BerE) also defies straightforward categorization. BerE is a stabilized, non-standard koiné which was probably fully nativized around three centuries ago. It developed from a mixed range of English input including British, Scottish, Irish, and Caribbean Englishes, and little to no language contact; this, along with sociodemographic conditions in early Bermuda, accounts for its lack of a creole. The features of BerE are accordingly complex; Eberle and Schreier (2013) show alignments with Northern Caribbean varieties in their morphosyntactic profile of the variety, and, as shown in Hall (2018), the vowel system and consonant features of BerE reflect the full range of its linguistic input; BerE is not straightforwardly a Caribbean, American, or British English dialect. Neither entirely colonial nor postcolonial, Bermuda does not fit into commonly used evolutionary categories used by scholars of new dialect formation, including those most recently proposed by Denis and D'Arcy (2018). With regards to language ideologies, however, Bermuda is unremarkable; as in other sites of "non-standard" English varieties, prescriptivist attitudes co-exist with feelings of dialect pride.

In the existing literature on BerE, scholars have given impressionistic accounts of differences between black and white Bermudian speech (Ayres, 1933; Trudgill & Hannah, 2002), and Holliday (2016) notes that further investigation is needed. The question of whether black and white Bermudians speak different varieties of BerE is complex. Bermuda was a site of close dialect contact in early colonial settings, but extreme segregation over the last two centuries, and a significant proportion of Bermuda's white speakers arrived on the island relatively recently from North America and the UK following the international business boom. This means that black and white Bermudian Englishes are likely to be diverging rather than converging over time, and is supported by evidence in my own corpus of BerE. Ultimately, it may be best to characterize Black Bermudian English (BBerE) and White Bermudian English (WBerE) as overlapping subvarieties of BerE, while recognizing the limitations and risks associated with such labels. This study does not aim to make general claims about the speech of black and white Bermudians, but rather examines the behaviour of one socially stereotyped variable in the speech of a very specific community of practice (elite white performers) in two contrasting styles, and compares it to the same variable in the group of speakers they appear to be impersonating (black Bermudians).

1.2 | "The two Bermudas"

Race is crucial to a sociolinguistic understanding of Bermuda. While Bermuda is indeed "characterized by a high level of diversity with regard to ancestries" (Eberle & Schreier, 2013: 287), the locally meaningful racialized categories—black, white, and Portuguese—are entrenched. Only 9% of Bermudians identified as mixed-race in the most recent census, and Bermudians of mixed heritage are typically racialized as black. Portuguese Bermudians were for many years treated as a separate underclass, but have come to be racialized as white (Winfield, 2014), and the central political and cultural distinction today is between black and white groups. This is reflected in respondents' use of these terms to self-identify on their consent forms in free-text answer format; labels have been assigned to speakers in this paper according to their responses. I use the terms black and white not uncritically, but in line with the goal of understanding a set of linguistic performances as they relate to and indeed construct these racialized categories in Bermuda. Additionally, I use the terms as an aid to the examination of the language of differently empowered groups. They are useful to some extent in contradicting the colour-blind ideology (discussed below) used by performers to justify their racialized language mocking practices. With this approach, I follow Alim's emphasis on the importance of "both doing and undoing race" in sociolinguistics (2016: 47).

Black and white Bermudians are residentially and educationally segregated, and unequally empowered. Socioeconomic inequality is reflected in comparative levels of income, inherited wealth, and incarceration (Government of Bermuda Department of Statistics, 2017; Lawrence & Codrington, 2014; Starling, 2014). Unlike many postcolonial societies, Bermuda's black majority is slim, at 52% (Government of Bermuda Department of Statistics, 2017). This is linked not only to the immigration from the UK and North America that was spurred by Bermuda's turn to international business, but also to a history of government agendas designed to limit the black population and augment the white, including the banishment of freed slaves (Packwood, 1975: 78), birth-control policies aimed at black families (Bourbonnais, 2016), and the deliberate courting of white immigrants (Winfield, 2014). Unsurprisingly, therefore, immigration is a highly sensitive and politically polarized issue, although in qualitatively different ways from societies in which the majority of migrants are underprivileged. In Bermuda, immigration supporters, who are mostly white, argue for the "trickle-down" effect of international business—"immigration policy is economic policy"—while anti-immigration protesters, who are mostly black, argue that affluent white immigrants and their offspring take the best jobs and opportunities away from Bermudians; changes in policy are often interpreted as continuations of historic population control, or efforts to "whiten" the vote (Johnson, 2012).

The related question of belonging is an ever-present and contentious issue, often rising to the forefront of public debate during periods of political tension over immigration and naturalization. What constitutes real "Bermudian-ness" is a point of sharp disagreement in Bermuda, usually between black and white groups. The fact that Bermuda was uninhabited when it was discovered is at the foundation of one viewpoint which argues that "all Bermudians are really immigrants" and theorizes equal status and cultural citizenship for all (potential) residents. Bermudians' lack of indigenous ancestors is regularly weaponized in response to black Bermudian nationalism, and "there's no such thing as a native Bermudian" is a common catch-phrase among white immigration supporters. The same sentiment is evident in the following extract from a poem by white Bermudian Jeremy Frith, entitled "Send 'Em Back":

'Cause either we're all immigrants
Or else we send 'em back
We cannot make distinctions
Of white or brown or black. (Frith, 1996: 12–13)

This line of argument is part of the ideology of colour-blind racism in Bermuda; it erases and ignores the very different circumstances under which black and white Bermudians came to be Bermudian, as well as present-day inequality, and rhetorically projects prejudice onto blacks for "making distinctions," much in the same way as described by Bonilla-Silva (2002: 54). Recently, objections have been raised to this general position and to Frith's poetry specifically; a poem responding to "Send 'Em Back" included the line "don't deprive me and kin the title indigenous" (Royal Gazette, 2014), and a blog entitled "Code-Switching and Color Blindness" notes of Frith that "people share his words when they want everybody to stop talking about race, immigration and the wealth gap" (White, 2018b). I will show in the remainder of this paper that this colour-blind ideology is linked to, and used to justify, a specific type of linguistic performance common among white Bermudian men.

