EVIDENTIALITY IN HISTORICAL
SOUTHERN AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH

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Language never represents what is actually in the world, merely our construal of these states of affairs (Mushin, 2001:7).

Abstract

Evidentiality marking (i.e. *surely ... I think... seems like...)* in English is relatively understudied (Bednarek, 2006:635), and research conducted has largely considered standardized dialects in the United States and Britain. This analysis is a unique contribution to the study of the linguistic marking of speaker stance as I explore the occurrence of evidential marking in 1930s Southern African American English oral narratives from South Carolina. I adopt a broad perspective of evidentiality, considering the marking of speaker attitude towards the reliability of a proposition and its evidence. This analysis first looks at how speakers linguistically express evidential attitude towards the information they convey, exploring the roles of evidential aspects and discourse strategies in this expression. I conclude that the marking of evidentiality in the narratives is achieved by a large variety of forms including lexical, phrasal, and clausal which utilize a number of ways speakers express their commitment to information. By taking a broader perspective, unique ways in which the speakers convey evidential aspects are found to reveal features of the speakers cultural and ethnic identity as southern African American orators. This study contributes to our understanding of evidential marking in languages without grammaticalized systems as well as adding to the semantic/pragmatic perspective of the history and development of African American English and other dialects of English spoken in the United States.

Chapter 1

Introduction

What can be considered evidential has been a matter of debate for some time. Evidentiality is often defined as having a primary meaning of source of information (de Haan, 1999; Aikhenvald, 2004). Aikhenvald (2004) considers evidentials to only appear in languages with grammaticalized evidentiality, arguing they include no reference to validity or reliability of knowledge or information (5). This 'narrow' perspective claims that evidentials expressing source of information often derive "epistemic extensions" which imply secondary meanings of reliability (6). Mushin (2001), however, claims that evidential marking in languages such as English should be analyzed in terms of attitude towards the validity of information because the marking of source of information is not coherent with attitudinal notions like certainty and doubt. She claims that many markers of attitude derive source of information as opposed to the narrow perspective of source deriving attitude.

In this analysis, I consider evidentiality to have two manifestations, one grammatical and one that functions through the use of a wide variety of lexical, phrasal, and clausal markers, such as found in many Indo-European languages. In the English language, evidential markers have been referred to as *evidential strategies* (Aikhenvald, 2004), *epistemological stance* (Mushin, 2001), or *epistemological positioning* (Bednarek, 2006). Chafe (1986) labeled this view of evidentiality as the broad perspective, extending evidential marking to include all forms in language that express epistemological assessment. The broad perspective regards evidentiality in English "as roughly equivalent to…epistemic modality" (Willett, 1988:55).

The present work analyzes the marking of evidential aspects in southern, 1930s African American English. In these narratives of personal experience, I consider all forms that convey aspects of speaker attitude towards information and evidence, not just those forms previously studied as evidential. I explore all manifestations of language that are considered an expression of the status of one's knowledge, the degree to which the speaker 'vouches for' the information being conveyed (Mushin, 2001). Such markers may encode one or more of the following elements from the broad interpretation of evidentiality: degree of commitment, evidence (source/basis), and extent of knowledge (Chafe, 1986; Biber & Finegan, 1989; Mushin, 2001; Bednarek, 2006). By

taking an even broader perspective than the present literature on evidentiality, I am able to explore unique ways in which this particular community of speakers expresses evidential meanings. The concept of evidentials as marking not just the subjective relationship between the speaker and the outside world but also as having a dimension that is representative of the relationship between the speaker and his/her fellow interlocutors is also explored through analysis of the pragmatic functions of evidentials.

When taking Mushin's (2001) perspective of evidential marking (or *epistemological stance*) as expressing the subjective attitude of the speaker, the narrative data in this study reveals that while the English language does not make use of grammatical or obligatory evidential marking, this dialect of African American English utilizes an elaborate inventory of ways in which speakers can convey the degree to which they 'vouch for' their knowledge. Markers work independently and/or together in order to convey the degree to which the speakers commit to the proposition's truth. Through analysis of the subset of evidential markers most often utilized in the narratives, I claim that the marking of evidentiality in languages without grammaticalized, obligatory marking has a cultural basis, evidence of which lies in the choice of the types of evidential forms used throughout the narratives. I show the connection between culture, custom, and evidential markers through looking at the co-occurrence of evidentials and features of the African American oral tradition present in the narrative data. The use of evidential markers in the narratives is concluded to reveal the speakers' cultural identities as African, African American and Southern.

In this analysis, the following research questions will be explored:

1. *What are some of the ways speakers express their attitude towards the information they convey? What role do evidential aspects play in the expression of this attitude?*

2. *What are some of the various discourse functions of each evidential marker and what role do they play in the expression of attitude?*

3. *What does the use of evidential markers reveal about the cultural identities of the speakers?*

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The linguistic coding of epistemology is a debated area of linguistics; both the terms used to label such linguistic phenomena as well as their interpretations have generated a variety of perspectives in both linguistic and anthropological literature. E*videntiality* as a concept is originally credited to Franz Boas' 1911 work in Kwakiutl. He used the term to describe suffixes that convey subjective knowledge (Jacobsen, 1986:4). While there is some mention of evidentiality since Boas, such as Jakobson (1971 [1957]) who is claimed to have coined the term *evidential* for the labeling of verbs that mark basis of information (as cited in Bednarek, 2006:636), it isn't until the 1980s that a stronger interest in the phenomenon appears. A large part of the scholarship during this initial surge in interest focuses on what Chafe (1986) labels the *narrow* approach, defining evidentials as expressing source of information only (For example: Jakobson, 1986; Anderson, 1986; Willett, 1988; de Haan, 1999; Aikhenvald, 2004). In the narrow view, Anderson (1986) defined evidentials as forms that "express the kinds of evidence a person has for making factual claims" (237). In this approach, much research on evidentials is restricted to grammaticalized expressions (Bednarek, 2006:635). Below in (1) and (2) are examples in two languages with grammaticalized, obligatory evidential marking:

(1) Quechua (Floyd, 1993)

Waala-man-shi　　　*Wankayuu-ta*　　*li-n'a*

Tomorrow-GOAL_REP　*Huancayo-ACC*　*go-FUT*

"He will go to Huancayo tomorrow (I hear)"

(2) Tuyuca (Palmer, 1986)

díiga　　*apé-wi*

Soccer　*play-3SG.DIR*

"He played soccer (I saw him play)"

(as cited in Mushin, 2001:18-19)

From this perspective, evidentials do not express notions of attitude like validity or reliability of knowledge (Aikhenwald, 2004:5). Attitude is considered as derived from the nature of the source

and labeled "epistemic extensions" (Aikhenwald, 2004:6). Discussed in Mushin (2001), the above examples, according to the source based perspective, imply that in (1) the marking of this proposition as hearsay automatically implies low commitment to validity, while example (2) derives an attitude of high commitment as a result of the basis of direct visual evidence. The literature that takes the (narrow) source based perspective is divided in respect to languages the term evidential can be applied to. Aikhenwald (2004) claims that evidentials only appear in languages that have obligatory, grammaticalized marking (5), while some researchers such as Fox (2001) have extended this view of evidentiality to its analysis in languages that do not have obligatory or grammaticalized evidentials. Partially as a result of the debate on what is considered evidential, little research has been dedicated to English, which expresses speaker relationship towards knowledge with a variety of forms other than obligatory affixes.

Another view of evidentiality has emerged that considers it "a semantic category which may be realized grammatically, lexically or periphrastically" (Mushin, 2001:17). Labeled the *broad* approach by Chafe, also called *epistemological stance* (Mushin, 2001) or *epistemological positioning* (Bednarek, 2006), this view encompasses a wide variety of ways in which subjectivity towards knowledge evidence and validity is expressed in language. From this perspective, source and basis (evidence) of information is often found to be closely related to speaker attitude, both of which are sensitive to the social aspects of the current speech event. The broad view encompasses speaker attitudes such as those concerned with matters of truth, certainty, doubt, expectedness, confidence, etc. (Bednarek, 2006:637). Contrary to research in the narrow perspective, where source is considered to derive attitude, Mushin (2001) adopts the broad interpretation of evidentiality. She claims that in the languages she explores, English, Japanese, and Macedonian, evidentiality "involves the speaker's attitude toward the information – source being an implication derived from that attitude" (19-20). The evaluation of evidentiality as source-based is claimed by Mushin as working only in a small number of languages that have paradigmatic morphological evidential marking (19). Instead, in the languages analyzed in her work, the view is taken that the marking of source of information is not coherent with attitudinal notions like the degree to which the speaker vouches for the information, and therefore attitude cannot derive from source of information (22). She argues:

> *"...there is plenty of evidence that the relationship between evidential categories*
> *and speaker commitment is not fixed, at least with respect to some evidential*
> *categories. While the use of a direct evidential may necessarily represent the*

speaker as more involved, and the use of a Reportive evidential may represent the speaker as more 'distanced' from the event, these parameters are independent of whether the speaker believes in the validity of the information they report" (21-2).

This idea is demonstrated through Mushin's (2001) reinterpretation of Macedonian examples originally interpreted in Willett (1988) as source based:

(3) *Taa   mesial   leb*
    3SG   bake:L   bread
    "She baked bread (I am not prepared to vouch for it)"
    (original source interpretation: *I didn't see her do it / I was told*)

(4) *Taa   mesi   leb*
    3SG   bake:SP   bread
    "She baked bread (I vouch for it)"
    (original source interpretation: *I saw her do it*)

                                                                    (Mushin, 2001:20)

Instead of example (3) marking an indirect source that derives low commitment and example (4) marking a direct source that derives high commitment, these examples are reanalyzed in terms of whether or not the speaker is willing to 'vouch for' the truth of the proposition. In this interpretation, the nature of the source is seen as a conventional implicature; If the speaker vouches for the information, then it is likely he/she is a direct witness, simultaneously, not vouching for information lowers the likelihood of the speaker having a basis in direct evidence (Friedman, 1986; Mushin, 2001). This perspective, though, does not exclude the reading of (3) as having a basis in direct evidence and (4) as having a basis in indirect, hearsay evidence.

Other research taking the broad perspective of evidentiality in English has looked at evidential markers from varying perspectives. The meaning of evidential markers has been an active focus of research since the 1980's. One main focus of this research was that of the speaker's relationship to knowledge. Chafe's (1986) influential work on evidentials in English conversation and academic writing claimed four elements of evidentiality: (1) degree of reliability/certainty of knowledge, (2) source of knowledge (e.g. evidence, language, hypothesis), (3) mode of

knowledge (e.g. belief, induction, hearsay, deduction), and (4) extent of knowledge. While many studies of evidentiality in the broad since consider the same domains proposed by Chafe, most all of them vary in the way in which they categorize these ideas. For instance, Bednarek's (2006) study of epistemic markers in English news discourse considers the term *evidentiality* as referring to the linguistic marking of evidence (the narrow sense) while labeling the broad sense *epistemological positioning*. Epistemological positioning refers to the same ideas proposed by Chafe, only categorized differently. In her study, Bednarek considers epistemological positioning as dealing with source, basis, and certainty of knowledge. Her notion of certainty of knowledge is in line with Chafe's degree of reliability. Where the two researchers differ most is in their analysis of source and mode (Chafe) and basis (Bednarek). Bednarek considers *source* to be "the source to which knowledge can be attributed" (639); sources can therefore be *self* (the speaker) or *other*. The *basis* of knowledge is defined as the evidence on which a proposition is based. For her study, these include perception (a mode of knowing in Chafe), general knowledge (a match against expectations in Chafe), proof (a source in Chafe), obviousness (a match against expectations in Chafe), and hearsay (a mode in Chafe). As can be seen, these frameworks are very similar in the ideas of what to include in the broad interpretation of evidentiality, but they vary greatly in their means of categorization of meaning with form. Bednarek also considers other aspects of *basis* of knowledge that are not discussed in Chafe, such as *mindsay*, defined as a thought, feeling, or experience by an *other* source ('sensor'), as opposed to *hearsay*, which refers to an actual utterance from an *other* source (643).

Differences in the study of evidence, source, and basis in English is prevalent in the literature. A number of studies conflate these ideas into one or various concepts that fall under the general label of evidence (Pomerantz, 1984; Fox, 2001). Bednarek (2006) is one of the few that makes a detailed distinction between them. Pomerantz (1984) conflates the notions of source, considering both to be types of *evidence*, defined as "grounds for believing that given assertions are true" (608). Literal evidential meanings based on the marking of commitment and evidence are but one aspect of evidential markers, though. The speaker is not only influenced by his/her relationship to the knowledge conveyed but also by aspects of the speech event itself.

Pragmatic Functions of Evidentials

The research in both the broad and the narrow perspectives of evidentiality recognize the pragmatic functions of evidential markers in oral discourse. As a result of their presence in human interaction, evidentials are highly influenced by elements of the speech event. Fox (2001) states:

> *...while evidentiality clearly has roots in speakers' knowledge of events and facts, and in their disposition towards the truth/certainty of that knowledge, its totality – at least in English – represents a social elaboration of those roots…"* (185).

