6 Remnant dialects in the coastal United States

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1 Introduction

Along the southern and mid-Atlantic coasts of the United States, there are a number of *remnant dialect communities*, that is, longstanding communities of speakers who have been geographically or culturally isolated from surrounding populations for extended periods of time. These include island communities in the Chesapeake Bay of Maryland and Virginia, the barrier islands off the coast of North Carolina, and the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina and Georgia, as well as inland communities which have been physically or socioculturally isolated from neighbouring communities. Given the relatively early habitation of some of these areas by English-speaking colonists and subsequent periods of separation from other groups, these situations provide ideal settings for considering the nature of the development and maintenance of transported dialects in relative isolation.

Our recent research on remnant dialect communities has included a sample of island communities populated primarily by Anglo-Americans on the Outer Banks of North Carolina (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1995, 1997; Wolfram, Hazen and Schilling-Estes 1999) and in the Chesapeake Bay (Schilling-Estes 1997, 2002; Schilling-Estes and Wolfram 1999). In addition, we have investigated communities involved in long-standing interethnic contact situations, including contact between African Americans and Anglo-Americans in mainland Hyde County adjacent to the Outer Banks of North Carolina (Green 1998; Wolfram, Thomas and Green 2000; Wolfram and Thomas 2002), and tri-ethnic contact involving African Americans, Lumbee Native Americans and Anglo-Americans in Robeson County, in the Coastal Plains region of North Carolina (Wolfram 1996; Dannenberg and Wolfram 1998; Dannenberg 1999, 2002; Wolfram and Dannenberg 1999; Wolfram, Dannenberg, Knick and Oxendine 2002; Schilling-Estes 1999, 2000a). The locations of the specific communities focused on in this discussion are given in map 6.1.

All of these communities qualify as remnant communities in the sense that they have been through extended periods of social and/or geographic isolation

Map 6.1 Remnant community sites

from dominant population groups and thus retain remnants of earlier cultural practices and language varieties. At the same time, these communities are also quite varied, in terms of their current and historical contact situations as well as internal community developments.

Although remnant dialect communities similar to those examined here have been scrutinised in recent sociolinguistic studies and have, in fact, provided the basis for reconstructing earlier varieties of English spoken in North America (Poplack and Sankoff 1987; Poplack and Tagliamonte 1989, 1991; Singler 1989,

1991; Poplack 2000), there remain a number of questions about dialect formation, change and variation in these situations. Do the language varieties of the original English-speaking groups still play a role in the current patterning of language variation, and if so how? To what extent have these varieties been moulded by their original and subsequent contact situations? Is there evidence for autonomous, parallel linguistic development or dialect 'drift' (Sapir 1921) across the different communities? Has independent innovation or the differential influence of outside varieties taken the communities along different paths of language change? By examining a set of remnant speech communities with both similar and distinctive sociohistorical backgrounds, we hope to shed light on the dynamics of language change and variation in remnant dialect situations in the United States and elsewhere.

2 On defining remnant speech communities

The unifying theme of the dialect communities considered here, apart from their geographical location along the southern and mid-Atlantic coasts of the United States, is their historical isolation from the surrounding dominant populations. Unfortunately, the notions *historical isolation* and *remnant dialect community* have been defined in rather imprecise ways in dialectology and sociolinguistics. There is, for example, no consensus operational definition of *remnant dialect community* nor objective index of historical isolation that has been applied to the situations described in recent studies. In this section, we therefore attempt to set forth some of the recurrent physical, historical, demographic, sociocultural and (socio)linguistic conditions associated with these remnant dialect situations.

Perhaps the most obvious physical trait associated with these remnant situations is geographic remoteness. Geographical factors typically play a significant role in cases of historical isolation, not because of topography per se, but because bodies of water, mountains and other topographical features often serve to foster separation and hence create communication discontinuities.

Although remnant groups are typically characterised by geographical separation from other groups, community members themselves may be concentrated in a particular locale within a more expansive region or dispersed throughout a region. For example, although Ocracoke is an island 14 miles long, the entire residential population lives within a square mile at the southern end of the island. Conversely, in mainland Hyde County, houses are clustered in groups of three to ten homes, with each cluster often separated from others by several miles. Such differential population distributions can foster quite different patterns of intercommunication within different remnant communities. Thus, although we might expect that remnant dialect communities typically will be characterised by higher-density, more multiplex social networks (Milroy 1987) than larger, more metropolitan areas, we cannot simply assume this is true without careful examination of the populations we are investigating. Apparently, the presence

of dense, multiplex networks is not essential to the definition of remnant dialect community.

In each of the communities we consider, geographical factors have played a role in the formation of the remnant dialect situation. However, the factors themselves vary from situation to situation, as does the extent of isolation occasioned by geography. Neither Smith Island nor Ocracoke Island is accessible by road, unlike the mainland areas of Hyde County and Robeson County. However, mainland Hyde County is 85 per cent marshland, and boats were the primary means of travel at earlier stages in the county's history. Similarly, a large area of the region where the Lumbee Native Americans live today was swampland and not convenient for overland travel until substantial portions of the swampland were drained during the last century.

For a community to maintain its remnant status over an extended period of time, it also must have the potential for economic autonomy. In fact, one of the reasons that fishing communities are implicated so often in historically isolated situations is because of the combination of their geographic isolation and their potential for economic self-sufficiency. By the same token, economic conditions also tend to play a prominent role in shifts back and forth from isolated to nonisolated status and in the emergence of a community from insularity. Communities are highly vulnerable to wider influences, and the lack of ability to maintain economic autonomy is often cited as the most essential reason for the endangerment and ultimate death of the language varieties associated with historically isolated groups (Grenoble and Whaley 1998).

One of the critical components of remnant dialect situations is time depth, although the time dimension may be quite relative. There must at least be enough time for the establishment of linguistic separation from mainstream population groups, but the time frame can actually be quite compressed. As we shall see, linguistic change that leads to divergence from surrounding dialects needs only a couple of generations to take effect.