2 | THE WHITE PARODIC PERFORMANCE REGISTER IN BERMUDA

"Send 'Em Back" comes from a collection of poetry by Frith entitled "Oh Gawd, I Vish Dis Ig'rance Vud Stop!" The collection contains a number of poems expressing the same political standpoint, and is written in what Frith calls "the Bermudian vernacular," reflected in non-standard orthographic choices, and a set of "notes on pronunciation" for readers. Frith (now deceased) was one of many white Bermudian men with a reputation for performing BerE, not only on the page, but also orally; Frith released an audio recording of himself reading the same collection "in dialect" in 2008. Another key site of public linguistic display in Bermuda was *Not the Um Um Show* (NTUU), a live stage comedy performed by a troupe of five white Bermudian men and one white "ex-pat" (the term commonly used to refer to white immigrants in Bermuda). The show, the name of which refers to the BBerE filler um-um, was popular among predominantly white audiences in the 1980s and 1990s. Two members of the troupe co-authored the joke dialect dictionary *Bermewjan Vurds* (Smith & Barritt, 2005).

This paper focuses on the style of linguistic performance of BerE associated with speakers like Frith and the NTUU players. Of course, as a tourist destination home to a non-standard variety of English, dialect display is common in Bermuda and takes many forms. The stock phrase "down the road," for example, pronounced [dɑːn di rəːd] and written as *dahn de road* or *dahn dee rode*, is often used to demonstrate the monophthongization of the MOUTH and GOAT vowels, and the pronunciation of the definite article, which are all stereotyped features of BerE. Performance is not limited to any one group of speakers; there are examples in the corpus of black Bermudians and Bermudian women engaging in heightened dialect display during interviews. However, there is a very particular style among white men characterized by shared repertoire and political commentary. This kind of linguistic parody has its roots in communication between white male Bermudians and ex-pats: NTUU originated as a charity-raising skit for the ex-pat dominated "Save Our Cinema Society" in 1984, and *Bermewjan Vurds* was designed as a tool for de-coding BerE for new residents working in the corporate sector (Barritt et al., 2004).

During fieldwork, and in my experience as a white Bermudian, I noticed this type of performance to be common in conversational contexts as well as on stage and on paper, and eight white speakers who are known for performing in public did so in the context of their interviews. The remainder of this section introduces the style by way of examples from their interview data. The speakers have been assigned pseudonyms (further details are given below in Table 1). Extracts have been transcribed according to the guidelines for automatic alignment issued by the Linguistic Data Consortium (2003); double brackets indicate unclear speech, {LG} indicates laughter, and + indicates the transcriber's

guess at a partially pronounced word. IPA transcriptions are given for instances of MOUTH in performance and non-performance speech, since this variable will be investigated in more depth later on. My own emphasis is given in italics, and performance speech is marked in bold type.

In interviews, these white men performed both freely and in response to prompts such as "how does an authentic Bermudian speak?" and "what does a Bermudian accent sound like?" Performances were often given spontaneously during discussions about politics and immigration. Based on the content of the performances, and the speakers' own explanations of them, it is clear that they are racialized. The most obvious sign that these speakers are voicing a black Bermudian is that they say that they are doing so, as in (1) and (2):

(1) PARKER And then (()) in the (()) the sorta in *in the black pop- +population* — I don't know all the expressions but *they're always saying*, say **you know what I mean, you know, see it, see it? You know, yy- you know what I'm talking 'bout? You know (()) right? right?** You know get all that.

(2) DAVIES I can recall going to this party, and [redacted] and I were the only white people there! You know? But I got along with all these people! **You know, I was talking to them like they was buddies from way back, you know what I'm saying! And I can talk like I can talk you know I can talk *their language*! You know what I'm saying?**

Further indication that the speakers are "doing" a black character comes in the political messages of the performances, which consistently mock black-majority political stances in Bermuda, as in (3):

(3) HALL Uh, well you were saying um there's no such thing as a Bermudian, right?

PARKER Well no that that's only — uh because there isn't. You know, I mean uh the the um — Bermudians get very, you know **"Love, let's talk about the nation, you know, things of national importance, and we got national playing fields, we got national libraries, and uh, (()) the nation!"** (()) Come on, you know.

Interviews included other, more indirect hints that the speakers were voicing a black Bermudian. Although it is less explicitly stated, the fact that Foster voices a black speaker in (4) is woven into the context of his performance—that of a "Bermuda Foster" confronting him as a "white Foster" and ancestor of a slave-owner, while visiting St. Monica's, a well-known black-congregation church:

(4) FOSTER And St Monica's is up on the hill, in the area where just near where I grew up, and there are a lot of Fosters there, so uh, somebody came up to me and said **"Oh, you know there's some Bermuda Fosters round here you know"** And I said yes yes I'm one of those, I come from [redacted]. You know and they said **"Oh. 'I guess that means I was your slave.'"**

Of course, these kinds of evidence undermine the colour-blind ideology demonstrated above. They also co-occur with evidence that the performances link BerE with negative personal attributes. In the following examples, the personae invoked by the performers are ridiculed and share socially disdained traits such as alcoholism, low intellect, and swearing. The joke in example (5) plays on the stereotyped BerE pronunciation of *boy* when used as a form of address.

(5) PARKER There are old Bermuda jokes, like um, uh teacher writes on the blackboard a sentence, and the sentence is "The king asked the passer-by who cut down [dɑʊn] those trees." And she said um, "Dwayne, will you come to the front of the class and pick up a piece of chalk and punctuate that sentence as you think it should be punctuated." So Dwayne goes up to the blackboard. "Alright, now read back to the class what you have done." **"The king asked the passer, boy [bɑi], who cut down [dɑːn] those trees?"**

(6) WILLIAMS So I did this funeral notice, and **I just did it in a voice that that sounded [sɑːndɪd] right. Sounded [sɑːndɪd] like someone who comes from here … It was about the death of a man who died when he was out fishing…And um he got pulled over-board and he was never seen again. And the last sentence he ever ever said in his life started with the word holy. Two-word sentence, started with the word holy. So at least you know half of him was righteous when he went down [dɑːn]!** {LG}

(7) PARKER **Uh, I was um um I was um bitten by a goat. I was um bitten by a goat…Uh yeah I had ringworm or something. Anyway I was a young boy, sitting up to the table chomping down [dɑːn] on a piece of christophine, when whop! My jaw was locked up one time. I couldn't speak for two years! The only way I was able to communicate was to um um fart in Morse code. One time I was up to the kitchen fire expressing myself almost blew up the fucking house!**

(8) WILLIAMS I played the very Bermudian man who was being interviewed at nine o'clock in the morning with a flask of rum in a paper bag, and you know sipping while he was talking, and **so that accent was like real like you know um extreme. Extreme accent like you don't hear people talk like this 'cause this is a complete exaggeration but the idea being that if someone's like inebriated the whole time, their whole life, they may be a little wet-brain from a life of drinking, they might talk like that, you know.**

The types of personal qualities observed in the personae of these performances are also present in video data of staged performances by members of NTUU. Characters are unsuccessful job-seekers, homeless, or unhelpful customer service assistants, all with strong BBerE accents. One scene, set in a court-room, involves a criminal on trial having to be "translated" into "standard" English by an interpreter for the benefit of the judge (Barritt et al., 2004).