The interactionally based aspect of evidentiality considers how markers convey the speaker's relationship to the speech event. The speech event includes the aspects of the physical act of producing the utterance (speaker, hearer, scene) and also "the knowledge and objectives of the speaker and hearer" (Langacker, 1985:133). Fox (2001) explores the social interactional meanings of giving (or not giving) evidence in American English conversation. Like Pomerantz, taking the narrow view of evidentiality, Fox conflates the meanings of basis and source detailed by Bednarek, by looking at "*how the speaker has come to know* the proposition expressed by the utterance" (167). She claims that evidentiality indexes the social meanings of authority, responsibility and entitlement, finding that evidential marking is no guarantee of authority or entitlement of information, but instead a 'bid' for these (171). Fox also explores the significance of zero marking, or 'faceless' language, in evidential studies. She concludes that language unmarked for evidential aspects is in fact representative of a claim to greater authority, responsibility, and entitlement than some overt marking.

Fox's analysis looks at a crucial aspect of epistemological marking in language, the role of evidence, and its social functions in discourse. She points out that much prior research focuses on the relationship between the speaker and the world, citing research by Chafe (1986) and Willett (1988) (169). By contrast, the focus of her research considers how evidentiality indexes the relationship between the speaker and his/her interlocutors through showing that evidential marking is "sensitive to the relationship between speaker and recipient(s)" (170). Through the analysis of two phone conversations, Fox demonstrates how speakers may choose different evidential markers for the same proposition depending on the relationship between the speaker and his/her interlocutor. She details how with one interlocutor, the speaker distances himself from authority by marking his proposition with indirect evidence through *apparently*, while with the other he speaks with authority through the use of propositions with zero marking. The author's

access to personal information about the speakers allows for the conclusion that the distancing with the first interlocutor rests in an already established tension between the two, resulting in the speaker's desire to not emphasize information as direct (180). The second interlocutor receives the information with authority because there is no tension between the two surrounding the subject of conversation.

Another way in which evidentiality has been studied is under the broader label of stance in English (Biber & Finegan,1988; 1989). Stance is defined as "the overt expression of an author's or speaker's attitudes, feelings, judgements, or commitment concerning the message" (Biber & Finegan, 1988:1). Although aware of evidentiality as part of research in the 'information perspective of utterances in discourse" (1988:1), this work on evidentiality does not take source or basis of knowledge into consideration at all, focusing on markers of speakers' attitude towards information; A perspective that is reminiscent of Mushin's claim that evidential markers are primarily markers of attitude. Biber & Finegan's research specifically analyzes stance markers realized grammatically as *disjuncts*, discussed in Quirk & Greenbaum's (1973) description of the grammar of the English language. These forms are "detached from the main structure of the sentence and have a scope that extends over the sentence as a whole" (Biber & Finegan, 1988:3). This is opposed to integrated forms which comment from within the proposition and generally focus on one aspect of it. Examples from Quirk & Greenbaum (1973) include:

> (5) Disjunct:
> *Seriously, do you intend to resign?* (242)

> (6) Integrated form:
> *He will definitely judge us.* (217)

Biber and Finegan's (1989) research specifically analyzes lexical and grammatical markers of evidentiality as a sub-category of stance. They consider aspects of evidential marking taken from Chafe (1986): reliability, mode, adequacy of knowledge (Biber & Finegan, 1989:93). The authors use six categories of stance markers in order to identify and interpret basic stance styles in English. The aim of their work therefore is not to describe discourse functions of stance markers but instead to establish how they group together, distinguishing differing styles of English.

Quirk & Greenbaum differentiate between two types of disjuncts, *Style Disjuncts* and *Attitudinal Disjuncts*. The former "convey[s] the speaker's comment on the form of what he is saying, defining in some way under what conditions he is speaking" (242). The description of style disjuncts coincides with Biber & Finegan's (1988) stance category *honestly adverbials* which express manner of speaking (7). *Attitudinal Disjuncts*, the larger of the two classes, "comment on the content of the communication" (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973:242). The other five categories of stance distinguished in Biber & Finegan are of this type and include: *surely* adverbials (certainty, conviction), *generally* adverbials (approximation and usual cases), *actually* adverbials (emphasis and greater certainty than expected), *maybe* adverbials (possibility, questionable assertions, and hedging), and *amazingly* adverbials (attitude independent of epistemological statue). The authors categorize these stance styles based on literal meanings, which are often found to be very different than their discourse functions. Many of their findings point to the pragmatic aspect of the marking of evidentiality. For example, their analysis shows that *actually* adverbials (*in fact*, *actually*, *really*) literally express a conclusion that is contrary to expectations, but they are often used in order to invite intimacy. The authors show how these markers can be utilized when the speaker wishes to establish solidarity (Biber & Finegan, 1988:17). The cluster analysis performed in Biber & Finegan (1989) reveals that the use of stance markers in English contributes to styles of discourse. They show how the purpose of communication largely dictates the use of stance markers. For example, the reporting of news is often executed without overt stance marking because it is assumed as "reality"; This is in opposition to what the authors label as "involved interaction" (116), represented mostly by conversational texts making extensive use of emphatic stance markers.

Considering evidentiality and its pragmatic features from the sourced based perspective, Pomerantz (1984) discusses reasons why speakers give evidence. She concludes that evidence is used for one of two reasons: to defend point of view or as a way of "backing off from positions and safely asserting just what they know is true" (611). She considers two types of evidence: one's own experience (direct evidence) and the reporting of someone else's version (indirect evidence). Detailing ways in which speakers use evidence in situations where their assertions are being, or may be, challenged, Pomerantz considers the weight of direct experience as "known unproblematically and with certainty" (608) against that of an *other* "purportedly authoritative source" (612). A large portion of Pomerantz' analysis is dedicated to the use of evidence in what she calls sensitive actions, discussing ways in which speakers use evidence in order to display caution, distance the self from the proposition, mitigate disagreements, or avoid being wrong

through reporting limited experience. Pomerantz' work is focused on the use of evidence in English conversation and contributes to work on the social interactional basis of evidential marking. The marking of evidential aspects does not only have a basis in interactional institutions, though, but also in social institutions (Fox, 2011), including aspects of culture and custom.

Cultural Aspects of Evidentiality

The current analysis gains much insight from Precht (2003)'s work in comparing evidential use in dialects of English. Similar to Biber & Finegan (1988, 1989), evidential markers are viewed as an aspect of a larger category labeled stance. Using a balance of quantitative and qualitative analysis (241), she looks at frequencies and social norms of stance markers in British and American English conversation. Precht analyzes how markers of stance occur together in each dialect of English, creating what she calls *stance moods*, defined as "the set of stance markers that occur together and which communicate the tenor of a conversation" (241). In comparing British and American English conversation, she finds that Americans tended to use more affect while Britons used more evidentials. This is seen as suggesting that British use evidentials to express affect (254). These findings reinforce a main argument made by Precht, that the use of stance markers is "related to larger cultural norms" and that "stance use is socialized [so that] different dialects could end up using different stance markers to express the same stance mood" (255). Since our expression of stance is "shaped by culture and custom" (240), the findings of significant differences in stance marking in different dialects of English is not surprising. Precht concludes her paper with a call for research on stance markers in African-American vernacular English, stating that "it would be most interesting to compare that with other dialects of English" (255).

Many languages studied in evidential research make use of obligatory grammaticalized forms, while English marks such meaning optionally and with forms that range from single lexemes (modals, adverbs, verbs, nouns, etc.), to phrases and clauses (adverb and prepositional phrases, idiomatic phrases), and full declarative assertions and interrogatives. The marking of evidential meaning is therefore much more complicated and involves a larger number of forms under consideration than appear in languages with grammaticalized evidentiality. "One of the most intriguing findings of the last 20 years is that all languages…make use of evidential marking, although the markers may not be obligatory elements of the verb structure, as they are in

languages originally identified as having evidential systems" (Fox, 2001:168). The non-obligatory element of evidentiality in English is exactly why the topic is such an interesting one to explore; When an element is optional, its use becomes marked, allowing the speaker to choose which elements to foreground and emphasize and which to background or omit from the narrative telling. This adds to the speaker's unique and subjective presentation of *self*.

The remainder of this paper will continue as follows: Chapter Three will describe the data used in the present analysis, provide some background information on narrative analysis as discussed by Labov & Waletzky (1967) and Labov (1997), and discuss African American oral tradition. Working through research questions one and two, Chapter Four will enumerate a number of common evidential markers found throughout the narratives that reveal to what degree the speaker 'vouches for', or commits to, the validity of the information. The role of the evidential aspects of degree of reliability and evidence, as well as the role of pragmatic functions and expression of attitude, will be explored. Chapter Five will consider research question three, exploring how the selection of forms most commonly used across the narratives reveals the shared cultural identity of the speakers as Southern African American orators. I will conclude with a summary of the findings and suggestions for further research in Chapter Six.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The Data

Not only has there been limited research on evidential marking in the English language, but most of the research that has been conducted is restricted to standard and academic varieties. In order to broaden the perspective of the marking of evidentiality in English as well as contribute to our understanding of the historical development of the English language in the United States, the data explored in this study is a variety of African American English taken from the Federal Writer's Project's Ex-Slave Narratives, a collection of oral narratives by elderly ex-slaves compiled from 1936-1938 (Yetman, 1984:182). The original collection is housed in the Rare Book Collection Room of the Library of Congress (182), although the manuscripts are openly available on the Library of Congress website, where I obtained them. Portions of the narratives have been published in a variety of books such as *The Negro in Virginia* (1940) and *Life Under the Peculiar Institution* (1970), among others. The narratives in the project were collected through informal interviews with over two thousand male and female participants between the ages of about seventy to over a hundred years old. All participants had been slaves within the states of the Confederacy and continued to reside there (Yetman, 1984:182). Interviews were conducted by volunteers who mostly had backgrounds in writing. The present study will focus specifically on participants living in the state of South Carolina. The portion from South Carolina consists of 274 narratives, made up of about 300,000 words spoken by the interviewees. South Carolina is particularly interesting because during the years of slavery, it was the state with the highest black population (Viereck, 1991:247), and therefore we can assume to find a fairly representative sample of historical African American speech patterns from this region. This collection of historical narratives is said to "provide[] a more heterogeneous and diverse pool of informants than any other set of slave testimonies" (Yetman, 1984:182).

These narratives as a subject of analysis contributes to the historical study of AAE, its origins, and its relationship to other dialects of English such as Standard English (SE), Southern White English (SWE), and creoles such as Gullah, spoken on the South Carolina and Georgia coast and often considered a separate language instead of a dialect of English (Bailey, 1984). A small number of similar examples found in other dialects of English will be presented in Chapter 5, but

further comparison in this respect is needed in order to explore historical change and dialects in contact. Also, the use of historical documents to examine subjective expression in AAE and linguistic forms that are influenced by social interaction is an uncommon practice. Most linguistic analysis on the relationship of southern dialects such as SWE, AAE, and Creoles such as Gullah has focused on formal grammatical forms such as variations in the use of *be* (Wolfram, 1974; Bugh, 1980; Cukor-Avila, 2003; Weldon, 2003), multiple modals (Butters, 1991; Cukor-Avila, 2003; Bernstein, 2003), pronoun variation (Jones-Jackson, 1983, 1984; Nichols, 2003), and -s suffix variation (Jones-Jackson, 1983), among others. This research has largely ignored semantic analysis, and even more so pragmatically influenced forms. Analysis of subjective and socially influenced strategies such as these could prove quite useful because they are often shaped by culture and custom (Precht, 2003:240); Socialization within a community influences us "to use particular stance markers in particular ways" (240). These social and cultural forms of linguistic expression have influence across dialects in contact just as much as formal features because two dialects in contact are also two cultures in contact. It is claimed here that because of the status of the expression of evidentiality or *epistemological stance* as the expression of subjectivity (Mushin, 2001:1), and the pragmatic influence that resides over the choice of such forms, this is an area of research that lies at the semantic/pragmatic interface (Mushin, 2001). It can allow for the study of dialects in contact and language change through a more social and pragmatic lens than normally used, perhaps opening doors to new insights on the influences that have shaped southern AAE, SWE, and even AAE as an internationally influential dialect of English.

Oral Narratives of Personal Experience

A narrative of personal experience is defined as "a report of a sequence of events that have entered into the biography of the speaker" (Labov, 1997:22). Like narratives studied in Labov & Waletzky (1967) and Labov (1997), the narratives looked at in this analysis are essentially monologues with the exception of some topic questions posed by the interviewer(s). The idea of the events having entered into the biography of the speaker describes events which are marked with both emotional and social evaluation (Labov, 1997:22). Emotional and social evaluation that is explored in this paper is seen to be expressed, at least in part, through the marking of aspects of evidentiality.

Oral Traditions of African American English

African American language and culture has a rich oral tradition (Kersting *et al*, 2015:90) which has strong roots in language and cultural traditions brought from Africa. In her study on storytelling styles of African Americans in South Carolina, Nichols (1989) demonstrates relationships between African American storytelling themes in the North American continent, the Caribbean, and West Africa. Language and narrative features shared between African languages and the creole language Gullah in coastal South Carolina and Georgia were first explored by Turner (1949) in his eye-opening work *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*. The literature considers social or ethnic varieties, Gullah, inland African American English, and varieties of Standard American English that include features of non-standard varieties all as part of the African stratum (Algeo, 2003:10).