Although it is difficult to determine the precise date of establishment for some of the communities included in this sample, all were established at least by the early 1700s.[1] Subsequent to the original settlement of the areas by English speakers, there have been periods of separation from more widely dispersed and socially dominant populations in the region. Each of the communities considered here has gone through extended periods – in some cases a century or more – in which a substantial number of community members were not in regular contact with outside groups. By the same token, it must be recognised that isolation is a

[1] For more specific details about the early English settlement of the Outer Banks, see Stick (1958); Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1997); and Wolfram, Hazen and Schilling-Estes (1999). For mainland Hyde County, see Selby, Spencer and Swindell (1976); Wolfram, Thomas and Green (2000); and Wolfram and Thomas (2002). For Smith Island, see Dize (1990); Schilling-Estes (1997); and Schilling-Estes and Wolfram (1999). For the Lumbee, see Dial and Eliades (1975); Dial (1993); Schilling-Estes (1998); Wolfram, Dannenberg, Knick and Oxendine (2002); and Maynor (1999).

relative notion and that groups do not necessarily follow a direct path from greater to lesser insularity. Due to various economic and social factors, communities may become more or less isolated through their history. In fact, all of the communities included in this study have gone through periods in which they were less isolated than at other, later times. For example, at one point early in its history, Ocracoke was a bustling port community, since ships were frequently routed through the inlet next to Ocracoke Village for access to the mainland. This inlet later fell out of use, and Ocracoke's insularity increased. Similarly, near the turn of the twentieth century, mainland Hyde County became a major logging area and its population suddenly doubled after centuries of relative stability.

Historical continuity is another characteristic of remnant speech communities. In each of the communities included in this survey, there is a group of residents who can trace their genealogies back to the earliest English-speaking inhabitants.[2] While different historical events may have brought newcomers to each region and there may have been significant out-migration over the years, there are recognised families and other groups who have been an important part of each community for generations. In fact, continuous family residency is often an important dimension of defining community membership, and a number of families in the target communities examined here have kept detailed genealogies tracing their local family lineage. On the island of Ocracoke, the label for an authentic native of the region, *O'cocker* [ók^{h}àkɚ], is reserved exclusively for those whose islander ancestry can be traced back at least several generations (McClive 1995).

The notion of historical continuity has obvious implications for patterns of in- and out-migration. In most instances of historical isolation, there is limited in-migration, though there may be considerable out-migration by residents for various economic and social reasons. Some of the communities examined here have undergone significant out-migration at various periods in their histories while still maintaining their remnant, isolated status. In fact, one of the reasons that a community such as mainland Hyde County still has roughly the same population it had two centuries ago (e.g. the 1790 census totals 4,120 residents while the 2000 census totals 5,826) is because of the continuing flow of some of the residents out of the county. At the same time, insular communities may be characterised by periods of in-migration, as, for example, in the case of Hyde County mentioned above. Sustained in-migration might, of course, eventually end the insular status of the community, but some of the communities considered here have actually endured periodic in-migration as well as out-migration.

While we may point to physical and historical conditions in defining remnant dialect status, isolation from other groups is more than simple physical separation or the lack of regular communicative interaction. In relation to 'mainstream' regional and national groups, remnant dialect communities are typically socially subordinate. Even when such groups have control of local governing institutions

[2] Even the Lumbee Indians in Robeson County can trace their English-speaking roots to at least the early 1700s.

and enjoy some measure of economic prosperity, they may remain vulnerable to more powerful regional, state and national institutions that have ascribed them 'nonmainstream' status.[3] Accordingly, the dialects associated with these communities are typically stigmatised and considered to be inferior to those associated with external groups. This differential status is, of course, consonant with the *principle of linguistic subordination* (Lippi-Green 1997), in which the speech of a socially subordinate group is interpreted as inadequate by comparison with that of socially dominant groups (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1998: 6). The traditional speech of all of the remnant communities in our survey is viewed as 'backward' and unsophisticated by comparison with other varieties, as are the lifestyles of the people in these communities.[4]

At the same time, remnant communities often develop a strong, positive sense of group identity. In most remnant situations there are essential distinctions between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. Thus, we find labels such as *dingbatters* versus *O'cockers* for outsiders versus ancestral islanders in Ocracoke, as well as the term *Lum* in Robeson County, an address term reserved solely for Lumbees. Furthermore, the local importance of 'us' versus 'them' identities may be perpetuated in the post-insular state of the community as well and may help maintain cultural and dialectal distinctions even when the physical barriers promoting isolation are overcome. For example, all of the communities we consider here currently exist in varying stages of post-insularity, yet there is evidence that they are not simply accommodating to the regional varieties with which they now have sustained contact.

It must be kept in mind that increasing contact does not necessarily entail increasing assimilation (whether linguistic or cultural) among groups. Andersen (1988) points out that it is not uncommon for communities that are becoming more open in terms of increasing contacts with the outside world to remain attitudinally (and linguistically) closed; nor is it unusual for relatively closed communities to be attitudinally open, wholeheartedly embracing the cultural and linguistic innovations that happen to come their way. Thus, Andersen maintains that a distinction be drawn between *open* versus *closed* communities and *endocentric* versus *exocentric* ones (1988: 74f.), with the former distinction referring to levels of contact with the outside world and the latter to the degree to which

[3] For example, although Lumbee Indians in Robeson County, North Carolina, hold major local political offices (e.g. Mayor of the city of Pembroke, Sheriff of Robeson County) and constitute the majority population in relation to Anglo-Americans and African Americans within the county, they are still viewed as socially subordinate to Anglo-Americans in Robeson County and throughout North Carolina. Furthermore, the federal government has denied their repeated requests for recognition and entitlements as an Indian tribe for over a century now.