These performances self-evidently belong with the literature on racialized mock language since they are framed explicitly as impressions of black Bermudians, parody BBerE, and link those parodies to crude and harmful stereotypes. The speakers, however, describe their performances as a form of legitimate self-mockery:

(9) HALL But you guys are in a way making fun on stage, right?

TURNER Oh abso- +absolutely g- I'm allowed to make fun of my own people!

BAKER Of oh yeah abso- +absolutely Yeah that's, yeah actually it's like, you know

TURNER {LG} I'm gonna make fun of us!

This exchange summarizes a strong belief among the performers that they are entitled to perform the way they do. Here, Baker and Turner position themselves as Bermudians making fun of Bermudians, appealing to the mainstream ideology that mock language is not offensive if it is performed by an in-group member (Chun, 2004: 266). Perhaps to the same end, many of the speakers emphasized their Bermudian credentials to me in their interviews ("there's no-one more Bermudian than me" [Davies]). While the white speakers claim membership of a single, deracialized speech

community, evidence from interviews with black Bermudians suggests that they are linguistically race-conscious rather than colour blind:

(10)

GREEN	I can tell you are Bermudian.
HALL	You can?
GREEN	Yeah, you're born in Bermuda.
HALL	How can you tell that?
GREEN	The way you speak. And you're white. When you've called over the phone. I knew you were a white person, white girl that was calling. And you also know um you're a young-ish person, rather than a fifty or eighty year old person.
HALL	So you could tell over the phone whether someone was black or white because of the way they speak.
GREEN	Generally, generally, generally, uh well I could say absolutely, yes. Yeah. It would be odd for one not to. You know, they're they're very distinct let's face it.

It is also clear from black Bermudians' objections to NTUU performances that they do not subscribe to the colour-blind stance that white speakers use to defend them:

> The fact that the Um Um shows haven't become fashionable amongst the black community in 20 years is a reflection of just how far apart the two cultures are in Bermuda… With all the comics being white and the theme of using a Bermudian accent that is aimed at our ignorance and one racial group. (Wells, 2004)

> How hard is it to accept that what was once thought of as innocent is actually an insensitive mockery, and in some cases, downright appropriation of the Bermudian accent and slang? (White, 2018a)

Besides auditory observations to the contrary, and in light of the examples above, the performers' race and class privileges make it highly unlikely that they are mocking themselves rather than voicing the racial other. In the white community, however, the raciolinguistic ideology of colour blindness persists, perhaps protected in some way by the ambiguity surrounding "authentic" Bermudian identity. In this context, an examination of the linguistic detail of performance vs. non-performance style may help us to scrutinize the Bermudian performers' claims that they are parodying themselves. As seen in the IPA transcriptions given above in examples (5)–(7), MOUTH is monophthongized in white speakers' performances, whereas (5) includes an example of diphthongal MOUTH in non-performance white speech. This is consistent with written stereotyping of BerE MOUTH; *Bermewjan Vurds* has entries for "sahn" (*sound*), "ron" (*round*), "tawn/tahn" (*town*), and "pahnd" (*pound*) (Smith & Barritt, 2005). Together these observations prompted a closer look at the acoustic behaviour of MOUTH among white performers in performance vs. non-performance style.

3 | THE PHONETICS OF MOUTH

3.1 | Data

Tokens for the phonetic study were included based on the phonological conditioning of MOUTH in BBerE. A low-back monophthong [ɑː] occurs before voiced codas, and MOUTH in pre-voiceless contexts is subject to "Canadian" raising [əʊ]. Given these constraints, only pre-voiced tokens of MOUTH

TABLE 1 Number of MOUTH tokens per speaker in two styles

Speaker pseudonym	Race	Age	Performance tokens	Non-performance tokens
Jones	W	64	24	21
Williams	W	57	5	19
Parker	W	70	7	68
Davies	W	72	2	73
Foster	W	52	2	19
Turner	W	60 approx.	1	23
Martin	W	52	0	41
Baker	W	60 approx.	0	28
Roberts	B	81	N/A	43
Clarke	B	82	N/A	75
King	B	70	N/A	23
Allen	B	63	N/A	48
Edwards	B	66	N/A	41
Hughes	B	86	N/A	38
Green	B	83	N/A	101
Lewis	B	60	N/A	56
TOTAL			41	717

were extracted for this study. The sample was further narrowed to include tokens of pre-nasal MOUTH only, in order to exclude the possibility of results being affected by variability between different voiced contexts.

A total of 717 non-performance tokens and 41 performance tokens was collected. As seen in Table 1, the number of tokens of MOUTH per speaker is unbalanced. This is because the interviews were not designed specifically for the purposes of collecting pre-nasal tokens of MOUTH, and some interviews lasted longer than others. The results for speakers with lower numbers of tokens, however, are consistent with the rest of the sample. Unsurprisingly, far fewer tokens of MOUTH in performance style were available than tokens in "normal" conversational speech in all 16 speakers, and two speakers did not perform the variable. This is a challenge inevitable in analyses of performance speech.

3.2 | Analytic methodology

The basic procedure of the analysis was to compare black and white MOUTH in non-performance style, and then examine white performance against these findings. The interviews were orthographically transcribed and stylistically coded (according to the criteria listed above) using ELAN (Sloetjes & Willenburg, 2008). Transcripts were then automatically force-aligned with corresponding sound files using FAVE (Rosenfelder, Fruehwald, Evanini, & Yuan, 2011). Scripts were used in Praat (Boersma & Weenink, 2015) to extract tokens of pre-nasal MOUTH, and to measure each token at 25% and 75% of the duration of the vowel.

In analysing the phonetic realizations of MOUTH tokens, two main points were of interest: the frontness/backness of the onset, and the amount of trajectory change, or degree of diphthongization. The expectations based on auditory impressions made during fieldwork and transcription were that:

- Black and white MOUTH in non-performance style would be significantly different from each other, with black speakers producing a more monophthongal vowel whose onset is further back in the vowel space.
- In the white group, MOUTH in performance style would be significantly different from MOUTH in non-performance style. Non-performed tokens of MOUTH would be "fronter" at the onset and have a longer trajectory than performed tokens, which were expected to be monophthongal.
- White performed MOUTH and black non-performed MOUTH would not be significantly different from each other in terms of onset F2 value and trajectory change.