An important aspect of African American oral narrative telling is the interactive quality of what is seen as a performance. This quality is also found in Traditional African American sermons, which are typically not written beforehand (Wharry, 2003:204) and therefore share features of spontaneous narrative telling. African American English and Gullah oral tradition is found to have strong roots in languages and cultures from along the West Coast of Africa from Senegal to Angola (Turner, 1949). In Anyidoho's (1983) dissertation on oral poetics and verbal art in Africa, the author explores the theoretical premises that oral literature is by nature participatory (viii). Although oral narratives of personal experience may be in many ways *personal*, the cultural tradition of oral narrative dictates an interactive experience at least to some degree. Anyidoho found that in verbal art of the Ewe of Ghana, the participants in any narrative telling often have an interchange of roles that leaves no person static in the role of active or passive participant (266). African American oral narratives as well as public speaking forums such as religious sermons have a variety of distinct pragmatic features, including directly addressing the audience, rhetorical questions and answers, repetition, evaluative language and off-narrative comment (Kersting et al, 2015), to name a few. These features contribute to creating an interpersonal experience, providing a favorable context for the reception of information, as well as displaying the speakers' ethnic affiliation (Britt, 2011:211).

Chapter 4

Analysis of Evidential Markers

Chapter Four will address research questions one and two:

> 4. *What are some of the ways speakers express their attitude towards the information they convey? What role do evidential aspects play in the expression of this attitude?*

> 5. *What are some of the various discourse functions of each evidential marker and what role do they play in the expression of attitude?*

This chapter consists of two sections. The first, entitled *Evidence Marking*, will consider the relationship between the expression of evidence and the degree of commitment the speaker portrays towards a proposition's truth. The second section, entitled *Evidential Markers of Attitude*, will consider a variety of evidential markers of epistemological attitude found across the narratives and some strategies utilized in the expression of degree of commitment. Before I begin the discussion, it would be useful to establish a scale on which the markers in the analysis can be placed in order to provide a visual representation of the varying degrees of commitment possible. This commitment scale can be measured based on language void of any evidential marking: unmarked, or "faceless", language.

Unmarked Language

What has been labeled in the literature as 'faceless' language defines propositions that do not include any evidential markers; This zero marking is considered the 'norm' in English (Biber & Finegan, 1989:108). These unmarked statements assume the factuality of assertions (Biber & Finegan, 1988:23). Fox (2001) proposes zero evidential marking as claiming greater authority than overt evidential marking, making this 'faceless' speech part of the evidential paradigm in English (172). Unmarked propositions here are not considered as actually 'faceless'; Unmarked language may not make use of overt evidential forms, but they do have an implied source and degree of commitment. If a speaker does not mark a piece of knowledge with any evidential coding that points to level of commitment, the information is assumed to be, from the speaker's point of view, an expression of factuality or culturally shared knowledge. This analysis of

unmarked language is based on the premise that "no utterance is accepted without authority" (Du Bois, 1986:322). Givón (1982) claims this authority on unmarked information is a result of the shared contract between the interlocutors, one that is based on an understanding that declarative assertions propose "actual states of affairs, and are accountable for being right" (Pomerantz, 1984:609). Some examples of unmarked propositions from the narratives include:

(7) *We wore heavy brogans with brass toes[1]*

(8) *He treats me so good*

These examples demonstrate that unmarked language can come in a variety of forms, facts about the past as in (7) or internal opinions such as (8). Unmarked information such as the above assumes the speaker has direct evidence by default based on the lack of any marker to suggest otherwise. This "interpretation of the nature of the source arises pragmatically from the conventional inference that if speakers are prepared to vouch for information, then they are likely to have directly witnessed or experienced the events/situations they describe" (Mushin, 2006:20). In discourse, information void of overt evidential markers puts the emphasis on the information in the utterance rather than on any attitude the speaker has towards it; The information is automatically assumed to be factual based on Grice's maxim of quality, which states that one not say what is believed to be false nor that which lacks adequate evidence (Grice, 1989:46). With this assumption about discourse, it can be concluded that language unmarked for evidentiality is interactionally neutral; additional marking is for conveying specifics about the speakers' perceived reliability of the information and its source. As a result of evidential marking in English being an optional feature, information marked with language conveying evidential aspects becomes a significant way in which speakers are able to create their speech as an expression of *self* (Lyons, 1982; Mushin, 2001).

Figure 1 below demonstrates the scale of commitment that evidential markers reveal. Unmarked language is considered to have neutral commitment and lies in the center of the scale. Forms that fall to the right of unmarked language explicitly mark high commitment and high certainty to varying degrees; Those forms that fall to the left explicitly mark some level of doubt in validity.

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[1] Examples from the narrative data used in this analysis have in most cases been adjusted for spelling to fit a more conventional style. This is to avoid inconsistencies in transcriptions and for better understanding by the reader. Certain spellings were retained if they were considered to show a significant and relevant semantic, pragmatic, or functional difference from other dialects of English.

Figure 1: *Zero Marking on Commitment Scale*

Low/No Commitment   **Neutral Commitment**   **High Commitment**

Zero Marking
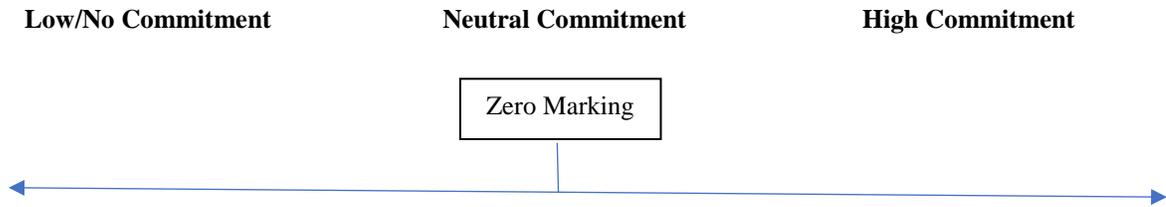
Evidence Marking

Evidence marking refers to those language forms that express the kinds of evidence a speaker has for the information conveyed. Evidence can be either direct (*self* source) or indirect (*other* source) (Mushin, 2001; Bednarek, 2006). Evidence can have a variety of bases which reside inside *self* (e.g. feelings, thoughts), labeled internal evidence, or outside *self* (e.g. hearsay, visual evidence), labeled external evidence (Bednarek, 2006:648-9). The present data shows that English often marks evidence with a separate overt marker specifying source only and not indicating degree of commitment. These findings are consistent with Mushin's (2011) finding that "[e]vidential forms that encode specific information about the nature of the source of information are less likely to also encode specific information about epistemological status" (Mushin, 2001:32). Overt source markers are still placed within the realm of *self* and *other*; The markers can indicate a variety of types of *other* sources that range in specificity from general markers of gossip to more specific markers like *mammy* or names like *Mr. Ross*.

While source marking in English is considered here to not necessarily derive degree of commitment, the use of separate lexical, phrasal, and clausal markers that qualify the reliability of the source are often utilized to convey the speaker's positioning towards information. Consistent with the literature, the data reveals that the speakers express highest commitment to direct evidence and overall lowest commitment to indirect evidence. In Chafe's (1986) work, he finds that the indication of a basis of sensory evidence is rare, only finding one example per thousand words in his data set (268). While the present analysis follows a qualitative approach, and did not focus on numbers, sensory evidence in the data is invoked as a very common way of indicating

degree of commitment. The speaker's dedication to direct evidence is explicitly stated repeatedly by many of the orators:

> (9) *You want my mind my heart the truth and I going tell you it just like **I see it***

> (10) *I must speak the truth ma'am **I didn't see** anything out of the way*

Notice how in example (9) there is a connection made between the speaker telling the *truth* and the telling of the narrative as he/she *see it*. Example (10) conveys the truth as obligatory for the speaker and since nothing was *seen*, nothing can be spoken.

While direct evidence does tend to imply a high degree of commitment cross-linguistically (Mushin, 2001:23), the present AAE narrative data reveals that there are exceptions. Supporting Mushin (2001), evidential meanings analyzed in terms of commitment deriving from source do not work as a coherent whole. Markers of direct evidence are shown to not always mark a high degree of commitment. The most common way in which the speakers mark direct evidence with low, or below neutral, commitment is through the marking of the unreliability of memory obtained through perception. Doubt in memory appears in a variety of forms, displaying differing degrees of certainty. Some common phrases used to portray direct evidence as recalled from memory as unreliable are: *I just remembers, I just can remember, I can't hardly remember nothing, I don't remember anything,* and *I can't remember much*. Speakers also mark a low reliability for memory through inferential forms, which indicate degree of evidence to the left of neutral on the scale in Figure 1.

> (11) ***Seems to me** I remembers seeing old flour sacks*

Marked with *seems*, example (11) demonstrates how a proposition with direct visual evidence can be considered as less than fully reliable. This speaker provides doubt in his/her commitment as a result of memory as an unreliable source. Fox (2001) shows that even reports of one's memories acquired from direct experience have the potential for evidential marking of low commitment (187).

As shown above, direct evidence cannot be analyzed as always deriving an attitude of high commitment towards the information, at least not in English, because it does not consistently imply reliability. Indirect evidence also supports Mushin's observation pointing to the incoherency of types of sources with notions of commitment. While direct evidence has a

tendency to have a high degree of reliability, indirect evidence is "completely independent of the degree to which speakers might 'vouch for' the information they assert" (Mushin, 2001:23). The narrative data reveals the status of indirect, or reported, evidence as independent of assumptions of reliability. This independence I claim to be in part a result of the intimate connection between speaker commitment and the assessment of the authority of the reported source.

Reported speech, also known as hearsay, is a way in which knowledge is acquired Chafe (1986:268), and is used by speakers to mark indirect evidence. Mushin (2001) describes reported speech as representative of information that "is not part of the speaker/conceptualiser's direct experience of the information" (70). Hearsay is prominently marked throughout the narratives, presented as both *direct speech*, indexed to the reported speaker's subjectivity, and as *indirect speech*, which is presented from the point of view of the actual speaker, and represents his/her subjectivity (Mushin, 2001:12).

Direct speech is common in the data and is often headed by a verb of speech, such as *say/said* and *tell/told*:

> (12) *Then I recollects we chillum used to ask us mammy where us come from and she **say** I got you out the hollow log*

> (13) *Him **tell** me once you must learn two good trades*

Instead of conveying the subjectivity of the speaker, these examples express the point of view of someone other than the speaker, in a different *here* and *now* from the narrative telling (Mushin, 2001:11). Direct speech is not qualified in any way by the speakers. These assertions can be considered similarly to markers of direct evidence above where the speaker conveys something that was obtained through perceptual evidence and the reporting of that 'hearing' event is the point of the assertion. While reported speech is itself sensory, it is not whether or not someone said something that is at question here but instead the concern is whether or not what was said is vouched for by the speaker as factual. While an essential part of narration, indirect speech is of more interest in the present study because of its ability to reveal more about the speaker's subjectivity; It allows the speaker to position him/herself in relationship to the information and to the speech event. The verbs of speech used to mark direct speech are also used to mark indirect speech:

(14) **Say** *them what put faith in them kind of victuals on de New Year's Day they won't suffer for nothing no time all de next year*

(15) *Misses **told** me it was a sin to put on man's pants*

Indirect reportive marking is more common in the narratives than direct. Often the speakers mark indirect speech overtly as perceptually obtained, utilizing the sensory verb *hear*:

(16) *I **hear** tell of them things called ghosts*

(17) *I **hear** talk about all kind of signs de people used to worry over in some of them still frets about them, too*

Hear is only a marker of indirect speech, most often combined with another verbs of speech such as *tell* in (16) or *talk* in (17). These forms exemplify hearsay as obtained through an unspecified source, implying the possibility of multiple sources.

Hearsay as indirect speech, unlike the examples of direct speech, reveals the point of view of the speaker; it is not displaced to an *other* in a different place and time. As discussed above, the speaker's degree to which he/she vouches for the validity of information marked as indirect reported speech varies in the narratives. Markers of reported speech in English do not imply any degree of commitment on their own, but they do often make use of separate qualifying markers that help determine the status of the knowledge. Consistent with the status of indirect evidence as representing the speaker 'distancing' from the event (Mushin, 2001:21), most indirect hearsay is not fully committed to in the narratives, varying in the degree to which the speaker marks the information as reliable. The contrast between the reliability of direct evidence and hearsay evidence can be seen in example (18):

(18) **They tell me** *some put on stand and sold there at Marion **but I never saw any sold. Just hear about that** but I remembers I saw this Saw six men tied together with a chain one Saturday evening that was coming from Virginia and going to Texas*

When evidence is given, it is either used to defend the speakers point of view or to back off and safely assert just what is certain (Pomerantz, 1984:611). Example (18) above gives hearsay as the source of the information and then adds an additional clause that works not just to distance the speaker but to overtly dispute the truth of the proposition through the lack of direct evidence: the speaker *never saw any* slaves sold, he/she *just hear about that*. The speaker then continues with something that he/she considers reliable, based on direct visual evidence (*I saw this Saw…*). This clearly demonstrates the contrast between the generally accepted commitment to direct evidence as opposed to indirect.

Other qualifiers of hearsay that work to distance the speaker from claiming the validity of information are seen in examples (19) – (22):

> (19) *I **just hear** about Booker Washington **recon** he is all right*

> (20) *I **must** be come here on Saturday cause everywhere I goes I has to work. **Hear Talk** if you born on a Saturday you going have to work hard for what you get all your days*

> (21) *Right over there cross de creek in them big cedars, there another slavery graveyard People going by there could often hear talk and couldn't never see nothing **so they tell me***

> (22) *Us chillum never didn't know who us daddy been till us mammy point him out cause all us went in Massa Anthony Ross' name **Yes mam** all us had a different daddy **so my mammy say***

By using lexical markers that convey doubt like *just* (19) and *so* (21, 22), the speaker effectively marks the information as less reliable. Example (22) shows somewhat higher commitment than (21) through the use of an emphasizer *yes, mam* placed before the proposition. Example (19) and (20) use the hedges *recon* and *must,* lessening the force of the speakers' commitment, *must* conveying a higher commitment than *recon*.