[4] Of course, the retention of historical ways of life and speech also carries positive connotations. For example, the communities in our study are often romantically viewed as preserving a 'purer' form of English such as 'Shakespearean' or 'Elizabethan' English (cf. Montgomery 1998), as well as preserving a 'purer', more 'wholesome' way of life. Ultimately, though, such linguistic and cultural conservatism is attributed to the community's backward and nonprogressive ways. In addition, nonstandard dialects in American society are always scorned in educational and official contexts, no matter how 'pure' or 'quaint' they are considered to be.

the community is focused on its own internal norms versus outside norms. In addition, increasing levels of contact may actually serve to sharpen dividing lines among groups, as residents of formerly closed communities set up psychological (and, often, linguistic) barriers against the encroachment of the outside world. As we shall see, this seems to be the case in Smith Island, where dialect intensification is taking place even under conditions of increased contact with outsiders. Community attitudes, in the final analysis, may play a far greater role in guiding the directionality of change in interdialect contact than levels of contact. In fact, Andersen states (1988: 74f.), 'It may be primarily an attitudinal shift from endocentric to exocentric which changes the course of development of a local dialect when it becomes part of a wider socio-spatial grouping [i.e. when it becomes more open] and not just the opening up of new avenues of interdialectal communication' (75). Thus, changes in the use of dialect variants over time and across different remnant communities have to do not only with interactional considerations but with identificational factors as well.

Although settlement history and demographic, geographic, economic, sociocultural and sociopolitical factors may all be part of the mix, we would argue that remnant or insular status is also a socially constructed notion, shared both by the members of the community and by those outside the community. Furthermore, locally constructed identity appears to play an important role in the development and maintenance of remnant dialects, as witnessed by the fact these communities may reshape and perpetuate dialect distinctiveness during less insular periods just as they maintain dialect distinctiveness during periods of greater isolation.

3 Some selective dialect traits: a comparative overview

As a basis for examining the dynamics of change and maintenance in remnant varieties, we set forth a selective set of phonological and grammatical structures that have figured prominently in current studies of remnant speech communities on the southern and mid-Atlantic coasts of the United States. A restricted, qualitative comparison of grammatical structures is given in table 6.1 and a set of phonological structures is given in table 6.2. For the island communities of the Outer Banks and Smith Island, which are relatively mono-ethnic, we include Anglo-Americans only, but for mainland Hyde County, which has had a significant African-American population for a couple of centuries, we include profiles for both the African-American and Anglo-American communities. For Robeson County, we include the Lumbee, Anglo-American, and African-American communities since the county has been a tri-ethnic region for a couple of centuries now.

The profiles are based, for the most part, on our samples of elderly speakers in each of the communities as found in Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1995, 1997) and Wolfram, Hazen and Schilling-Estes (1999) for Ocracoke; Schilling-Estes

Table 6.1. *Comparative dialect profile of selective grammatical variables*

Grammatical structure	Outer Banks	Smith Island	Hyde Co. Anglo-Am.	Hyde Co. Afric. Am.	Lumbee	Robeson Co. Anglo-Am.	Robeson Co. Afric. Am.
finites *be(s)* e.g. *She bes there*					✓	(✓)	
perfective *be* e.g. *I'm been there*, *I might be done it*			(✓)	✓	✓		
weren't regularisation e.g. *She weren't here*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
was/is regularisation e.g. *We was there*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
a-prefixing e.g. *He was a-fishin'*	(✓)	✓	(✓)	(✓)	✓	(✓)	
copula absence e.g. *They nice*, *She nice*				✓	(✓)	(✓)	✓
3rd sg. absence e.g. *She like_cats*				✓			✓
3rd pl. -*s* agreement e.g. *The dogs gets upset*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	(✓)	
measurement noun -*s* abs. e.g. *twenty mile_*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
negative concord e.g. *We didn't like nothing*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
double modals e.g. *He might could come*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
for to complement e.g. *I want for to get it*	(✓)	(✓)	✓		✓		

Table 6.2. *Comparative profile of selective phonological variables*

Phonological structure	Outer Banks	Smith Island	Hyde Co. Anglo-Am.	Hyde Co. Afric. Am.	Lumbee	Robeson Co. Anglo-Am.	Robeson Co. Afric. Am.
dental fricative stopping e.g. [dɪs] ‘this’	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
[aɪ] raising, backing e.g. [tʌ˃ɪd] ‘tide’	✓	✓	✓	✓	(✓)		
final θ labialisation e.g. [bof] ‘both’	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
[h] retention in ‘it’, ain’t’ e.g. [hɪt] ‘it’	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
[æ] lowering prec. *r* e.g. [ðar] ‘there’	✓	✓	✓		✓		
intrusive [t] e.g. [wʌnst] ‘oncet’	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
[Iz] following *s*+stop e.g. [postIz] ‘posts’	✓		✓		✓		✓
[ayr]/[awr] reduction e.g. [tar] ‘tire’	✓	✓	✓		✓		
instrusive *r*, unstr. final [o] e.g. [fɛlɚ] ‘feller’	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
postvocalic *r* loss e.g. [ka] ‘car’					✓		✓
unstressed initial [w] del e.g. [yʌŋ#ənz] ‘young uns’	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
prevocalic cluster red. e.g. [wɛs##ɛn] ‘west end’					✓		✓

(1997) and Schilling-Estes and Wolfram (1999) for Smith Island; Green (1998), Wolfram, Thomas and Green (2000) and Wolfram and Thomas (2002) for mainland Hyde County; and Wolfram (1996), Dannenberg and Wolfram (1998), Dannenberg (1999, 2002), Wolfram and Dannenberg (1999), Schilling-Estes (1999, 2000a) and Wolfram, Dannenberg, Knick and Oxendine (2002) for Robeson County. Based on the apparent time assumption (Bailey, Wikle, Tillery and Sand 1991), these samples, most of which were collected in the mid and late 1990s, would reflect speech learned in the early twentieth century. In addition, in the case of the Lumbees, a set of recordings conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s with elderly Lumbee speakers enables us to examine the speech of people who learned their language as early as the 1870s.