The data were not normalized despite the wide age range of the speakers, since we do not expect significant age effects on F2 in this all-male group. The value of F2 at 25% of the duration of the vowel was used as the measure of onset vowel quality. Euclidean distance (see below) was used as a measure of diphthongization, calculated from F1 and F2 values measured at 25% and 75% of the duration of each token (Di Paolo, Yaeger-Dror, & Wassink, 2011: 101–102).

Euclidean distance formula for calculating diphthong trajectory, where i = 75% measurement point and j = 25% measurement point:

$$d_{ij} = \sqrt{(F1_i - F1_j)^2 + (F2_i - F2_j)^2}$$

Owing to the small number of tokens involved in this type of study, statistical analysis was limited to simple t-test comparisons. Since unequal sample sizes were involved, Welch's unequal variances t-test was used to test the differences (1) between black and white MOUTH in non-performance style and (2) between white performed MOUTH and black non-performed MOUTH. Paired Student's t-tests were used to test whether white performed and non-performed MOUTH were significantly different from each other, this being comparable to a "repeated measures" experiment, with each speaker being used as their own "control." Owing to the fact that not all eight speakers gave performances of MOUTH, the paired tests could only be conducted using data from the six speakers who did. All the *p*-values presented in this paper are the results of these two statistical tests.

Below, I first present results from each speaker group in non-performance style and then compare them, before introducing the results for the linguistic performances of the white group. I then compare the results for white performance with black and white non-performance in order to address the two main questions of the phonetic study: How acoustically different are white speakers' realizations of this stereotyped feature in and out of performance style? And how does this compare to black speakers' production of the same variable?

3.3 | Findings

Acoustic results show two main variants of pre-nasal MOUTH among the black speakers. The first of these is a low-back monophthong as in (11) below and Figure 1. The other variant is a low-back vowel with a rising-fronting off-glide, as in (12) and Figure 2. A rising-backing diphthong, although rare, is also possible, as in (13).

(11) Go down [dɑːn] there (Hughes)

(12) Look around [əɹɑɪn] try (Edwards)

(13) Go down [daʊn] (Lewis)

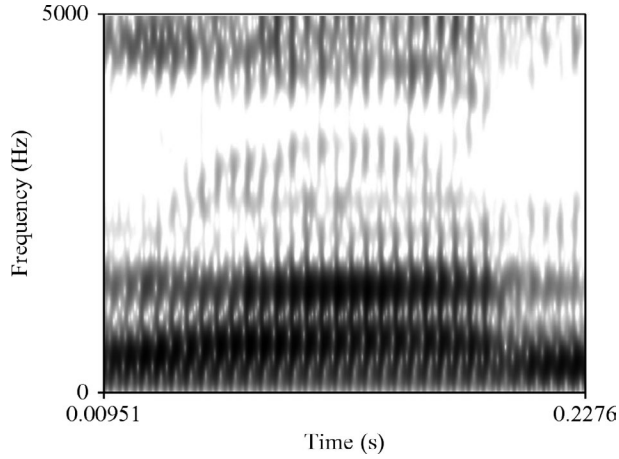

FIGURE 1 Typical monophthongal black token of MOUTH (Hughes token 643 "down"); Euclidean distance 32

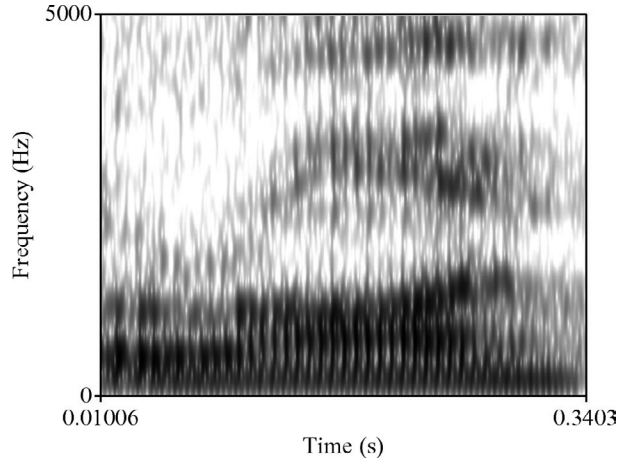

FIGURE 2 Black token of MOUTH with a rising-fronting diphthong (Edwards token 488 "around"); Euclidean distance 273

TABLE 2 Black group statistics for F1 and F2 values for MOUTH at two measurement points, change in vowel and Euclidean distance

	25%		75%		Change 25 > 75		Euclidean distance
	F1	**F2**	**F1**	**F2**	**F1**	**F2**	114
Mean	625	1170	627	1183	3	13	**Standard deviation**
Median	621	1170	617	1190	2	9	72

Table 2 gives the mean and median values for F1 and F2 at the two measurement points for MOUTH in the black group, as well as the mean change between the 25% and 75% measurements, and the mean Euclidean distance. Importantly, the latter has been affected by the tokens with a rising-fronting off-glide, which are less common than the low-back monophthong, but have a Euclidean distance similar to a "standard" rising-backing variant, thus artificially increasing the mean.