Although rare, there were instances where the speakers marked hearsay as having authority, showing that indirect evidence cannot derive degree of commitment. In these cases, hearsay is used as a means of expressing full willingness to vouch for the information and used to help

defend the speaker's point of view. Reliable sources generally consist of multiple people who claim direct sensory evidence:

> (23) **I know that word been true** *cause **I hear** my parents and the olden people speak about that right there fore we chillum*

> (24) **I hear talk** *they give some of them 50 lashes to a whippin **That how it was** in slavery time*

Example (23) begins with a subjective evidential form overtly marking previously given information as fully vouched for, utilizing two markers of high commitment *know* and *true*. This is followed by a hearsay marker *I hear* used as a basis for the speaker's commitment. Example (24) begins with the hearsay marker as basis for the information. This is followed by a faceless statement of certainty, *that how it was*, marking the previous reported speech as fully reliable. The examples of high commitment to hearsay in the narratives are found to most often be sources that possess direct evidence of the information, for example, in (24), there is an implication that those that talked about the *50 lashes* also saw them happen. This is also the case with the more extended example below:

> (25) *Yankees Oh I **hear folks speak** bout de Yankees plundering through de country plenty times **Hear** bout de Yankees going all bout stealing white people silver **Say** everywhere they went en found white folks with silver they would just clean de place up **That de blessed truth too cause that exactly what I hear about them***

Example (25) gives three pieces of related information, each marked as hearsay with the forms *hear folks speak, hear,* and *say*. These three propositions are then followed by a marker of high commitment, expressed through two conjoined clauses. The first, *that the blessed truth too* marks the information as fully vouched for by the speaker. The second, *that exactly what I hear about them*, specifies the basis for high commitment as hearsay.

Another source commonly marked as reliable in the data is religiously based:

>(26) ***De Bible say so that's why it be true*** *Ain't going to tell you nothing but de truth and de whole truth, so help me Jesus…That's why I always sticks to de truth I does*

Religion in the data is expressed by the speakers as self-evident in its authority. It has been shown that "…degree of speaker commitment is…connected to assessment of the reliability of the reported source" (Mushin, 2006:21). Phenomena in the data related to religion reveals that the speakers' religious beliefs are one of the only unquestionable sources conveyed.

Evidential Markers of Attitude

This section will explore some of the common evidential markers and strategies utilized to express speaker epistemological attitude: the degree to which the speaker commits to the validity of the information. The markers in this section may imply evidence or they may appear in a proposition or group of propositions with separate direct evidence marking. They are all considered first and foremost markers of degree of reliability (Chafe, 1989) or degree of commitment (Mushin, 2001). These evidential markers will be analyzed for the strategies the speakers utilize in order to convey this attitude, including any implied or overt evidence. I will also consider how discourse functions derive from degree of commitment and also work to support the expression of it.

Emphatics and Amplifiers are types of intensifiers commonly appearing across all the narratives. Biber & Finegan (1989) state that emphatics are used to indicate the presence of certainty towards a proposition (94). Examples of English emphatics given are *for sure, really*, and *a lot*. Amplifiers are similar in function with the additional feature of marking the degree of certainty the speaker wishes to convey (*completely, extremely, absolutely*) (94). Intensifiers indicate the focus of the speaker to be on involved interaction (19). The primary functions of intensifiers include soliciting listener empathy and agreement (19), and backgrounding assertions as secluded from direct contradiction (22). Biber & Finegan (1989) state that these types of markers encourage solidarity and are characteristic of informal, colloquial discourse (94).

Direct address refers to the speaker directly marking elements of the speech event and thereby manipulating the point of view(s) portrayed. "The viewpoint in oral narratives of personal

experiences is that of the narrator at the time of the events referred to" (Labov, 1997:31), but the speaker has a large number of linguistic forms available to him/her which allow this viewpoint to shift to the time of the current speech event, which includes the speaker, hearer(s) and the *here and now* of the speech event (Langacker, 1983:113). The extensive use of evidential markers that reference the speech event itself is one pragmatic strategy the speakers use in order to bring the listener on stage with the telling of the narrative, allowing him/her to share the experience of the narrator. A constant explicit reference to the elements of the speech event construes the present scene as part of the telling. With the speech event as ground, the constant reference to these elements construes the speech event as seen not through the eyes of the characters in the narrative or even entirely through the eyes of the speaker, but instead through the eyes of the listener in the here and now of the speech event. Reference to the speech event therefore invites the speaker to experience the narrative through his/her own eyes. In this way, creating a direct experience for the audience is used as a strategic resource for encouraging agreement (Britt, 2011:224) and creating a participatory narrative telling (Algeo, 2003). Below I consider a variety of attitudinal evidential markers used in the narratives that utilize pragmatic features of intensifiers and direct address.

Sho

Sho is one of the most commonly used evidential markers of attitude found across the narratives. This marker falls into Biber & Finegan's (1988) stance category "surely adverbials", considered as expressing conviction or certainty (7) and often found to be utilized as emphatic markers of solidarity (1989:110). *Sho* does not overtly mark nor imply evidence, making it only a marker of degree of commitment as high. Its placement on Figure 2 below is therefore found on the far right of the scale:

Figure 2: *Sho on Commitment Scale*

Low/No Commitment	Neutral Commitment	High Commitment
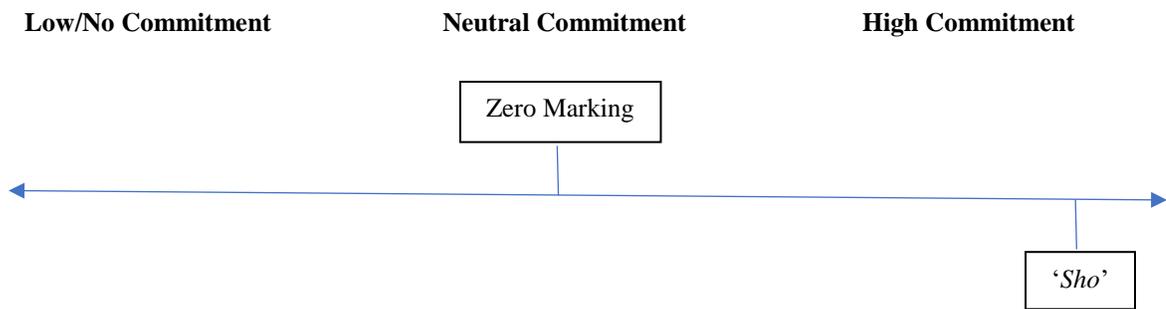
Sho is a very commonly used evidential marker that did not itself convey anything about evidence, yet the environment that it is most found in reveals its association with direct evidence, supporting its analysis as a marker of high commitment.

> (27) *De world **sho** going worser these days*

> (28) *I **sho** born right down yonner to Massa Ben Gause plantation*

Sho commonly appears with otherwise faceless propositions, as in the two examples above, but it is also the form most often combined with other markers of a high degree of commitment, as can be seen in example (29):

> (29) *I tell you hone, some of de colored people **sho** been speak praise to them Yankees*

Along with the commitment marker *sho,* example (29) makes use of direct address markers in the explicit performative *I tell you* and the reference to the speaker as *honey* as well as implying direct perceptual evidence as a basis in order to convey a high commitment.

In discourse, s*ho* marks emphatic conviction (Biber & Finegan, 1988;19); *Sho* indicates the focus of the speaker to be on involved interaction and the soliciting of empathy and agreement, backgrounding marked assertions as secluded from direct contradiction (22). According to Biber & Finegan (1989), emphatics like *sho* mark solidarity and are characteristic of informal, colloquial discourse (94). The narratives examined here convey similar functions with *sho*,

displaying characteristics that classify this marker as an intensifier that works sometimes as an emphatic and other times also marks intensity, classifying it as an amplifier.

Sho often appears with *nough/nuff* [2], carrying the same meaning of emphatic interaction:

> (30) **I *sho nough*** did ride with de Red Shirts for Marse Hampton

These forms do not appear to have a primary function of marking the speaker's certainty of the propositions truth, but instead the primary function here is pragmatic; *Sho* interactionally functions as reflecting a sense of "heightened emphatic excitement" (Biber & Finegan, 1989:110) This emphatic sense of *sho* is seen in other forms in English that express conviction and certainty, such as *obviously* (110) and *of course* (Biber & Finegan, 1988:7). While in past research on evidentiality, markers such as *sho* show a variety of discourse functions, the present analysis reveals that *sho* functions only as an intensifier, marking involved interaction and solidarity. *Sho* in the narratives does not function in the present data as other dialects of English utilize the adverb *surely*, for example. Downing (2001) analyzed a corpus of British English for evidential *surely* and found it to be used as a discourse marker with a range of meanings such as surprise, disbelief, doubt, of disapproval, none of which appear to be marked with *sho* in the present data.

Many uses of *sho* are primarily emphatic, marking the presence of certainty but not specifying a particular degree as amplifiers do. The marker can also function as an amplifier. *Sho'* used as an amplifier is clear in the following example:

> (31) *Sometimes rain **sho** fall bad to tend that bunch of cattle rain or no rain*

The inclusion of the adverb *sometimes* excludes the reading of this proposition as *purely* marking certainty of the fact that it rained a lot, as in *it sho rains all the time*. A high degree of intensity of the rain is also specified through the placement of *sho* modifying *fall*, creating the meaning *it rains hard/heavily*. Consider another example:

> (32) *Mr. Roosevelt the president and he **sho** looks after the poor folks*

This since of *sho* is used to emphasize the proposition *he looks after the poor folks*, expressing the speaker's subjective evaluation of the information as not only true but with a certain intensity

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[2] Standard English: "sure enough" = "definitely" = "without a doubt"

added, amplifying the degree to which he looks after the poor folks. The specification of degree is also seen when used with *nough/nuff* :

> (33) *Fact they was made from red flannel and I means it was* **sho nough** *flannel too*

The second proposition works to emphasize the quality of the flannel mentioned in the first. It was not just any 'so-called' flannel but one considered by the speaker to be of high quality. This additional meaning of intensity adds to the commitment of the speaker in respect to the prior proposition's claim that the uniforms were made from *red flannel*.

There are a number of other forms utilized in the narratives that also express the same emphatic conviction as *sho*, making use of a variety of aspects of evidentiality, often marking evidence and including other interactive strategies that add to the degree of commitment the speaker wishes to convey.

You Know(s)

One evidential emphatic marker in which the speakers utilize the pragmatic strategy of directly addressing the 'audience' is *you know*, where the second person subject pronoun is used alongside a verb of certainty: *know*. This phrase marks the listener as already in possession of the knowledge the speaker references. By remarking on the knowledge of the listener, the speaker references the listener's knowledge as evidence. For example:

> (34) *Us don't do that and* **you knows** *that is a heap to us*

The assertion *that is a heap to us* is emphasized by the overt mention that the information is known by the listener as well as the speaker. *You know* creates a discourse function of giving a sense of familiarity (Schiffrin, 1982:309), marking the information as shared knowledge between the speaker and the listener. This can be seen as well in example (35) below:

> (35) **You knows** *that poor white folks and niggers has to work to live regardless of liberty love and all them things*

You know is often extended to add additional meaning and function:

(36) *They never had no ice in them days **as you well knows***
.
(37) ***As you all knows** de Fourth has always been nigger day*

These two examples lengthen the phrase *you knows* by adding an emphasizer *well* to example (36) and pluralizing the pronoun direct reference in example (37). Also, the addition of *as* at the beginning of these examples adds additional emphasis to the indication of shared knowledge/history between the speaker and his/her audience.

Tags

Tags that convey evidential aspects are common in the data; Both declarative and interrogative tags are utilized by a large portion of the speakers.

Interrogative Tags

Interrogative tags are common throughout the data. Through the use of direct address and tactics that function as persuasive devices, these tags work to emphasize commitment to the proposition as well as invite the listener to make a judgement on its validity:

(38) *Boss, kind treatment done good then and it sho' does good dis present day **don't you think I's right bout that?***

(39) *Mr. Roosevelt have done more good for the nigger in four years than all the other presidents…in seventy-two years **Don't you know that is so?***

The above examples of tag questions work to encourage the hearer to confirm the truth of the prior proposition. Regardless of the yes/no question form, this tag leaves little room for the speaker to disagree, instead, functioning as a request for confirmation of the truth of the prior information (Bublitz, 1979:8) through suggesting what the speaker *thinks* or *knows*. Bublitz's (1979) claims that the communicative function of tag questions is twofold: "The speaker seeks confirmation of the truth of his sentence and wants agreement with his attitudes and beliefs concerning that sentence" (18). Interactionally then, a tag question signals a desire on the part of

the speaker to "…ascertain that [the information] really is part of the pragmatic universe of discourse" (Bublitz, 1979:19). Consider one last example, which makes extensive use of tags:

> (40) *Christ was baptized in de waters of Jordon* **won't he?** *Well, he never drapped back* **did he?** *He say we must follow in His footsteps* **didn't he?** *Well* **there you is and that's all there is to it**

Here the speaker gives a series of propositions, each ending with a tag questions encouraging the agreement of the addressee: *won't he?, did he?, didn't he?*. The speaker then figuratively lays the information out for the listener with "*there you is*" and then finalizes it by adding "*…and that's all there is to it*", conveying the prior information as in no need of further discussion and beyond dispute. Because tag questions leave room for disagreement with the speaker's statement while simultaneously suggesting agreement and factuality in the utterance, tag questions are considered here to most often convey a degree of commitment from the speaker that falls below the *neural* line, displayed in in Figure (3) below, yet still convey little doubt, placing them closer to high commitment on the scale than to low commitment.