The grammatical profile indicates a number of similarities as well as some differences. For example, all of the communities under review are characterised by third-person-plural *-s* attachment (e.g. *The dogs barks*), *-s* absence on quantified measure nouns (e.g. *five mile*), *a*-prefixing (e.g. *The dog is a-barkin'*) and regularisation of past *be* to *weren't* (e.g. *I weren't there*), although not all ethnic groups in each community have all of the features. Other structures are more selectively represented, so that copula absence (e.g. *She nice*) is represented only in the African-American communities and finite *be(s)* (e.g. *That's how it bes*) is found only among the Lumbees and, to a much more limited extent, as a vestigial trait in the cohort Anglo-American community. The similarities and differences among the communities naturally raise important questions about the earlier status of the dialects in relation to one another as well as in relation to other dialects represented in colonial America. For example, regularisation to *weren't* is relatively rare among American dialects – in fact, it has only been documented in a few eastern seaboard varieties – yet it is a common trait in the varied remnant dialects under review here. What might account for this affinity in dispersed island dialects and in the inland language variety of the Lumbees located almost a hundred miles from the coast? Why would the Lumbees use structures such as finite *be(s)* and perfective *be* while the other groups do not? And why would only the African-American groups in this comparison have copula absence and third-person-singular *-s* absence?

A similar situation is found with respect to the selective comparison of phonological structures. Thus, the retention of *h* in *(h)it* and *(h)ain't* and the deletion of unstressed, syllable-onset [w] (e.g. *young 'uns*, *second 'un*) are distributed among all of the remnant varieties considered here, whereas features such as the reduction of prevocalic consonant clusters in syllable coda position (e.g. w*es' en'*, *col' air*) and postvocalic *r*-lessness are much more selectively distributed. Again, we are faced with explaining patterns of similarity and difference. Why might all of these groups have syllable-onset interdental fricative stopping whereas only the African Americans have extensive prevocalic consonant cluster reduction? We hope to address the basis for these similarities and dissimilarities in the subsequent sections.

4 On the dialect status of remnant communities

Determining patterns of dialect change and maintenance in longstanding, historically isolated dialect communities poses a number of methodological, descriptive and explanatory challenges. Ideally, we would like to know in precise detail the distinctive language and dialect traits brought to each region by the original inhabitants, the particular kinds of language contact that took place at the time of the original settlement and in subsequent periods, and the progression of internally motivated independent language changes that have taken place over time. Rarely, if ever, is such an ideal database found in the examination of remnant dialect communities. Instead, most studies are characterised by the absence of essential pieces of the linguistic, sociolinguistic and sociohistorical puzzle. Therefore, researchers are left with a set of assumptions and inferences about former linguistic and historical conditions. In the following discussion, we focus on three primary issues in sorting out the development of remnant communities – the donor issue, the internal development issue and the contact issue.

5 The donor issue

Where do remnant dialects such as those along the southern and mid-Atlantic coasts of the United States acquire the structural features that set them apart from as well as unite them with other varieties of American English? Most researchers of remnant dialect situations explicitly or tacitly rely on a version of the so-called *founder principle* (Mufwene 1996, 1999, 2001) as a starting point. This principle maintains that the structural peculiarities of a given dialect have their roots in the varieties spoken by the population(s) that originally introduced the language to the region.

To begin with, the application of the founder principle assumes that we know the structural traits of the original donor varieties and that these may be distinguished from features that derive from other sources, including parallel, independent development and diffusion from neighbouring communities. It assumes further that we have a clear understanding of dialect lineage over an earlier period of time, including the dialect traits of the original transplanted dialects from the British Isles as well as those that developed within colonial America and subsequently were brought to the regions under consideration here. For remnant dialect communities whose dialect histories go back almost three centuries, pinpointing genuine founder effects can be elusive indeed. Nonetheless, we can recognise several apparent patterns of donorship as we consider the types of dialect traits indicated in tables 6.1 and 6.2.

First, there is a set of structures that unite these remnant dialect communities not only with each other but with a relatively wide range of rural dialects. Given the distribution of these forms in diverse, rural areas throughout the United States, and their attestation in earlier varieties of English that include those brought to colonial America, we would assume that communities manifesting

these structural traits have simply resisted changes that apparently eradicated these structures from larger metropolitan areas and their surrounding environs. For this reason, such forms are often labelled as 'relic'.[5] For example, the use of *a*-prefixing has been documented not only in the communities currently under consideration but also in rural contexts in New England (Kurath 1939–43), in the midwestern US (Allen 1973–6) and in the American South (Pederson et al. 1986–92). Further, it was widely distributed in the earlier English of the British Isles (Trudgill 1990: 80), including earlier Irish English. Similarly, the use of initial *h* in *hain't* for *ain't* and *hit* for *it* has been found not only across the communities we are focusing on but also in a wide range of other rural varieties. In addition, it is well documented in earlier varieties in the British Isles. Linguistically, it also represents a feature that would be highly unlikely to emerge through independent, parallel development. Thus, cases such as *a*-prefixing and initial *h* in *(h)it* and *(h)ain't* appear to qualify as genuine instances of the retention of earlier, widespread features of colonial American English. In these cases, it seems obvious that we are describing general traits transplanted from the British Isles, retained in insular communities across the US that have resisted some of the subsequent developments of less insular varieties of American and British English.

A second type of pattern in remnant dialects involves traits that can be traced to regional patterns of distribution in the dialects of England. In the earliest American English, these patterns might have shown regional distribution as well, as groups from particular regions of the British Isles tended to settle in particular locales within America. For example, the concord pattern attaching *-s* to verbs occurring with plural noun phrase subjects (e.g. *The dogs barks*) has been attributed to varieties in northern England and to the dialect of the Ulster Scots-Irish immigrants who were a dominant population in the Highland areas of Appalachia (Fischer 1988; Montgomery 1989). In fact, the marking of *-s* on verbs with third plural subjects has now become known as the 'Northern Concord Rule', in recognition of its historical regionalisation in England (Montgomery 1999).