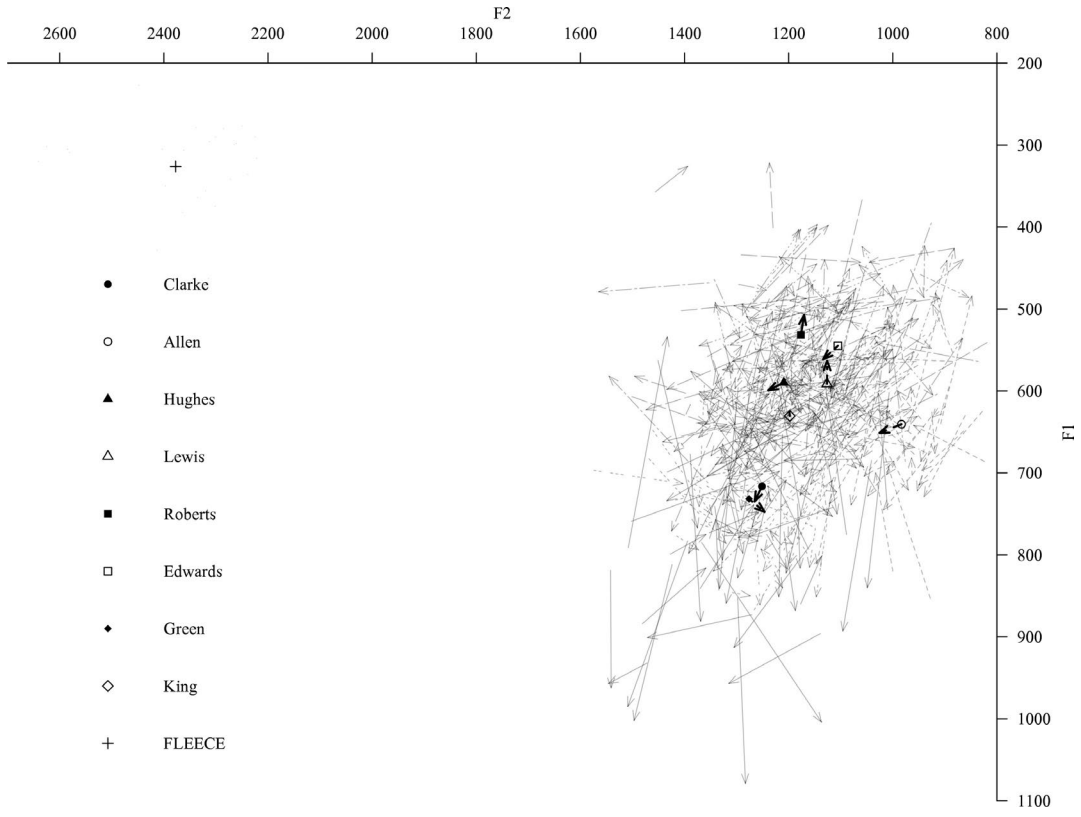

FIGURE 3 Raw data for MOUTH in the black group, with individual speaker means and mean for /i/

Figure 3 displays all black tokens of MOUTH, labelled by speaker. Each narrow-weight line shows the trajectory of a single vowel token, and thicker lines represent individual speaker means. Speaker means were generated by calculating the mean value at each of the two measured time-points of the vowel in each token. The mean for /i/ is plotted to provide a reference point in the vowel space. Although there is some variability in the data, Figure 3 clearly shows that each speaker's average MOUTH has a short or negligible trajectory and occupies a low-back position in the vowel space relative to /i/.

In the white group, non-performance pre-nasal MOUTH is typically a rising-backing diphthong, as in (14) and Figure 4. Occasionally the vowels in these data have a short trajectory, giving the auditory impression of a low-front monophthong, similar in quality to the onset of the usual white diphthongal variant. This is illustrated in (15) and Figure 5.

(14) People round [ɘɹæʊnd] (Williams)

(15) Is down [dæːn] there (Baker)

Table 3 gives the basic statistics for MOUTH in the white group. Figure 6 presents the raw data for MOUTH in all eight white speakers of the study in the same manner as Figure 3. Figure 6 clearly shows the diphthongal quality of MOUTH in all these white speakers, with the exception of Baker, who mostly used the low-front [æ] variant.

The data presented so far show that the non-performance MOUTH vowels of the black and white groups of this study contrast considerably. First, the white speakers' MOUTH has a more front onset than the MOUTH of the black speakers: The mean F2 at 25% of the vowel duration is 1470 Hz, compared

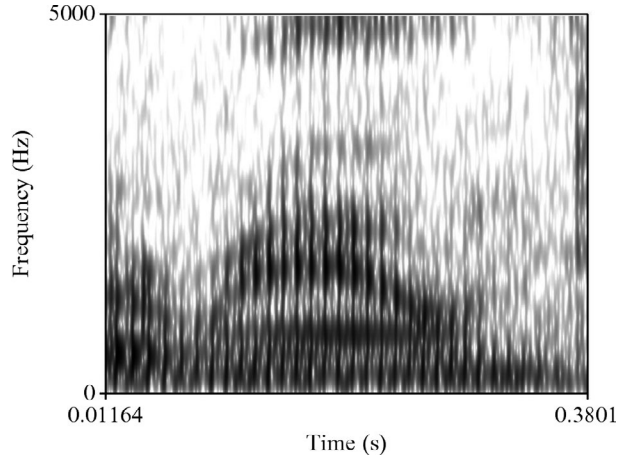

FIGURE 4 Typical white token of MOUTH (Williams token 148 "around"); Euclidean distance 808

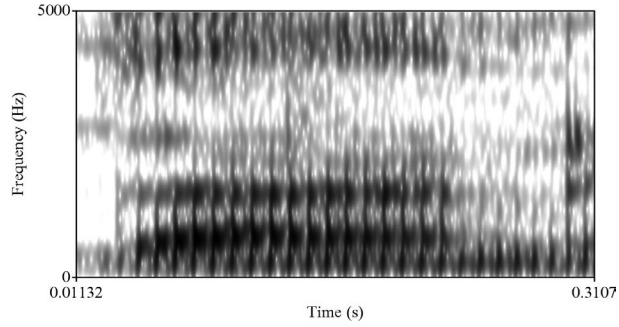

FIGURE 5 White token of MOUTH with a low-front monophthong (Baker token 317 "down"); Euclidean distance 28

TABLE 3 White group statistics for F1 and F2 values at two measurement points, change in vowel and Euclidean distance

	25%		75%		Change 25 > 75		Euclidean distance
	F1	**F2**	**F1**	**F2**	**F1**	**F2**	233
Mean	639	1470	578	1284	−62	−186	**Standard deviation**
Median	636	1482	568	1274	−55	−181	148

to 1170 Hz in the black group. Second, the white speakers' MOUTH is a diphthong, with an average Euclidean distance of 233, whereas the black speakers typically produce a monophthong, although a relatively short low-back vowel with a rising-fronting off-glide is also possible: the mean Euclidean distance for this group is 114. Statistical analysis shows that these differences between black and white MOUTH are significant. As predicted, the black speakers' onset F2 values are significantly lower than the white speakers ($p < .0001$), and their MOUTH tokens show significantly less trajectory change than those of the white speakers ($p < .01$). The difference in trajectory length between groups would be even more significant were it not for the rising-fronting diphthongs found in the black group—which have Euclidean distances similar to that of the "standard" white tokens, despite having an opposite