**Figure 3**: *Tag Questions on Commitment Scale*
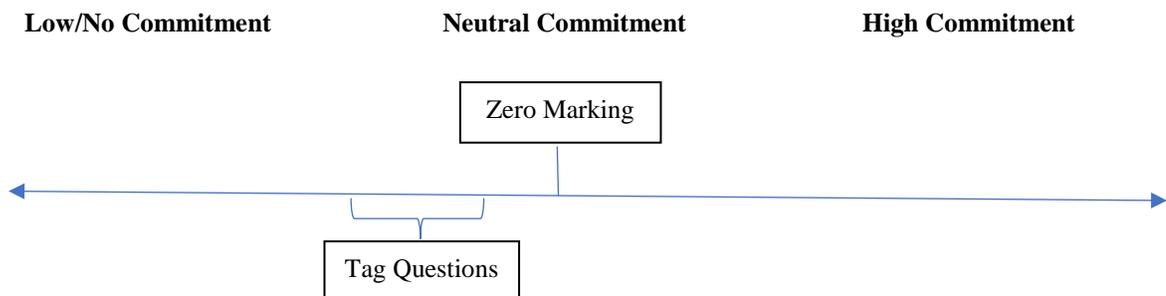
Figure (3) displays how tag questions can vary in the degree to which they mark commitment; Although tag questions always convey some level of commitment, some instances display a degree that falls further towards the left, as in example (38), or further towards the right, as in examples (39) and, even more so, (40).

Declarative Tags

Many declarative tags in the narratives convey emphatic conviction towards the propositions they modify. Often tags that function in this way appear as full, independent clauses acting as modifiers of the prior information; They all in some way reflect the speakers' high level of commitment to the prior proposition:

(41) *Enoree River is de thing that divides Union County from Laurens County* ***that it is***

(42) *Dese is some of de particularest things of de Confederate times that I come back from Sedalis to give you* ***that's right***

The speaker in example (42) explicitly uses a lexical marker of commitment: *right*. Both examples utilize phrases with *that*, creating reference to the point of the prior proposition. Example (42) includes a reference to the speech event, *that <u>I come back</u> from Sedalis to <u>give to you</u>*, pointing out the location of the speech event as separate from the actual events in the narrative, as well as explicitly addressing the listener with *you*.

The most common tag form used in the data is a phrase that involves a *yes/no + sir/mam*, in reference to the addressee. Like the clausal tags discussed above, this form is found throughout the data as a marker of emphatic conviction on behalf of the speaker and his/her willingness to vouch for the information.

(43) *I was sick last night Suffers with high blood,* ***yes'm***

(44) *He was a sorry nigger that never had no quality in him at all* ***no sir-ee***

In example (43), *yes'm* expresses agreement with the prior proposition (*I*) *suffers with high blood pressure* and places emphasis on that agreement. Example (44) has the same functions as (43) except agreement requires a negative as the result of it modifying a negative proposition *never had to quality in him at all*. This form more often than not, though, works less like a tag but instead to link a proposition to a following lexeme, phrase, or clause that supports the certainty of the first. The *yes/no + sir/mam* forms connect related propositions in one of two ways. One way is the connection of repeated forms that emphasize a point in the first proposition, for example:

(45) *When they thickens they bees good* ***yes sir*** *good good*

In example (45), *yes sir* marks agreement with the opinion in the first proposition: *when they thinkens they bees good* and connects repeated forms of *good*, emphasizing the point of the statement. These markers also connect an elaboration of the prior proposition which often gives evidence:

> (46) *My mother she was the house woman to the big house in slavery time but she never didn't get no money for what she been do **No mam** white folks never didn't pay the poor colored people no money in that day in time*

Similar to example (45), the point of the first part of this segment is emphasized by the *no,mam* and elaborated upon, this time with evidence: the speaker's mother *didn't get no money* because *white folks never didn't pay the poor colored people no money in that day in time.* While the *yes/no + sir/mam* markers lack any implication of evidence in themselves, in many instances, the *yes/no + mam/sir* forms work to introduce evidence for the information conveyed. Consider another example, where the evidence is assumed to be visually supporting the assertion in the moment of speaking through the phrase *there one right over yonder*:

> (47) *All bout in these woods you can find plenty of them slavery graves this day in time I can tell when there one now. **Yes, mam**, <u>there one right over yonder</u> to de brow of de hill going next to Mr. Claussens*

These markers appear to answer a question that is never posed. Interactionally, they create a discourse that is based on anticipated questions that the speaker judges the listener to have. Although usually not overtly marked, occasionally a question is overtly posed by the speaker, before the *yes/no* form is used to answer it:

> (48) *I belonged to Marse Jesse Briggs Did **you know** that it was two Jesse Briggs? **Yes sir** so was two Jesse Briggses*

In the above example, it is clear how this form works as the second part of a basic adjacency pair as discussed by Schegloff (2007), where the first pair part is a yes/no question and the second pair part is an answer with a direct address term of *mam* or *sir*. In example (48), the speaker poses a question to the addressee, asking if the addressee *knows* a certain piece of knowledge, *that it was two Jesse Briggs*. The speaker then answers the question him/herself with *yes sir*, and a repetition of the question, in declarative form.

A large majority of the instances of *yes/no + sir/mam* appear in the data without the prior interrogative first pair part though, as seen in example (49) below:

> (49) *I loves them so much that it does make my mouth run water to think about how me and Koota going enjoy them this evening **No mam**, us don' never eat us heavy meal till that sun start going down behind them trees cross the creek yonder*

In this example, the speaker chooses a particular aspect of the first assertion to elaborate upon, the time of day her and *Koota* eat. This aspect is then foregrounded and elaborated upon in the second proposition, marked with a second pair part *no mam*. Through speaking as if answering an anticipated question, the speaker effectively displays an involved interaction with the addressee. The speaker is overtly acknowledging that he/she is aware of the existence of his/her addressees and their interpretations and possible questions.

Explicit Performatives

Along with *sho*, explicit performatives are one of the most common emphatic forms used to fully vouch for information. Common explicit performatives are realized in three similar phrases: *I tells you, I tellin you,* and *I tell you*. Some examples are:

> (50) ***I tells you*** *dis getting what don't belong to you is the main cause of these wars and troubles bout over dis world now*

> (51) ***I tellin you*** *time hard these days*

> (52) ***I tell you*** *I is scared every time I go along there*

First discussed by Austin (1975), explicit performatives perform the action itself and not just state the action is being performed. Yet, the examples here do not appear to fit this definition. When the speaker says *I tells you*, he/she is not performing the telling; it is the proposition that follows or precedes that performs the act of telling. This can be compared to *I promise*, which is itself the act of promising. If these disjuncts are in fact explicit performatives, then they must be doing something more than marking the following proposition as sourced by the speaker: they must be

performing an action in and of themselves. I propose that they are in fact doing just that; They are completing the action of fully and completely vouching for the proposition. Explicit performatives modify information that is sourced by self and other, but their marking of *telling* by the speaker to the listener marks them as sourced by the speaker him/herself in the moment of speaking. The speakers effectively include the entire speech event in this phrase: the speaker is marked with *I*, the audience is marked with *you*, and the present scene of the event is marked with a present tense form of the verb of speaking *tell*.

Since knowledge expressed with speaker as source consistently implies a high degree of speaker commitment cross-linguistically (Mushin, 2001), the marking of the information as sourced by the speaker in the moment of speaking contributes to this phrase's portrayal of a high degree of commitment; The speaker is willing to accept responsibility for the *telling*, regardless of what the original source is. This reading is supported by the speakers themselves when considering the environment some explicit performatives are found in:

> (53) *Every word that **I tell you** is de <u>truth</u> and I is got to meet that word somewheres else and for that reason, de truth is all that this old man ever tells*

> (54) *<u>I likes to be truthful</u> and **I tellin you** when we was coming up we never didn't know nothing except what we catch from the old folks*

When the speakers use this explicit performative phrase, they are essentially saying *I'm telling you the truth*. Explicit performatives are only found in environments indicating high commitment, like the ones exemplified above in (53) and (54), where they are surrounded by forms of the lexeme *truth*. The language in the narratives exhibits a strong connection between *truth*, the here and now of the speech event, and direct evidence, all of which appear in explicit performative markers.

Interactionally, explicit performatives are similar to the yes/no phrases above. The explicit performatives in the data appear as disjuncts (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973; Biber & Finegan, 1988;1989), "detached from the main structure of the sentence and have a scope that extends over the sentence as a whole" (Biber & Finegan, 1988:3). Explicit Performatives and *yes/no + sir/mam* often work in conjunction to modify the same proposition:

(55) ***Yes mam I tell you*** *I been raise up a motherless child right there with Pa Oudjo and I been take the storm many a day*

The two phrases are placed one after the other at the beginning of the proposition, not working to increase the validity of the proposition, but instead to add to emphasis and involved interaction. Both forms also mark a high degree of commitment to the validity of the information, supported by the discourse strategy of directly addressing the 'audience', the yes/no phrases with *mam* or *sir* and the explicit performatives with the pronoun *you*. Unlike the *yes/no* forms above though, explicit performatives explicitly mark the information that precedes or follows as sourced by the speaker him/herself in the moment of speaking.

Some instances of these explicit performative phrases were elaborated upon, adding further emphasis:

(56) *...in the summertime I minds de flies off de table with the peafowl feather brush and eat in de kitchen just what de white folks eat them was very good eatins **I's here for to tell you***

(57) ***I here for to tell you*** *my old Missus was a dear old soul and we chillum sho had a fine time coming up*

This extended form *I('s) here for to tell you* along with examples (50) - (55) above show forms that function as emphatics. In example (56), the speaker takes a past memory and brings it to the present, then adds an opinion of the food, marked for veracity and claiming him/herself as a reliable source of information. This marker, like many others, explicitly marks the information as directly obtained; The speaker is conveyed as the authority of the information, as if sent from the past to deliver the quality of the food as *good*. Example (57) conveys the same meanings as (56) but has an additional feature of appearing to defend the speaker's Missus as a good woman who cared for her/him. This is evidenced by another proposition that gives a basis to the high degree of commitment the speaker displays, *we chillun sho had a fine time coming up*, further emphasized by the emphatic marker *sho*.

Comparisons

Comparisons are used in the narratives as another way in which speakers emphatically express a high degree of commitment to the information. Along with explicit performatives, these forms

belong positioned to the right of neutral on Figure 2, alongside the intensifier *sho*. Comparisons express high commitment by comparing a proposition to one of two things that the speakers consider unquestionably and absolutely certain: *religion* and *the now*.

The authority behind a religious utterance is discussed by Du Bois (1961[1933]) in his work on ritual speech. His main claim is that ritual speech, defined as speech that references beliefs in mystical beings or powers (314), carries authority within itself (323). Du Bois explains that "a statement is sometimes called self-evident if it is considered a basic or foundational tenet of a particular culture – one that is ordinarily presupposed and…would ordinarily remain unremarked" (322). The effect of the use of self-evidence is distancing of the speaker from the information, putting the addressee in a position to actively construct his or her own conclusion about authority (322). The use of religious evidence as *self-evident* is a choice made by the speaker as a result of his/her evaluation of what the hearer may accept as reliable. The narratives examined in this paper again show a very strong cultural belief of reliability in religion as a source of authority. The speakers also clearly express the authority of their religion when they speak about *truth*:

> (58) *Now **it de Lord truth** honey I ain't want to mislead you no way*

Example (58) places *Lord* in a modifying position, using it to describe the type of truth that the speaker is referring to. The speaker then follows up with what the *Lord truth* implies: not misleading the listener in any way. Religion here is used as an emphasizer of the *truth* of the proposition. Speakers often mark propositions with comparisons to religion in order to express an absolute willingness to vouch for the information:

> (59) *Mr. Roosevelt got learning **like I is from de throne of God***

Du Bois suggests that such speech "merge[s] two apparent extremes: to equate the ritual truth with the analytic truth" (326). The belief that *Mr. Roosevelt got learning* (he is educated and knows how to use it) is presented as a fact: It appears as a faceless proposition without any integrated markers of evidentiality. This bit of 'real world' information is then compared with *like* to another 'mythical/ritual' proposition that is supported by the strong authority of religion. Through juxtaposing the secular with the sacred, the speaker is able to convey an unquestionable commitment to the proposition while also creating solidarity thorough implying a shared belief system with the addressee.