The assumed regional origin of such features in the British Isles raises important questions about the occurrence of such features in the remnant southern and mid-Atlantic coastal dialects, where Ulster Scots immigrants and speakers from northern England, though certainly part of the overall mix, were not nearly as concentrated in the historical population as they were in other areas such as the Highland South. One possibility is that some of the earlier varieties of English in colonial America diffused well beyond the areas of their original concentration. But it is also possible that some of these regional features of Great Britain may have become part of an early American English koiné that subsequently

[5] For the time being, we will accept the label 'relic' as it has traditionally been applied in dialectology. However, as we scrutinise this notion more closely in the next section, we will suggest important qualifications that need to be considered with respect to the application of this term to the kinds of situations examined here.

retracted into regional varieties within North America. If this was the case, the dialect features might have persisted in varieties that have had no significant contact with each other for a couple of centuries, such as the Highland South and the mid-Atlantic coast. The question of donorship, then, involves not only the identification of dialect traits brought originally from particular regions of the British Isles, but also the subsequent development of general American English and its formative regional varieties. The dialect traits of various settlement groups from the British Isles, the general development of an earlier general American English variety, and the subsequent regional development of American English must all be kept in mind in sorting out questions of donorship in remnant dialect communities in North America.

Issues of migration and the formation of earlier regional varieties become more apparent in yet another type of dialect feature that emerges from our comparison – structures that are common to our set of remnant dialects but documented in few other varieties of American English. The most prominent example of this type is the case of the regularisation of past *be* to *weren't* (e.g. *It weren't me*; *she weren't there*) as discussed in Schilling-Estes and Wolfram (1994) and Wolfram and Sellers (1999). In most US varieties, past *be* is usually regularised to *was*, as in *We was home* or *You wasn't there* (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1998). However, in the remnant communities considered here, we find an alternate pattern in which past *be* is levelled to *was* in positive contexts (e.g. *We was there*) but to *weren't* in negative (e.g. *I weren't home*). This pattern represents a remorphologisation of the two past *be* stems, such that *was* is now used as a marker of affirmative rather than singular meaning, and the *were-* stem is now used as a marker of negativity rather than plurality. Within our sample, the *was/weren't* pattern is robust among groups as geographically and culturally disparate as the Anglo-Americans of Smith Island in the Chesapeake Bay (Schilling-Estes 1997, 2000b) and the Lumbee Indians of the Coastal Plains of North Carolina (Wolfram and Sellers 1999). At the same time, there is little indication that it is found to any extent among cohort rural communities in neighbouring Coastal Plains regions or in the Highland South.[6] Where might this form have come from, and why is it so robust in the remnant communities considered here? Perhaps even more striking is the fact that it is not generally found elsewhere in transported dialects of English around the world (Cheshire 1991), although levelling to *were(n't)* has been amply documented in current and past vernacular varieties of English spoken in the British Isles (Cheshire 1982; Trudgill 1990).

Although we can only speculate, it does not seem likely that regularisation to *weren't* in isolated mid-Atlantic coastal regions is due to a simple, direct founder effect from the British Isles. The feature was present in some of the varieties brought to regions of the eastern seaboard of America, including those varieties that originally came from south-west England (Orton et al. 1962–71). From

[6] While regularisation to *were(n't)* has been noted by Montgomery (personal communication) in the Smoky Mountains, it seems to have been a relatively rare dialect feature.

that point, it probably developed into a regional feature of the coastal Delmarva dialect region (Shores 2000). As people from the Delmarva region moved to various coastal sites, including islands in the Chesapeake and Outer Banks, the *was/weren't* pattern was perhaps diffused along the mid-Atlantic and southern coasts. Thus, an important aspect of regularisation to *weren't* is its apparent development in an earlier regional variety of American English and its subsequent diffusion to other areas through migration by speakers who subsequently became isolated.[7]

When might a Delmarva dialect area have developed? One possibility is that the formative period was during the first half of the 1700s and that settlers who migrated south along the coast from Tidewater Virginia and coastal Maryland brought this feature with them. Shores (2000: 305), however, takes the position that 'the formative stages of these dialects [i.e. island communities in the Chesapeake and Outer Banks], that is, the period at which they took on the characteristics that they have today, would have been between 1800 and 1850, give or take a decade or two'. If this was the case, then the search for direct dialect descendents involves sorting through several levels of dialect development and diffusion.

Finally, we need to contend with donorship issues for dialect structures unique to particular remnant communities. For example, in table 6.1, we noted that finite *be(s)* is robust only among the Lumbee in Robeson County, though it is found to a limited extent as a vestigial feature among elderly Anglo-American cohorts in the county.[8] At the same time, however, Montgomery and Mishoe (1999) note that finite *be(s)* is quite robust among Anglo-Americans in neighbouring Horry County, South Carolina, and observe that this is one of the few regions in the United States where finite *be(s)* characterises the Anglo-American dialect. This region saw a concentrated influx of Scots English and Gaelic speakers during its formative European settlement period in the mid 1700s, as well as some Scots-Irish, and it may well be that a founder effect from this input dialect heritage is responsible for this distinctive dialect structure.[9]

At the same time, it must be recognised that unique donor sources are not, however, the only way that forms can come to be exclusive within a remnant

[7] In addition, there has long been frequent contact among watermen from different communities along the mid-Atlantic and southern coasts, including contact between Chesapeake Bay and Outer Banks watermen. Also, early settlement of coastal areas of mainland Hyde County from coastal Virginia was largely by boat since overland travel to these areas was virtually impossible.

[8] The use of finite *be(s)* here is distinguished from its 'habitual' use in African American Vernacular English, in which finite *be* was apparently grammaticalised as a habitual in *be* + verb-*ing* constructions during the past century (Bailey and Maynor 1986).