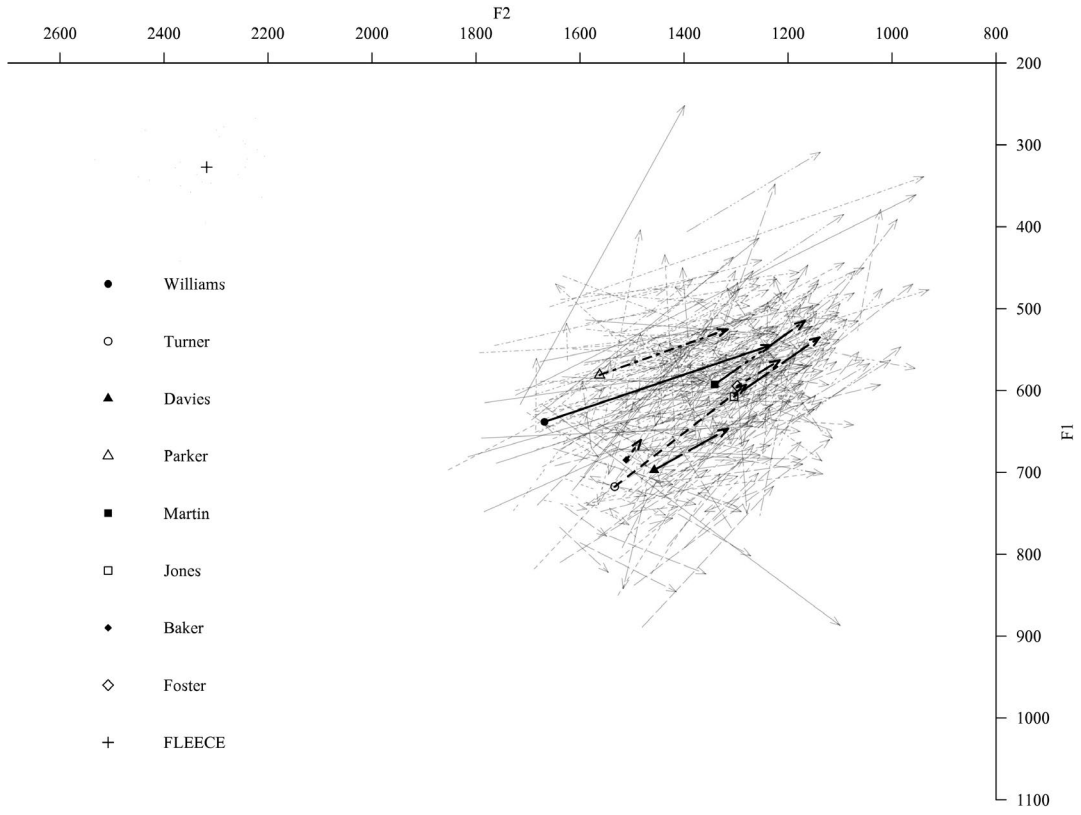

FIGURE 6 Raw data of MOUTH in the white group, with individual speaker means and mean for /i/

direction of change. Still, the frequency of low-back monophthongs among the black speakers is high enough that the mean Euclidean distance of that group is around half that of the white speakers.

One of the central auditory impressions which prompted this study is that the white speakers' performed tokens of MOUTH sound phonetically very different to their non-performed pronunciation of the same vowel, and at the same time sound similar to the monophthongal MOUTH vowel of the speakers in the black group. In other words, MOUTH in the white speakers' performances is generally a low-back monophthong, as in (16) and Figure 7.

(16) **Chomping down [dɑːn] on** (Parker)

Acoustic measurements largely confirm these observations. As seen in Table 4, the white speakers are in their performances producing a low-back MOUTH vowel with a short trajectory. The mean Euclidean distance for MOUTH in white performance (85) is actually lower than that of the black group (114), but this is because the inclusion of glide-fronted tokens in the black mean obscures this picture. The white performed tokens generally have slightly longer trajectories than most black tokens, although they are still dramatically shorter than the white non-performance tokens.

Figure 8 presents the raw data for MOUTH in performance style. There is some variability in the performances, but almost all tokens have very short trajectories, and, with a few exceptions, are tightly grouped around the mean—more so than the tokens of the black group, consistently with the lower mean Euclidean distance. This suggests the possibility of exaggeration and also that speakers are consciously aiming at a target sound. The rising-fronting token which stands out on the plot is similar

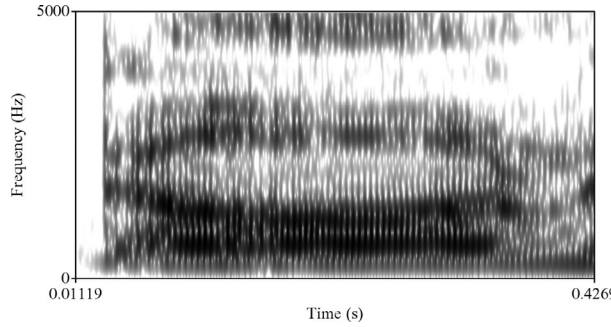

FIGURE 7 Typical white performance token of MOUTH (Parker token 136 "down"); Euclidean distance 36

TABLE 4 White group performance statistics for F1 and F2 values at two measurement points, change in vowel and Euclidean distance

	25%		75%		Change 25 > 75		Euclidean distance
	F1	**F2**	**F1**	**F2**	**F1**	**F2**	85
Mean	631	1180	615	1168	−16	−12	**Standard deviation**
Median	632	1148	615	1163	−17	−5	63

to the variant with this type of off-glide occasionally noticed in the black group's MOUTH. Williams is the only white speaker to produce such a token, however, and does so only once; this provides further evidence suggesting that white speakers are not attempting to mimic the black variant with a rising-fronting off-glide, but only the socially stereotyped low-back monophthong. This may also suggest that the rising-fronting variant is not socially salient.

I will now discuss two main phonetic contrasts central to the questions of this article: that between MOUTH in performance and non-performance in the white group, and that between MOUTH in white performance and black non-performance. Table 5, which reproduces the means for black and white data (including white performance), helps us to understand the relationship between these three groups of tokens. White performed and non-performed MOUTH are very different from one another. Non-performance tokens have an average Euclidean distance of 233 and a mean onset F2 value of 1470 Hz, whereas performed tokens are much shorter (with a mean Euclidean distance of 85) and more front at the onset (1180 Hz).

Figures 9(a) and 9(b) illustrate the differences in onset and diphthongization between MOUTH in the same word, spoken by the same speaker, in two styles. Statistically, the difference between MOUTH in performance and non-performance among white speakers is found to be significant, both in terms of onset F2 ($p < .05$) and Euclidean distance ($p < .01$). This is illustrated in Figure 10, which presents the means for white speakers in both styles, as well as the black mean (this time zoomed in, without individual tokens and /i/, for a clearer picture).

The figure shows that white performed MOUTH is similar to black MOUTH, so much so that the means overlap on the plot. Both have a low-back vowel with a short trajectory, and similar values for onset F2 and vowel change (as seen in Table 5). White performance and black non-performance are not found to be significantly different, either in terms of onset F2 value of MOUTH ($p = .31$) or of trajectory change ($p = .27$). The values for Euclidean distance, however, suggest that the white performers are aiming at a low-back monophthong but not at a rising-fronting off-glide, since the Euclidean distance for white performances of MOUTH (85) is actually lower than for the black speakers (114).