This idea of self-evidence extends to other things that are considered reliable/certain in and of themselves. The speakers display a high level of self-evidence in *the now*: the here and now of the actual telling of the narrative by the speaker to his/her audience. The actual *here* and *now* is treated by the speakers as reliable beyond any doubt. Differing from religious evidence, it is based on an external, observable phenomenon as opposed to a culturally specific belief. It remains though that these utterances share the idea proposed by Du Bois that the authority of the utterance is found in the utterance itself (322-23) and in the actual direct perception of the addressee. The fact that both the speaker and the listener have direct perception of the *here* and *now* of the speech event provides evidence of its absolute truth. Authority is portrayed through comparisons of the speakers' willingness to vouch for the information to the certainty of *the now*. These comparisons appear before or after a proposition, modifying it in its entirety:

(60) ***Like I speak to you*** *my white folks was blessed with a heap of black chillun*

(61) *Child I can see my ole mammy how she look working that spinning **wheel just as good as if that day was this day right here***

(62) ***I 'members to this hour and minute*** *that as soon as that boy got here he set the house full of noise a crying like a cat squalling*

These examples all explicitly mark aspects of the present speech event, comparing them to information within narrative time. Example (60) marks the speaker, hearer, and the *here* and *now* with the present tense verb *speak*. Examples (61) and (62) explicitly mark the present time with *this day right here* and *this hour and minute*.

Example (63) below is slightly different from the others in that it is not in reference to the exact *now* of the speech act, but it still remains close enough on the scale of time in order to maintain the *certainty of the now* comparison:

(63) ***I members like yesterday*** *de Yankees coming along*

Some comparisons did not overtly mention a particular time, but instead implied it:

(64) *Course there is going to be black sheeps in most flocks and it is going to take patience to get them out but they will come out **just as sho' as you is born***

The use of the present tense form *is* references the speech act, the *now* of the narrative telling. The speaker, the addressee, and any other 'audience' members are able to unquestionably declare the addressee's existence and, therefore, his/her birth. The fact that the addressee *is born* is self-evident in this particular speech event. That *they will come out*, then, is marked as highly committed to by the speaker. These emphatic markers of comparison work similarly to the lexical marker *course*, which also marks both emphatic conviction and often also self-evidence.

(Of) Course

Of course, commonly shortened to *course* in the data, implies a basis of *common knowledge* or *obviousness*, as seen in examples (65) and (66):

> (65) *If you could have seen pa's hammer you would have seen something to look at It was so big that it jarred the whole earth when it struck a lick **Of course** it was a forge hammer driven by water power.*

> (66) *They had a big plantation about two miles out, sort of southwest of Boro I mean Winnsboro **of course** but de country people still call it Boro*

Both of these examples use *course* to mark clarification of something in the prior proposition. In (65), the speaker clarifies the type of hammer used, and in (66), the clarification is of the meaning of *Boro*. Example (65) uses *of course* to modify the specification of type of hammer: *of course it was a forge hammer*. This instance implies that there could be no other than *a forge hammer driven by water power* that could *jar[] the whole earth when it struck a lick*, creating strong emphasis on the obviousness of this information. *Course* in example (66) does not serve as a strong emphatic though. The speaker here uses *I mean* to clarify what *Boro* is referencing, *I mean Winnsboro*. This is then modified by *of course*, marking common knowledge, then followed up with an explanation as to why he/she calls it *Boro*: *the country people still call it Boro*. The attempt at clarification as well as the explanation in example (66) imply the discourse function of acknowledging that an addressee may already be familiar with the information, yet the speaker is supplying it just in case someone may not be in the know (Biber, 1988:21).

As example (65) above, a number of instances of (*of*) *course* in the narratives served to mark strong emphasis, similar to *sho*, yet expressing a sense of obviousness about the statement:

(67) *Yes, Ma'am,* **course** *I remember St. Andres Hall, right next to the Roman Catholic Cathedral on Broad street*

(68) **Course** *I disremembers all except that what I is been told over and over*

(69) **Course** *I ain't told you all that I knows cause that wouldn't be proper*

While common knowledge finds its basis in assumed shared cultural knowledge between the speaker and the addressee, a statement that is marked as obvious often has more of a fuzzy basis, treating evidence as if unnecessary. These uses of (*of*) *course* do not appear to mark clarification as examples (65) and (66) above do, but instead function only as markers of emphatic involvement.

Inferential Markers / Hedges

Hedges, also referred to as inferential markers, represent information as inferred or deduced based on some evidence, often that obtained through direct, perceptual experience (Mushin, 2001:66), including that which was obtained through hearsay (130). Unlike the other forms discussed in this section, which all revealed a relatively high degree of commitment to the information, the degree of commitment portrayed through the use of a hedge can vary significantly, but are always found below neutral in Figure 1. Hedges "create a fuzziness in the relationship between the propositional content and the speaker" (Prince et al, 1982:85). These markers are utilized to indicate the speaker is not certain about the truth of a proposition (Markkanen & Schröder, 1997). Hedges are discussed as inferentials in the literature on evidentiality in English (Biber & Finegan, 1988,1989; Mushin, 2001). Types of hedges that appear in the data include epistemic modals (*must, maybe, might*), and epistemic verbs (*seem, peers, reckon, spec(s)(t), guess, spose, figures, think, believe*). All these forms have included in their semantics a degree of commitment and an implication that the information is based on some form of evidence, although not all of them convey what this type of evidence is. All inferential forms discussed here express epistemic modality. Epistemic modality is described as "concerned with the speaker's assumptions, or assessment of possibilities, and, in most cases, it indicates the speaker's confidence or lack of confidence in the truth of the proposition expressed (Coates, 1987:112). Two types of epistemic modality markers are found in the data: modal auxiliaries and modal lexical verbs.

Epistemic Modal Auxiliaries: Must, Maybe, Might

Epistemic modal auxiliaries most used in the narratives are *must, maybe,* and *might*. While *must* conveys commitment that orients towards a higher degree, *maybe* and *might* show less commitment.

(70) *It **must** take a million dollars to do that it sho **must***

(71) *I sorrow over her for weeks, **maybe** five months*

In example (70), the speaker makes a conclusion about a fact: how much money it would take to run a college, that *it must take a million dollars*, expressing a stronger commitment to the inference than in (71). This is especially apparent considering the tag added to the end of this proposition, repeating *must* combined with the emphatic *sho*. Example (71) demonstrates a lower degree of commitment because of the semantics of *maybe* expressing much lower reliability of knowledge. There are some instances of direct address with modal auxiliaries:

(72) *I used to do what **you might say** a right good size washing*

Example (72) speculates with *might* on what the addressee would or would not label as a *good size washing*. This phrase in discourse plays a double role, placing assessment of the knowledge in the hands of the listener through direct address while simultaneously suggesting the degree to which the listener would commit to the proposition's truth. In this way, functioning as persuasive devices similar to those used in tag questions found in examples (38), (39), and (40). In example (72) above, since the listener has no access to the memories of the speaker, and therefore no evidence to assess, the speaker's assessment is likely to be accepted.

Epistemic Modal Verbs: Reckon, spec(s)(t), guess, spose, seem, peers, think, believe

Reckon, spec(s)(t), guess, spose, seem, peers, think, and believe are all epistemic modal verbs (Coates, 1987). These markers work to hedge assertions as not fully committed to. Some examples include:

(73) *That balloon when on down to Beaufort **I spose***

(74) ***I spects*** *Marse Jimmie can name some for you*

Examples (73) and (74) display speculation on a fact that has an answer that the speaker does not have access to: in (73), where the balloon actually landed, and in (74), whether or not *Marse Jimmie* can name some. Inferential markers of epistemic modality like those considered here have one of two primary functions in English: they either express "simple subjective uncertainty" or they mark politeness (Coates, 1987:115). As exemplified in the above propositions containing markers of epistemic modality, the data reveals that these markers' primary use by the orators is that of expressing simple subjective uncertainty. Many instances of inferential markers overtly express evidence by means of a separate clause. For instance, example (75) gives a basis of perceptual evidence just prior to its utterance:

(75) *Yes um <u>he been sorta puny like dis here last week</u> He mamma **must** been feed him too much en broke he mouth out*

The speaker's visual sighting of the person in question gives a basis for the conclusions drawn in the proposition that follows. In example (76) below, the speaker speculates with *think* and gives the basis, or reason, behind his/her speculation, in the following clause:

(76) ***Think*** *I was born de 12ᵗʰ day of February <u>cause I was about 16 years old when freedom come</u>*

In example (76), the basis for the speculation *I was born on the 12ᵗʰ day of February* is seen in the underlined segment, introduced by *cause*, explicitly marking the segment as the evidence behind his/her conclusions. Notice how in example (75), where the speaker has recently obtained visual evidence as a basis, the more certain form *must* is used, while in example (76), a form that conveys less commitment is used when the evidence is based in a memory from the distant past, and it also is marked with further uncertainty through the use of *about*.

Of the inferential forms explored here, only *seem* and *peers* include type of evidence in their semantics. *Seem* and *peers* in their literal meaning mark inference (Bednarek, 2006:640) with a basis in direct evidence. The default interpretation is that the information marked by *seem* and *peers* was acquired by perceptual evidence (Mushin, 2006:30-31). Perceptual evidence used with *seem* is often visual, as in example (77) below. It is also found to indicate auditory evidence (78), as well as internal experiences (79):

(77) *Soon we see what* **seem** *like a thousand men on hosses coming briskly long*

(78) **Seem** *like they just sing the whole night throughs*

(79) *You made me feel religious asking all them questions* **Seem** *like a voice of all the days that am gone turn over me and press on the heart and this room affect me like I was in a church*

Considering these forms on the scale presented in Figure 1, they display a degree of commitment that falls to the left of unmarked language yet are generally more certain than doubtful; Although, this depends on both the nature of the embedded information and the context of the utterance. Consider the change in degree of commitment when the inferentials are negated in example (80):

(80) **I don't guess** *you will ever see him*

The speaker here is conveying that it is very unlikely the addressee will ever see *him*. Instead of negating the proposition with *never,* the speaker negates the evidential, conveying that he/she is not willing to commit to the proposition's higher likelihood that would be portrayed through *guessing*. The ability to manipulate forms in order to convey differing positions is apparent when we compare this to another negated instance of guess that portrays the opposite, a very high degree of commitment through a negated form:

(81) **I ain't guessing** *I done seed so*

Positioned in its own clause as a negated progressive, this instance of *guess* is able to convey that the speaker has a high degree of commitment to the truth of the proposition that precedes; The speaker does not have a need to *guess*, and the perceptual basis that follows elaborates as to why.

I think and *I believe* stand apart from other markers of epistemic modality because they have two different evidential functions: as markers of inference and as markers of opinion. When they appear as markers of inference, they work to distance the speaker from responsibility for the information based on external evidence. External evidence is defined as evidence that is based outside of the *self* (Bednarek, 2006:648). Internal evidence, then, is evidence that is based inside the *self*, residing in the speaker's "own subjective experience" and is often the "speaker's own mental or sensory perception" (Bednarek, 2006:648). Examples of *think* and *believe* working as hedges tend to be based on external evidence, or at least modify propositions that contain information about the external world. In this sense, *think* and *believe* work similarly the other

inferentials presented above; They effectively lessen the speaker's total commitment to the information as factual. This can be seen in examples (82) and (83) below:

(82) ***I think*** *that was in 1864*

(83) *Most of them there patrollers was poor white folks **I believes***

The hedges explored in this section are all found to work as markers of subjective uncertainty, distancing the speaker from the statement and lessening the speaker's commitment to the knowledge as truth. Their placement on the scale of commitment varies depending on the form used and the context in which functions. These markers are therefore represented as falling somewhere within the parameters set below in Figure 4:

Figure 4: *Hedges on Commitment Scale*

Low/No Commitment   **Neutral Commitment**   **High Commitment**

Hedges   Unmarked
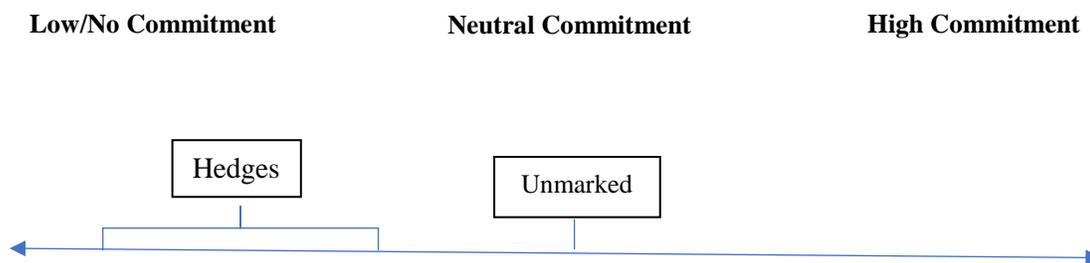
The placement of hedges on the scale falls to the left of tag questions, marking less certainty. TQs examined here work pragmatically, making use of persuasive devices in order to suggest agreement. Hedges, on the other hand, mark non-commitment; When speakers use hedges it is because they wish to indicate that the speaker is not certain of the validity of the information. This is because these forms are marking the existence of evidence that is considered by the speaker as not fully reliable. As opposed to the other hedges considered here, the function of *think* and *believe*, though, drastically alters when they are placed with a proposition that is based on internal evidence. *Opinion verbs* function is not to mark partial commitment according to some evidence but to mark full commitment to a particular internal opinion or belief that the speaker holds.