[9] Montgomery and Mishoe (1999), after reviewing the possible sources for this form, note that there are a number of qualifications that need to be placed on such a hypothesis, and that there is no unequivocal donor variety to account for the localisation of finite *be(s)* in this region. Their review also points out the need for reconstructing the earlier state of both source and recipient dialects. For example, they note that finite *be*, which has become relatively common in Ulster English, was unattested in this variety before the mid nineteenth century and thus is unlikely to have entered Robeson County from this source, since the heaviest influxes of Scots-Irish into the Robeson County area occurred long before this time.

dialect. We would, in fact, suggest a different route for another limited feature in our sample of remnant dialects, the use of perfective *be*. Significant occurrence of perfective *be* in structures such as *I'm been there* or *They must be taken the food* is currently represented only in Lumbee English (Wolfram 1996; Dannenberg 1999) among the varieties we have examined. In the other remnant communities in this study, it is nonexistent or vestigial, found only sporadically among elderly speakers as an apparent moribund form. The history of English indicates that the semantic territory for *be* once overlapped with that now covered by perfect forms, and that into the seventeenth century there was widespread use of both auxiliary *have* and auxiliary *be* for intransitive forms and motion verbs (Rydén and Brorström 1987). At the same time, there is ample documentation of perfective *be* in present-day dialects that include both remnant varieties of English elsewhere (Sabban 1984; Tagliamonte 1997), as well as some nonremnant varieties of English (Kallen 1989). With respect to the dialects under consideration here, we note that perfective *be* forms were apparently fairly extensive in some earlier versions of these varieties, such as those in the Chesapeake Bay area (Atwood 1953: 26–7). This distribution contrasts with the case of finite *be* discussed above, which has shown a quite localised history in American English. We would therefore suggest that the robustness of perfective *be* in a remnant community such as Lumbee English vis-à-vis the other remnant communities examined is not a function of a differential founder effect. Instead, it seems to be a function of language change differences, selective dialect retention, and independent dialect reconfiguration as discussed in the next section.

6 Independent language change

Like other varieties, the language varieties of remnant communities change from within. While dialectologists and historical linguists certainly would acknowledge the potential for internal linguistic change in peripheral dialect areas, the role of innovation tends to be overlooked in most descriptions. Instead, there seems to be an assumption that dialect forms in historically isolated varieties will be quite conservative with respect to innovation and that relic forms will remain relatively intact in their linguistic composition. Andersen (1988), however, argues that what we conveniently refer to here as *the relic assumption* has led researchers to slight system-internal innovations in favour of hypothetical contact situations that lead to diffusion-based explanations. Andersen notes:

> there are internally motivated innovations which arise independently of any external stimulus. These too have an areal dimension and may appear to spread merely because they arise in different places at different times. (Andersen 1988: 54)

Andersen not only admits the vitality of internally motivated change in peripheral dialect areas; based on the empirical examination of a number of different

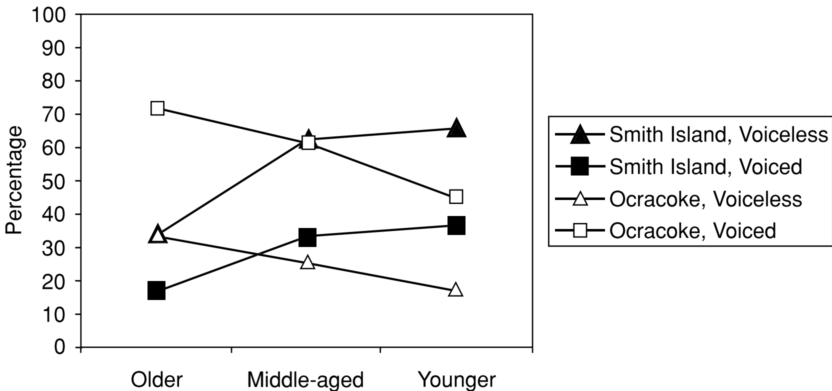


Figure 6.1 Cross-generational comparison of /ai/ raising in Ocracoke and Smith Island

European dialect situations, he asserts that peripheral varieties existing in closed, concentrated communities may show the 'ability to sustain exorbitant phonetic developments' (1988:70). Such a claim certainly counters the relic assumption that remnant dialect communities will necessarily be conservative in their patterns of change and rarely favour innovation.

Our investigation of remnant dialect communities in the coastal United States supports the contention that language change can indeed take place fairly rapidly in peripheral dialect areas and that dialect intensification – that is, the concentrated development of dialect distinctiveness – can take place through internally based language changes, even when a variety is in a moribund state. Consider, for example, the case of the /ai/ and /au/ diphthongs in Ocracoke and Smith Island. Both these varieties are characterised by the raising and/or backing and raising of the nucleus of /ai/, as in something like [təɪm] or [tʌɪm] for 'time', and the fronting of the glide (and possibly also the nucleus) of /au/, as in something like [sæɪnd] for 'sound'. (Hereafter, we will refer to the distinctive /ai/ pronunciation simply as 'raising' and the distinctive /au/ production as 'glide fronting'.) However, the processes appear to be moving in quite different directions in the two communities. When we compare the direction and rate of change for different age groups from these two island communities, we find the patterns displayed in figures 6.1 and 6.2 (from Schilling-Estes and Wolfram 1999: 494, 506). For /ai/ nucleus raising in figure 6.1, percentages are given for prevoiced (e.g. *tide*, *time*) and prevoiceless (e.g. *light*, *nice*) environments, since the voicing or voicelessness of a following obstruent is an important constraint on /ai/ raising in a number of varieties, including the two we are focusing on here.[10]

[10] Although following environment is relevant for both the raising of /ai/ to [əɪ] and backing to [ʌɪ], the effect is quite different. Following voiceless obstruents favour raising while following voiced obstruents favour backing. For a possible explanation in terms of vowel peripherality see Labov (1994), Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1995), and Schilling-Estes and Wolfram (1999).