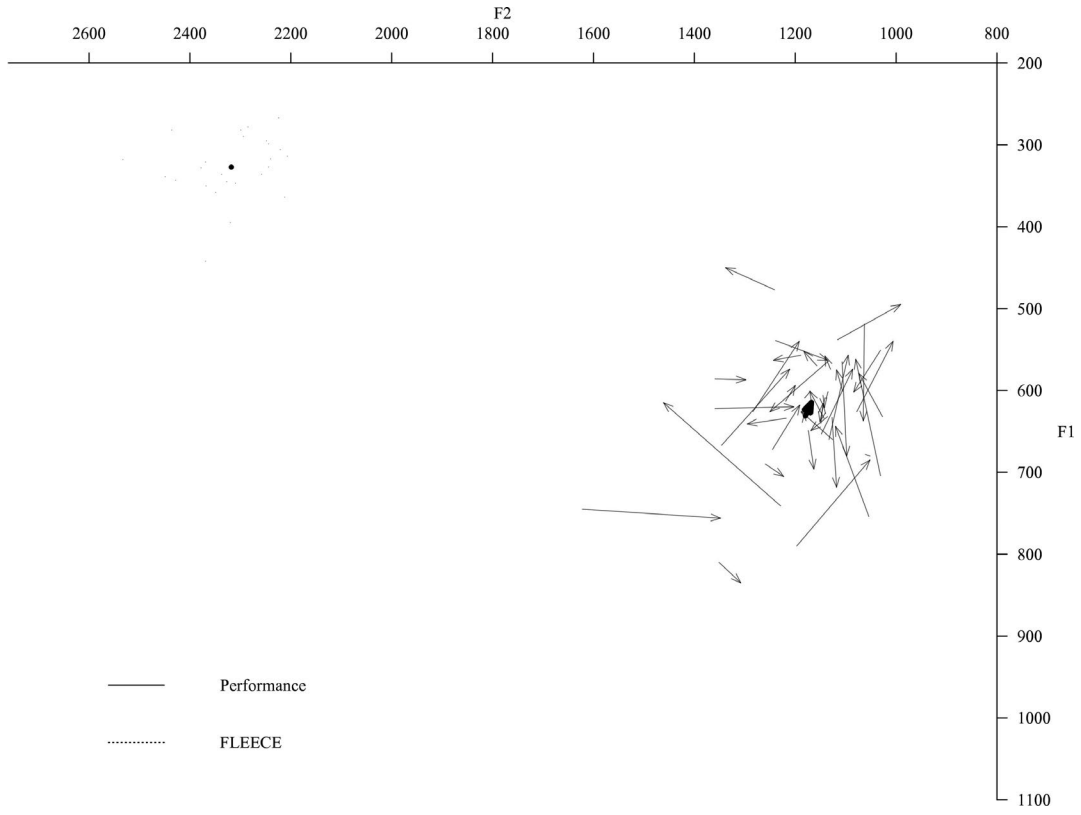

FIGURE 8 All tokens and mean of MOUTH in white performance

TABLE 5 Means for all three speaker groups

	25%		75%		Change 25 > 75		Euclidean distance
	F1	**F2**	**F1**	**F2**	**F1**	**F2**	
White non-performance	639	1470	578	1284	−62	186	233
Black non-performance	625	1170	627	1183	3	13	114
White performance	631	1180	615	1168	−16	−12	85

In summary, these acoustic and auditory results confirm significant phonetic differences between the black and white groups' pre-nasal MOUTH in non-performance contexts, both in terms of the Euclidean distance (corresponding to degree of diphthongization) and the F2 value of the onset (corresponding to an auditory impression of frontness/backness). The results also indicate that the white speakers' performances of MOUTH are different from their non-performed tokens in both respects, and bear some phonetic resemblance to the MOUTH vowel produced by the black speakers of this study. However, a key finding of the acoustic analysis is that white performances of MOUTH generally do not reflect the full complexity of practice in the black group, in that they do not incorporate the less common, off-gliding variant.

This pattern—white speakers' un-nuanced representation of features that are associated with a racialized group, but outside their own repertoire—is well precedented. It is seen in the literature on both written and spoken representations of dialect (Bucholtz, 2011: 213; Chun, 2009; DeBose, 2005;

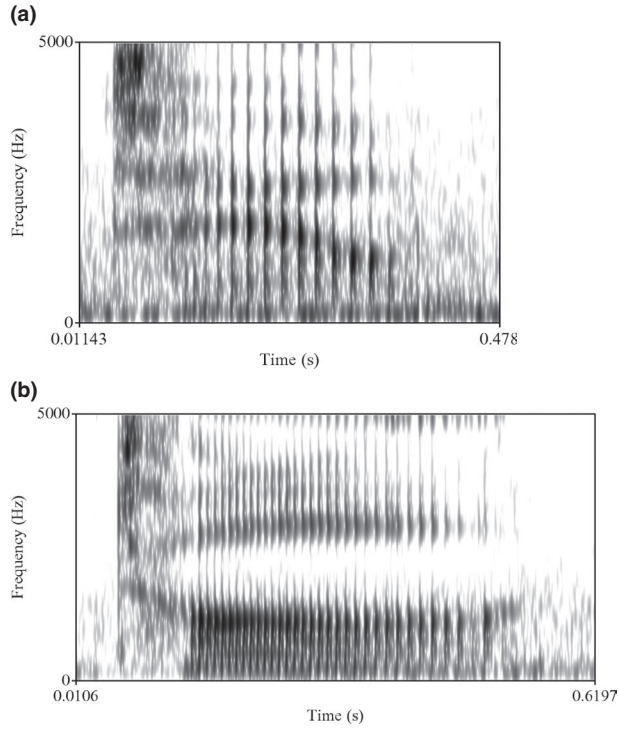

FIGURE 9 (a) Non-performance and (b) performance tokens of MOUTH in the same speaker (Williams tokens 469 and 025, "town")

Preston, 1982, 1992). Studies have found imitated speech to be "inauthentic" (DeBose, 2005: 213) in its form, and also harmful in its propagation of stereotypes. The fine-grained phonetic analysis here, alongside analysis of the content and context of the performances given above, shows the same to be true in the Bermudian case. This pattern is not limited to MOUTH, but also evident in a number of other phonetic variables (Hall, 2018), pointing towards a more generalized pattern in this performance style.