Opinion Verbs

The most common function of *think* and *believe* in the narratives is to explicitly mark a proposition as sourced by the speaker and based on internal evidence reflecting beliefs and opinions of the speaker The sense of *I think* and *I believe* as an indicator of internal evidence includes a third phrase, *I say*. Although vouching for the information as the speaker's own, by marking it as a personal belief or opinion, the speaker relinquishes accountability for the information as factual by downgrading the importance of evidence (Chafe, 1986:266), thereby lessening the force of a challenge. "Belief is always based on something other than evidence alone" (266); This *something* in these instances of opinion verbs is based on internal evidence and therefore harder to challenge than a statement based on external evidence. Some examples of an opinion sense of *think* and *believe* are:

> (84) *I sho **think** they worser than they used to be*

> (85) *I **think** everybody should join the church and do right*

> (86) *I **believes** a person loves more better when they feels*

People believe or have opinions about things for a variety of reasons, and although there may be evidence to support opinions, it is not always deemed necessary to give them because of their internal and personal status. It would be difficult to argue with statements in (84) – (86) because they are based internally and not on external facts. An interlocutor could disagree that *everybody should join the church* but that does not in any way change the fact that the speaker holds a differing opinion, thus exemplifying how evidentials allow for an expression of *self* (Mushin, 2001). It is interesting to note that in the current narratives, some form of the opinion stated in example (85) is repeated a significant number of times throughout, pointing again to the shared religious belief system and strong commitment to the truth of religion among this community of speakers.

I say is used in two different ways in the data, one of which is used to introduce a dialog of something the speaker said in the past:

> (87) *I remember Ma used to tell we chillum bout how they couldn't never do nothing in slavery time but what de white folks say they could do. **I say** If I been big enough in them days I would sho a let out a fight for you*

This sense reports self-speech in the narrative, marking only source of knowledge (the speaker). Another just as common use of *I say* marks more than the source of the knowledge; It marks a proposition as the opinion of the speaker:

> (88) *Who that come here with <u>you</u>? Lord that don't look like no wife How long <u>you</u> is been married, <u>honey</u>? <u>You</u> ain't say so Look like <u>you</u> is just blooming **I say***

> (89) *Lord I had a rough time Didn't never feel no rest. that how come I ain't get all my growth **I say***

In example (88), the speaker uses both declarative and interrogative statements, including forms of direct address such as *you* and *honey*. This example is not related to the narrative at all but is an aside that has created casual discourse between the interviewer, his wife, and the speaker. The speaker asks about their relationship and then gives an opinion of how young the wife looks, *look like you is just blooming*, marking the information as inferential, based on visual evidence with *looks like* and as an opinion with *I say*. The discourse function of this opinion marker is to protect the speaker from the possibility of being wrong about the age of the interviewer's wife; The opinion marker has established that this statement is in no way qualified as fact by the speaker but instead as what the wife *looks like* through the speaker's eyes, which cannot be challenged. Example (89) shows extranarrative evaluation; the speaker has stepped outside of the narrative to comment on it. The first two propositions work to evaluate the speaker's life as *rough* and with *no rest*, then these statements are proposed as a basis for the following opinion marked statement: *I ain't get all my growth*.

Chapter 5

Cultural Aspects of Evidential Markers

While Chapter Four explored some ways in which the speakers express the status of their knowledge through various markers that convey both literal meanings of evidentiality as well as their pragmatic features and functions, this chapter details ways in which evidential markers are shaped by culture and custom. Research question three will be explored in this chapter:

3. *What does the use of evidential markers reveal about the cultural identities of the speakers?*

Through the process of socialization into a particular language or dialect, speakers tend to make use of a small sub-set of evidential markers; These markers are an aspect of language that have usage patterns governed by culture and custom (Precht, 2003:240). The speakers' use of evidentiality reveals the subjective point of view that they choose to express in the moment of interaction. As Mushin (2006) stated, "…a fundamental property of language lies in the ability to express aspects of the speaker's (and addressee's) self in a particular speech situation" (3). In consideration of evidentiality as an optional marker of subjective self in English and the cultural perspective taken by Fox (2001) that the study of evidentiality includes social interactions and social institutions, I explore in this section how the use of evidential markers reveals the speakers' cultural identity as southern African American English orators. I do this first by looking at evidential markers that reveal features of AAE oral tradition and then by exploring markers that highlight cultural and dialectal identities connected with the Southern United States.

Markers of the African American Oral Tradition

In this chapter, I explore how the evidential markers in the narratives work to create an interactive, "person-centered" style as seen in AAE oral traditions and in research on black preaching style. The analysis is based on the theoretical premise that African and African American oral literature is by nature participatory (Anyidoho, 1983:viii), on pragmatic features of AAE oral traditions (Kersting et al, 2015; Britt, 2011) and on Jordon's (1988) description of Black English as "person-centered" (367). In her study on speeches given by African Americans, Britt (2011) concludes that "black preaching style allows speakers…to temporarily cloak

themselves with the status and respect associated with black preachers, providing a favorable context for the reception of their message while allowing for the display of their ethnic affiliation with the black community" (211). Religion is a repeated theme in evidential marking across the narratives, it is therefore not surprising that speakers often take on a traditional preaching or performative style. Preaching style reinforces the overall message and allows the speaker to assert subjective testimony and beliefs (Britt, 2011:223), allowing and encouraging the expression of evidential aspects with pragmatic features of AAE oral tradition. Features of African American oral tradition that appear with evidential markers add to the pragmatic universe of the speech event through their ability to increase speakers' credibility and authority while simultaneously displaying their cultural identity as African American.

Jordon's (1988) description of the "person-centered values of Black English" was compiled in conjunction with a group of native AAE speaking University English students. The consideration of AAE native speakers' perspectives is a very important contribution to the present analysis. I claim the academic literature alone cannot and should not be the sole basis of consideration when exploring aspects of language that depict culture. The views of actual speakers give an 'inside' and subjective perspective that cannot be equaled in lists of descriptions of features compiled by an often non-native speaker of AAE. I claim that the inclusion of Jordon's description contributes to a more extensive analysis of social and cultural aspects of the language.

Jordon (1988) presents a set of rules summarizing features of "correct" and "realistic" Black English. They included a description of qualities: "a presence of life, voice and clarity" (367) identified as working to "intensify to a distinctive Black value system". The following excerpt comes from their description of a "Black value system":

> *"...our culture has been constantly threatened by annihilation, at least, the swallowed blurring of assimilation. Therefore, our language is a system constructed by people constantly needed to insist that we exist, that we are present. Our language devolves from a culture that abhors all abstraction, or anything tending to obscure or delete the fact of the human being who is here and now/the truth of the person who is speaking or listening...The assumption of the presence of life governs all of Black English. Therefore, overwhelmingly, all action takes place in the language of the present indicative. And every sentence assumes the living and active participants of at least two human beings, the*

speaker and the listener…If your idea, your sentence, assumes the presence of at least two living and active people, you will make it understandable, because the motivation behind every sentence is the wish to say something real to somebody real" (p. 367).

This description supports the notion of African American English as naturally participatory: *every sentence assumes the living and active participants of at least two human beings, the speaker and the listener*, which can be found evident in language acts that do not necessarily call for interaction from the audience (e.g. public speaking events such as narrative tellings, sermons, or speeches). What this description also points out is the importance of the speech event and a dedication to the truth of the speaker and the listener(s) in the moment of the event: *a culture that abhors…anything tending to obscure or delete the fact of the human being who is here and now/the truth of the person who is speaking or listening.*

Precht (2003) concluded that "[t]he resources of language enable a virtually unlimited number of ways in which we could express ourselves, however my results suggest that we are culturally 'programmed' to use a very limited very specific subset of these options" (240). Through exploring the subset of evidential markers most often utilized in the narratives, I claim that evidentiality in languages without grammaticalized, obligatory marking has a cultural basis, evidence of which lies in the choice of the types of evidential forms used and the literal and discourse meanings that they convey. The connection between culture, custom, and evidential markers is explored here through looking at the occurrence of evidential markers that are expressed through features of the African American oral tradition. Kersting et al (2015) looked at the occurrence of pragmatic features in written narratives by African American students leading to the compilation of an extensive list of AAE pragmatic oral narrative features as described by the literature (Noonan-Wagner, 1981; Campbell, 1983; Troutman-Robinson, 1987; Visor, 1987; Chaplin, 1988; Ball, 1992; Champion, 2003; Richardson, 2003; Smitherman, 2000; as cited in Kersting et al, 2015). A number of features of oral tradition are found to be represented with the evidential markers detailed in Chapter Four. These features include**:** off-narrative comment, evaluative language, direct address, call response, and syntactic parallelism (96-9) and will be discussed below along with additional features of black preaching style as discussed in Britt (2011). I explore these features through discussion of narrative evaluation, involved interaction, and commitment to the truth.

Narrative Evaluation

According to Labov & Waletzky (1967), narrative evaluation is "the part of the narrative that reveals the attitude of the narrator towards the narrative by emphasizing the relative importance of some narrative units as compared to others" (32). According to this definition, narrative evaluation coincides well with evidentiality as the expression of the speaker's attitude towards information, considering the marking of evidentiality in the broad since as "the expression of subjectivity in language" (Mushin, 2001:1). Working within the broad perspective of attitude, we can conclude that markers of evidentiality are a way in which speakers subjectively evaluate their knowledge as well as the speech event. Since evaluative language is considered a prominent feature of AAE oral tradition (Kersting et al, 2015), this could certainly explain the high number of evidential markers found throughout the narratives.

Within narrative analysis, evaluation is considered as lying on a scale of internal vs. external. Internal evaluation is evaluation that takes place in the narrative world by a character within the narrative while external evaluation is "a direct statement of the narrator to the listener about his feelings at the time" (Labov & Waletzky, 1967:34). The present analysis found that both types of evaluation were expressed through evidential markers but an overwhelming amount were *external*, bringing the speech event on stage. This finding is in conjunction with Mushin (2001) who claimed that "…many strategies for expressing epistemological stance are extranarrative" (101). There are also a large number of evaluative clauses where the speaker not only evaluates feelings in narrative time but also feelings about those places, people, and objects in the present time of the telling. External evaluation, the most commonly utilized evaluation, is defined as "a direct statement of the narrator to the listener about his feelings at the time [of the narrative telling]" (34). The large number of uses of external evaluation points to the AAE oral tradition feature *off-narrative comment*, defined by Kersting (2015) as "a departure from the main theme of a narrative to address or comment to a person or object related to the theme of the narrative" (98). Some examples from the present data are found below:

(90) *They carried me a hundred miles to cure a sick woman, onliest time I ever left Union County. <u>I loves it and I is fit throughout</u>.*

(91) <u>*I thinks*</u> *that good teachers and work is what de colored race needs worser*
than anything else

Examples (90) and (91) both exemplify extranarrative evaluation *or* off-narrative comment. Example (90) is not explicitly marked for evidentiality, although it does mark an aspect of Biber & Finegans's (1988) description of stance as including affect markers. Affect here also happens to be displayed in the very form that exemplifies the off-narrative comment: *I loves it and I is fit throughout.* With this utterance, the speaker cuts off from the telling of the narrative to subjectively evaluate his/her place of residence, *Union County*. Example (91) utilizes an explicit evidential marker: the opinion marker *think*. The speaker veers away from the narrative here to give an opinion about what would help his race the most: *good teachers and work*. The feature of off-narrative comment is extremely common in the data. In fact, a large portion of evidential marking occurs in these evaluative asides.

Involved Interaction

A number of evidentials in the narratives create involved interaction, a key feature of AAE oral tradition. Biber & Finegan (1988) show that explicit marking of stance is an indicator of greater involvement on behalf of the speaker (23). The most pervasive way in which speakers evaluate language is by creating involved interaction with intensifiers, mostly utilizing emphatic forms. The evidential forms discussed in Chapter Four that are considered emphatic are numerous: *sho, you know, tags, yes/no +mam/sir, tag questions, explicit performatives, comparisons,* and *of course*. Emphatics were by far the most utilized type of evidential and are also the forms used with the highest numbers and that appear most evenly across the narratives. Emphatics mark involved interaction through their ability to emphasize and intensify information. They also are claimed to "...mark involvement and can be used to signal solidarity…[they are] characteristic of informal, colloquial speech" (Biber & Finegan, 1989:94). Emphatics are commonly 'stacked' to modify the same or more than one related proposition. This is seen in example (92) below:

(92) *I has found that if you gives to some poor folks white or black something a*
little better than they is used to they is **sho** *going to think too high of theirselves*
soon **that's right I sho believes that as much as I believes I's setting in this**
chair talking to you

This excerpt utilizes three emphatic markers, *sho,* a declarative tag *that's right*, and ends with a comparison to the here and now of the speech event. The comparison is also marked with an emphatic *sho* as well as an opinion marker *believes*. Involvement in this segment is also marked through the use of a direct address *you*. There are a number of ways, other than through emphasis, in which the speakers manipulate evidential markers to create involved interaction; This is done through the use of three AAE oral tradition features: direct address, call-response, and syntactic parallelism.

Direct address is defined as "talking directly to the audience in a conversational tone" (Kersting *et al*, 2015:99). An example from Kersting et al (2015:99) is given in example (93):

> (93) <u>I</u> would like to begin my story by <u>telling you</u> about…

Notice how in this example, the narrator directly addresses the audience with the pronoun *you* as well as explicitly marks *self* as teller of the information in the present speech event (*I would like to begin…*). The role of direct address is also mentioned in Jordon's description of Black English: *If your idea, your sentence, assumes the presence of at least two living and active people, you will make it understandable*. Jordon's description makes an association between direct address and clarity; There is a link created here between the acknowledgement of listeners and making speech understandable. Numerous Evidential markers in the narratives display the pragmatic feature of direct address: *you know, tags, explicit performatives,* and *comparisons to certainties*.