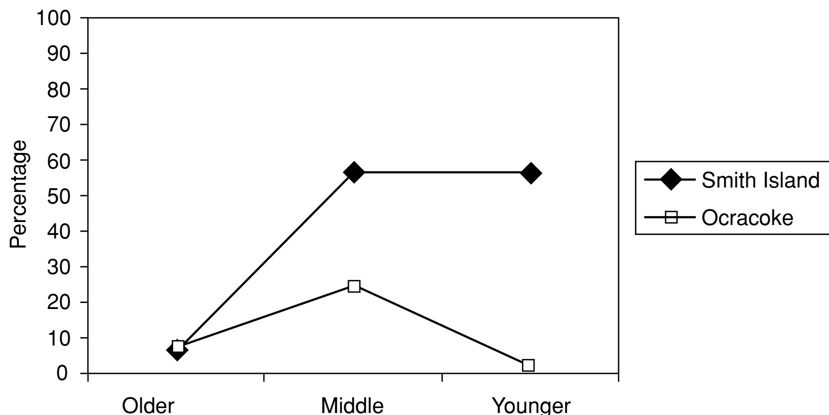


Figure 6.2 Cross-generational comparison of /au/ glide fronting in Ocracoke and Smith Island

We see in figure 6.1 that the incidence of nucleus raising is changing in opposite directions in the two communities, so that /ai/ raising is receding in Ocracoke and accelerating in Smith Island. We also see quite different patterns of change over three generations in the fronting of the glide of /au/ in figure 6.2. For example, we see that glide fronting is relatively limited among older speakers in both communities. Middle-aged speakers in Ocracoke show an increase in glide fronting; however, younger speakers have moved away completely from this change. On the other hand, Smith Island speakers show an abrupt increase in the use of glide fronting for /au/ within a single generation, as the middle-aged group shows approximately five times as much use of the fronted glide as the preceding generation of speakers. Most dialectologists would probably assume that raised /ai/ and glide-fronted /au/ represent retentions of older vowel productions that have resisted change. However, given the low levels of usage of glide-fronted /au/ by older speakers in both communities and the extensive use of this variant by middle-aged and younger Smith Islanders, glide-fronted /au/ actually appears to be an innovation on Smith Island (and a fairly recent one at that), rather than a relic form. Most likely, the change to glide-fronted /au/ was an internal change in the island community, since there are few external dialects from which the feature could have been adopted.[11] This does not mean,

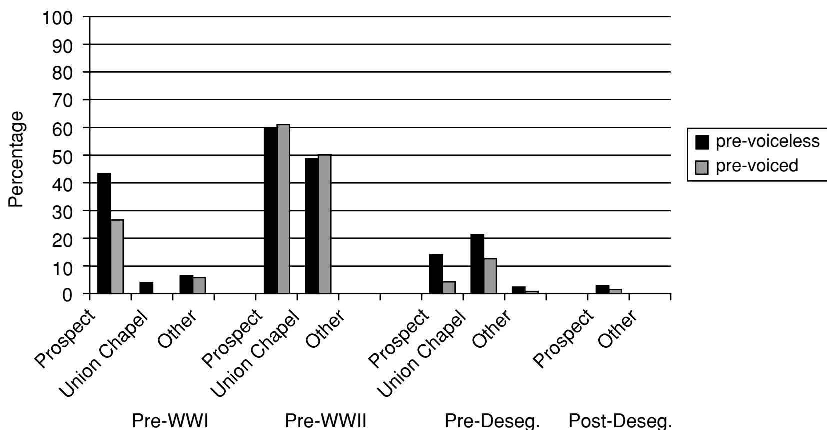
[11] Note, though, that middle-aged Ocracoke speakers also have this feature, though to a much more limited extent. Hence, it is possible that glide-fronted /au/ represents a regional innovation rather than one confined solely to the Smith Island community. Of course, it is also possible that the feature was innovated in another coastal community such as Ocracoke and that Smith Islanders adopted it through their contact with this community. However, given the fact that the usage levels for glide-fronted /au/ in Ocracoke were never very high, and that the change began its spread in each community during the same time period (rather than with a lag between communities), it is not likely that glide fronting began in Ocracoke and then spread to Smith Island. More evidence of the current and historical patterning of glide-fronted /au/ along the southern and mid-Atlantic coasts is certainly needed to resolve this issue.

however, that this form was not present at all among older speakers. It certainly could have been present as an embryonic variant that was simply developed into a full-fledged systemic form at a later point (Trudgill 1999).

At the same time that the Ocracoke variety is losing distinguishing dialect features like raised /ai/ and glide-fronted /au/, due largely to the influx of tourists and new residents in recent decades, the Smith Island dialect is showing a general intensification of dialectal distinctiveness. Interestingly, this increasing distinctiveness is accompanied by increasing rather than decreasing levels of contact with the outside world. This increasing openness, however, is not accompanied by increasing exocentrism, as in Ocracoke. Instead, Smith Islanders in general have retained the inward focus, or endocentrism, that has characterised the community for centuries. In fact, islanders seem to have become more focused than ever on their cultural distinctiveness, including their linguistic distinctiveness, in the face of increasing encroachment by outsiders. Hence, usage levels for distinguishing dialect features are actually increasing rather than receding or remaining steady in the face of competition from more mainstream variants. This acceleration is especially apparent with features that serve as overt markers of in-group identity, particularly the one feature that islanders and outsiders comment on most frequently, glide-fronted /au/.

The rapid rate of change within a relatively compressed time period (less than a half century) that characterises the Smith Island variety suggests that we cannot simply assume that dialect innovation is necessarily slow or that it takes a unilateral course. Rather, there may be periods of rapidity of change (as in figures 6.1 and 6.2) as well as conservatism over the course of three centuries of isolation. In addition, communities may well undergo periods of both recession and acceleration with respect to particular changes, especially with respect to vowel shifts but also with regard to other structures as well.