4 | SOCIAL MOTIVATIONS FOR WHITE PARODY

In light of the social context of Bermuda described above, these performances appear to be motivated by a complex and contradictory set of political and identity goals. In so far as they are explained by the performers as legitimate self-mockery, they are closely tied to the political outlook of white Bermuda—that is, to the ideology of one-ness ("we're all immigrants") that is often deployed in debates about race and immigration. Attempts to down-play or deny the existence of separately racialized groups and speech varieties in Bermuda represent a colour-blind raciolinguistic ideology which is at odds with the phonetic evidence presented here; paradoxically, the performers make their claim to authenticity by performing features of BBerE. The raciolinguistic ideology of colour blindness is also contradicted by the speakers' own acknowledgements of differences between black and white speech, which they explicitly say their performances traverse. As in the instances of "linguistic blackface" discussed by Bucholtz and Lopez, these speakers "maximize the linguistic and cultural divide" (2011: 701) between black and white, but explain the legitimacy of their performances by denying such a divide. This denial is easily made in a sociolinguistically ambiguous setting like Bermuda, which lacks an aboriginal population or language

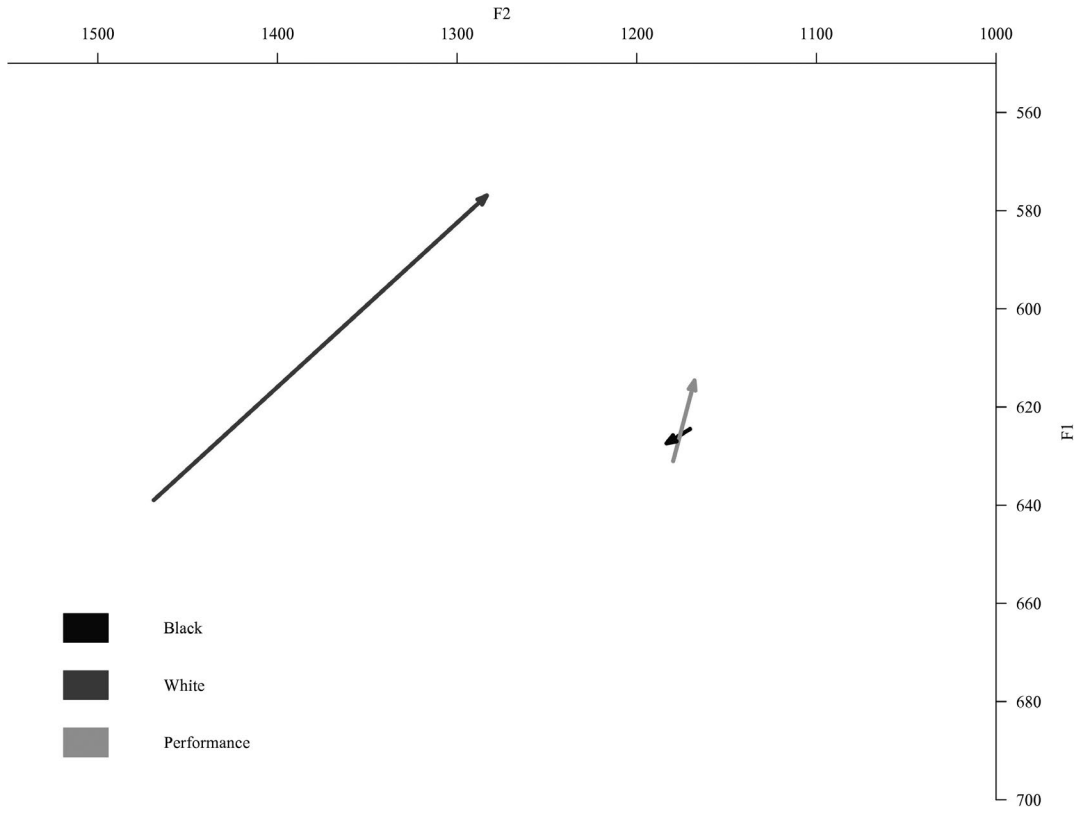

FIGURE 10 Group means of MOUTH in black and white speakers, including white performance

that can straightforwardly be linked to "Bermudian-ness." In this context, the speakers conflate their legal and historical Bermudian-ness with ownership of a social dialect that is not their own.

According to Slobe, the stereotypical white girl "transcends place because she is cosmopolitan" (2018: 543). The same could be said of elite white Bermudians; if there is one thing that they do not have, it is the reputation of being culturally "authentic." This is probably a result of multiple factors, including time spent off-island for education, internationally oriented employment, and political affiliation with ex-pats. All of these factors have considerable linguistic and socioeconomic effects, which the performances attempt to reverse, if only temporarily. As such, an "anxious desire for blackness" (Bucholtz & Lopez, 2011: 682; Lott, 1993) among white Bermudians may be behind their discourse of unity; this is also observed among white Barbadians by Hall (1991). Ultimately, this makes the performances deeply self-contradictory; while they are explained in colour-blind terms, they reinforce racialized stereotypes in their content, context, and phonetic detail. The need to appropriate BBerE features which are absent from their own speech in order to perform the "authentically" local not only exposes these speakers' insecurity about their own Bermudian-ness, but in the end draws attention to the differences between groups rather than erasing them.

In many ways, the linguistic practice examined in this paper draws attention to the similarities that exist across cases of racialized dialect parody; the performances are a part of the common phenomenon of white people assigning homogenizing attributes to disempowered groups and then appropriating these linguistically for social gain, as in the "Junk Spanish" described by Hill (1993) and in mock AAE as described by Bucholtz and Lopez:

> Such representations … not only reduce the linguistic complexity of the variety and reproduce racial divisions but also perpetuate seemingly positive yet essentializing language ideologies of AAE as indexical of coolness, physicality, and authenticity—all in the service of buttressing an increasingly unstable white masculinity (2011: 702).

On the other hand, the data underline that the precise forms and meanings of racialized performance are always a product of the history of racial politics in their specific settings. The Bermudian case is unique in that the white speakers position what is very obviously performance of the "other" as performance of the self; this is linguistic minstrelsy disguised as linguistic self-mockery. The approach used in this study allows an insight into the ways in which speakers selectively construct and de-construct local categories of race and authenticity. Fine-grained phonetic analysis reveals inconsistencies between what the performers do and what they say they do, and therefore proves useful in scrutinizing claims of self-parody as well as shedding light on racializing and racist linguistic practices.

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How to cite this article: Hall R. The MOUTHS of others: The linguistic performance of race in Bermuda. *J Sociolinguistics*. 2019;00:1–21. https://doi.org/10.1111/josl.12345