Another aspect of AAE oral tradition expressed with evidential markers is *call response*. Call-response is defined as "spontaneous verbal interactions between speaker and listener; also, a question with no clear speaker and a response by no clear listener" (Kersting et al, 2015:96). The following example is taken from Kersting et al (2015:96):

> (94) *Hey why don't I ask her to marry me? Yeah!*

Consider example (95) below from the present narrative data:

> (95) *I marry Kate at de close of that revival* **What you reckon? Don't know?** *The day after de wedding…*

This example directly addresses the interlocutor by posing a question with *you*, asking the addressee to share his/her speculations on what happened next through the use of *reckon*. The speaker then automatically answers for the unspecified addressee with another interrogative *don't know?* This marks the first question as rhetorical, allowing the entire episode to create involved interaction while simultaneously allowing the speaker to continue with the narrative without interruption. Similar instances of call-response are exemplified with the *yes/no + sir/mam* forms:

(96) *Does my folks help me along any?* ***No sir****, they sho don't*

These commonly repeated spontaneous features of interaction, even though one-sided, are indicative of the speakers' shared AAE culture and customs. They create rhetorical language that allows the speaker to take the turn for both sides of the interaction. Both call-response and direct address are considered as part of African American English's pragmatic code used in oral narrative (Kersting et al, 2015:99) and are representative of African and African American oral literature as participatory (Anyidoho, 1983:viii). They also support Jordon's (1988) description of the "black value system" as "person centered" and *assuming the living and active participants of at least two human beings* (367). This is opposed to an unmarked style, common in academic prose, fiction, press reviews, and editorials (Biber & Finegan, 1989:03), which do not mark involved interaction.

Another oral narrative strategy that appears with evidential markers is repetition. Repetition in discourse is considered an evaluative strategy that answers the question *so what?* (Labov, 1972:379). Studies in cross-cultural discourse have shown that repetition of particular discourse patterns is a culture specific phenomenon (Tannan, 2007:35) that is considered a strategy for creating involvement (1). Repetition is used as a marker of emphasis and commitment by all speakers. One common type of repetition used by speakers is syntactic repetition, *or* syntactic parallelism, defined as "playing one set of words or images against another without changing the theme" (Kersting et al, 2015:96). An example can be seen in (40) from Chapter Four, repeated as example (97) below:

(97) *Christ was baptized in de waters of Jordon* ***won't he?***
  Well he never drapped back, ***did he?***
   He say we must follow in His footsteps ***didn't he?***
   Well there you is, and that's all there is to it

This example displays the repetition of a syntactic form through tag questions, seen in bold. This segment also uses language that implies conclusions, marked by *well* in the second and fourth lines. The last line works to tie the entire segment together and mark it as certain and beyond dispute with *well there you is and that's all there is to it*.

The Presentation of Truth

Another way in which the marking of evidential aspects reveals speaker culture and custom is through the explicit marking of commitment to the truth of the speaker and/or listener in the here and now of the speech event, as is described in Jordon (1988) and apparent in African and African American oral tradition. These markers also contribute to the *clarity* of the narrative, considered fundamental in Black English (Jordon, 1988:367). In order for a speaker's message to be clear and understood, it must be sensitive to the participants in the here and now of the speech event. The importance of the truth of the *here and now* of the speech event is marked in comparisons to certainties, for example:

> (98) *I sho believes that as much as I believes I's setting in this chair talking to you*

Speakers also mark their commitment to the truth of the speech event through evidentials that convey what Biber & Finegan (1988) label "manner of speaking" (7). These forms "convey the speaker's comment on the form of what he is saying, defining in some way under what conditions he is speaking" (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973:242). The speakers in the current data repeatedly mark their manner of speaking with forms of the lexeme *truth,* as can be seen in example (99):

> (99) ***I tell the truth*** *the people sure had to scratch about and make what they had in slavery time*

Commitment to the truth is a common theme in black preaching style, which "appeal[s] to the sacred" in the presentation of events (Britt, 2011:216). Britt (2011) finds that "the interactional norms for church gatherings provide that there will be a presentation of (usually biblical) truth" (221). The marking of manner of speaking reveals a very commonly repeated theme of truth markers and their co-occurrence with religious speech. This association between religious beliefs and truth has a strong presence in the narrative data as a result of the speakers' cultural and social

foundation in a shared speech community. The speakers convey their high commitment to the certainty of their religion through a variety of language forms. Examples (100) – (104) below use religious language (*God, mighty, gospel, blessed, Lord*) in combination with the lexeme *truth*:

> (100) *I suffers Yes mam that **the God truth***

> (101) *I don't know nothing more than that to tell you that **the mighty truth** all I know*

> (102) *Yes, sir, that **the Gospel truth***

> (103) *I tell her she was wasting her speech cause I know I near had nothing to worry about **It the blessed truth** I'm tellin you*

> (104) ***It the Lord's truth** I tellin you he drown fore he let them whip him*

This section has revealed ways in which the speakers manipulate their marking of evidential aspects, creating features of black preaching style and therefore revealing the speakers' ethnic identity as African American. The last section will discuss how evidential markers relate to other southern dialects and how their use can be considered as further markering of the speakers' identities as African American and as southern.

Southern Identity Markers

While distinct in many ways, dialects of the Southern United States have many shared features. Some evidential forms in the narratives reveal the speakers' southern identity, pointing out their cultural and dialectal relationship to other southern dialects such as Southern White English (SWE) and Gullah (also known as *Geechee*) spoken in the coastal regions of South Carolina and Georgia.

Southern White English (SWE)

As pointed out earlier, there has been little to no research into the use of evidential markers in English dialects other than those considered standard, so it is difficult to make any conclusions here surrounding the relationship between SAAE and SWE evidential use. The minor amount of research on SWE and evidential use appears in work with upper class SWE as a focus of study, thereby excluding the majority of speakers of SWE, those that are not considered as part of the higher socio-economic class' culture and dialect. Also, without research into phrasal and clausal means of expressing stance, as opposed to lexical marking, many of the forms in the present data are difficult to compare. While the present data reveals some minor shared evidential features between the AAE and SWE, further research is needed to make more extensive comparisons. As a southerner myself, I know that southern speakers are often bi-dialectal, which can work to blur the line between southern dialects; Often it is hard to tell if speakers are using features of just one or if they are code switching between dialects. I claim that many of the clausal evidential forms in the data are in fact shared by many speakers of SWE, especially those speakers from a lower socio-economic class, but this claim needs further research. Anecdotal evidence aside, in consideration of the literature on SWE, there is but one evidential marker found both in the narratives as well as in the literature on SWE, *reckon*.

Reckon is considered a feature of southern speech as it is found to be more common in dialects of the Southern United States than elsewhere (Johnstone, 2003:194-5). Like in Johnstone's (2003) study of upper class SWE, *reckon* is the most commonly used of all the hedges. Yet in the present data, functionally, *reckon*, as well as other hedges, tends to act somewhat differently than found in the literature on upper class SWE. Hedged assertions in SWE function mainly as pragmatic markers of politeness and indirectness (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Johnstone, 2003) while the AAE speakers in the present data use hedges to directly portray a lack of reliable evidence. Unlike studies on upper class SWE, hedges in this sample of AAE do not appear to function as politeness markers.

Gullah

Gullah, also known as *Geechee*, is a creole language spoken on the coastal region and islands of South Carolina and Georgia (Turner, 1949:xi). Developed throughout the period of the slave trade (Abdou, 2014:58), Gullah has a close relationship with inland African American English, the two of which have been found to have commonalities in lexicon, grammar, and processes of

development and change (Edwards, 1991:15). As of yet, there have been no studies on evidential use in the Gullah language. For a comparison of features, I made use of Lorenzo Dow Turner's (1949) Gullah narratives, recorded in the early 1930s and transcribed by the interviewer and author of the influential work *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*. The first African American with professional training in linguistics (xi), Turner's work on Gullah dialect "provided, for the first time, concrete, comparable, and measurable correspondences between Gullah and African languages" (xii). This was a monumental claim amidst a time when Gullah, along with other Caribbean creoles, was "depicted as corrupted and unintelligible" and a form of "bad English" (Abdou, 2014:58). Turner's work examines relationships between Gullah and a number of languages spoken in countries that extend along the west coast of African from Senegal to Angola (Turner, 1949:1). After an examination of everything from extended lists of shared names, vocabulary, syntactical, morphological, phonological, and a small number of discourse features, the author provides a section dedicated to phonetically transcribed Gullah Texts. Turner provides fifteen original interviews transcribed phonetically and with an orthographic gloss that standardizes spelling and translates those words without obvious English equivalents, the latter of which I make use of in the examples here.

Some of the distinctive shared evidential features that aid in pointing out the shared cultural and dialectal identity between Gullah and inland speakers are apparent in the prominent use of emphatics in both dialects' speech. Emphatic features such as the emphatic *sho*, *tags, direct address*, and *repetition* are shared between the two sets of narratives.

The form *sho* is used in the Gullah narratives with the same function of emphatic conviction as in inland speech:

(105) *Yes you walk from that side there but **I sho** going scare you again*

The *yes/no + sir/mam* forms utilized in the inland AAE narratives is also common in the Gullah narratives:

(106) *God just save me and my house and children **yes mam** just save me*

Example (106) demonstrates how *yes'mam* provides emphasis to the previous information as well as connects the repetitive emphasis *just save me*. The use of *yes, mam* as a tag can be seen in

example (108) below, along with other examples of evidential tags in Gullah in both (107) (tag question *you see?*) and (108) (declarative tag *all right*):

(107) *Them people what go there have for to buy all them thing* **You see? Won't they?**

(108) *Ain't I going cook them fresh? I will cook them fresh* **all right Yes mam**

The first two tags (*you see? won't they?*) not only provides emphasis to the first proposition that people who go there buy all *them thing* (food items that were mentioned in a previous statement), but also include the feature of *direct address*. This is followed in the narrative by Example (108), representative of call-response in AAE narrative and sermons. The speaker asks *Ain't I going cook them fresh?* Answering him/herself with a repetitive declarative version of the question. This entire sequence is ended with two emphatic markers: *all right* and *yes, mam*.

The discussion of speakers' commitment to the truth of "the human being who is here and now…of the person who is speaking or listening" (Jordon, 1988:367) in the narratives above is also found to be a theme in the Gullah narratives, conveyed in example (109) through syntactic parallelism:

(109) *That was a night in [August]*
   I **don't know** *the date*
   I **can't tell you I know** *the date*
   because I **ain't know** *the date*
   I **won't lie, say I know** *the date*
   but I know it was [August]

This speaker demonstrates commitment to the expression of only that which he/she knows to be factual in the moment of speaking. That it *was a night in August* is first presented in a statement unmarked for evidential aspects, and therefore vouched for as true. Then the exact date is overtly marked as unknown with *I don't know*. Through repetition, the speaker adds emphatic commitment to the proposition through a variety of clauses, making use of other markers of evidentiality such as *tell, know, ain't know, won't lie, say*, finally ending with another reference to what *is* being vouched for by the

speaker, what is known, that he/she *knows* that *it was August*. Example (109) exemplifies the AAE oral tradition features of syntactic parallelism and lexical repetition. The speaker plays differing phrases of the same theme against each other, repeating uncertainty (*don't know, can't tell you I know, ain't know, won't lie say I know*) as well as repeating the subject *the date* four times. This sequence is framed on either side by what the speaker does know, the information marked as certain, the month of *August*.

In this chapter I discussed how speaker identities of African American and southern are revealed through the use of evidential markers placed in culturally specific structures that represent AAE oral narrative traditions, black preaching style, and that share features of other southern dialects, specifically the Gullah creole language of South Carolina and Georgia.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The present analysis has looked at ways in which Southern African American English from the 1930s marks aspects of evidentiality. The data is considered from the broad perspective of evidentiality which includes marking of speaker commitment to and/or evidence for the information conveyed by the speaker. Evidentiality in this perspective is considered to be at the "pragmatic/semantic interface" (Mushin, 2001:10), where meaning is based on the speaker's subjective attitude towards the information, the speech event, and any evidence the speaker may have. Evidential marking in the narrative data reveals that English utilizes a wide variety of language forms to mark evidential aspects of attitude and evidence. Evidential markers overtly or implicitly mark one or more aspects of evidentiality. By taking an even broader perspective than the present literature on Evidentiality, the data reveals unique ways in which speakers express their attitude towards information which also work to reveal the speakers' cultural identities as African, African American and Southern. Features of African American oral tradition that appear with evidential markers are considered to add to the pragmatic universe of the speech event through their ability to increase speakers' credibility and authority while simultaneously displaying their cultural identity as African American.

Further research on evidentiality in the English language and its many dialects would be useful in clarifying how to classify evidential aspects in languages that do not have obligatory, grammaticalized marking. Specifically, research on southern dialects could help to extend the analysis and comparison of evidential use begun in Chapter Five of this work. Further research on contemporary African American Speech would also aid in clarifying and extending some of the findings and conclusions made. African American English has great influence in our contemporary society, not just in the United States, but in the world over. Although many prejudices still exist, work such as the present analysis contributes to our understanding of AAE features and their historical development in an effort to one day reach beyond long-held negative and ignorant beliefs to see languages, dialects, and people as the fascinating results of many years of influence, experience, and change.

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