It appears that Lumbee English has also undergone different types of change with respect to the nucleus of the /ai/ vowel. In the general region where the Lumbee live, the backed/raised variant is popularly considered to be a relic feature, retained for centuries among the most insular Lumbees, as exemplified by those in the Prospect community, which is almost exclusively Lumbee and considered to be their historic cultural centre. Figure 6.3 shows the incidence of the backed/raised variant in Prospect, in Union Chapel, another fairly insular community, and in other Lumbee communities. The figures are divided into age groups representing four generations of speakers: (1) those born before World War I; (2) those who grew up between World Wars I and II; (3) those who grew up during or after World War II but before the integration of public schools in Robeson County in the early 1970s; and (4) those who were born late enough to have attended integrated schools for most or all of their school years. These generational groups follow a classification scheme (Schilling-Estes 2000a) based on significant historical events that have affected the status of the Lumbee community – particularly the degree of isolation from or contact with outside groups. A trinomial VARBRUL analysis (Guy 1993; Young and Bailey 1996)



VARBRUL: /ay/ backing/raising and ungliding in Lumbee English

	[ʌ>ɪ]	[a:]	[aɪ]
Generation			
Pre-WWI	.527	.151	.322
Post-WWI, Pre-WWII	.778	.067	.155
Pre-Deseg.	.215	.507	.278
Post-Deseg.	.041	.699	.260
Community			
Prospect	.643	.113	.244
Union Chapel	.419	.375	.206
Other	.079	.500	.422
Environment			
Pre-vl.	.428	.332	.240
Pre-vd.	.354	.289	.357
Pre-nas.	.249	.492	.260
Pre-#	.286	.228	.485
Input	.047	.553	.400

Figure 6.3 The incidence of backed/raised /ai/ across generations and Lumbee communities

given in figure 6.3 includes three variants: (1) the backed/raised variant as in [sʌɪd] for *side*; (2) the typical southern unglided variant, as in [saːd] for *side*; and (3) the more widespread American English variant, as in [saɪd] for *side*. Different phonetic environments are also given in the analysis since the /ai/ diphthong is quite sensitive to the following environment. Noteworthy aspects of the patterning of [ʌɪ] and [aː] as revealed in the VARBRUL analysis are shaded.

The pattern in figure 6.3 suggests that the backed/raised variant was actually innovated in the late 1800s and early 1900s in particular communities of Lumbees, reaching its highest usage levels in the years between World Wars I and II. This was a particularly isolated period for the Lumbee – much more so than the pre-World War I period, when many Lumbee travelled and even lived outside the community for extended stretches, chiefly for employment reasons. Thus, the Lumbee situation may provide yet another case of innovativeness in insularity. Following the interwar period, the spread of backed/raised /ai/ was reversed, and the once innovative variant quickly receded in the face of competition from the widespread Southern monophthongal variant, [aː].

Even when remnant dialects share a common core of structures, particular communities may indicate both differential rates of change as well as differing patterns of selectivity in their maintenance and development. As noted earlier, it is quite possible that perfective *be* was once a fairly common dialect trait across a broad range of earlier dialects of English, including most of the communities considered here. We know that perfective *have* was a later development in the English language in general, and that there was widespread fluctuation with perfective *be* well into the seventeenth century. But in Lumbee English, unlike the other dialect communities studied here, the use of perfective *be* is still a robust, productive form, even among younger Lumbee speakers. At the same time, the structure has undergone some independent development that now distinguishes its use in Lumbee English from other varieties where it is still productive (Sabban 1984; Kallen 1989; Tagliamonte 1997). For one, there is an important constraint related to the form of the co-occurring subject, so that perfective *be* is now strongly favoured with first-person-singular forms. Thus, a construction such as *I'm been there* is much more likely to occur than *You're been there* (Dannenberg 1999, 2002), even though both may occur. It has also become more structurally restricted in Lumbee English, so that it is now largely limited to contracted finite forms such as *I'm been here* versus *I am been here*. Meanwhile, it has expanded with respect to tense and aspect so that it now applies to some simple past constructions (e.g. *I'm forgot the food yesterday*) as well as perfects. Thus, there are changes in the structural and functional parameters of the form that distinguish its use in Lumbee English, not only from dialects where its use has receded, but also from other varieties where it is still in use.

Though the perfective use of *be* might qualify as a 'relic' form given the traditional definition of such items, it must be understood that such items are hardly static structurally or functionally. Indeed, these forms may undergo independent developments within a particular community that sets the community dialect apart from other remnant dialects in subtle but important ways. In fact, our analysis forces us to question whether the term *relic* is even a useful designation. If we assume that the label 'relic' refers to earlier forms selectively preserved intact, then there would be few forms that qualify. If, on the other hand, we admit that these forms are subject to change just like nonrelic features, then we are hard put to show how change in relic forms differs from other types of language change,

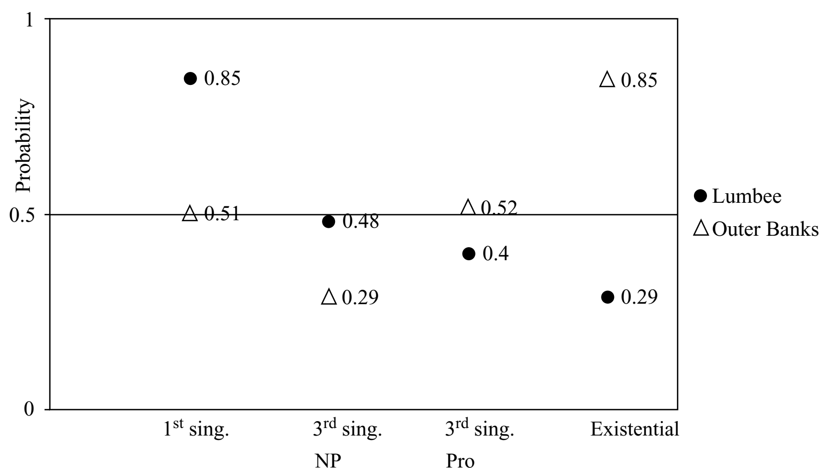


Figure 6.4 Comparison of subject type constraints on regularisation to *weren't* for Lumbee English and Outer Banks English

apart from the fact that relic forms involve changes in forms that have receded in mainstream varieties of the language.

One of the more subtle ways in which the distinctive traits of related remnant dialect communities may differ involves their systematic variation. As variation studies over the past three decades have demonstrated, fluctuation between forms is not random but is highly structured, and linguistic and extralinguistic constraints on variability can be hierarchically ordered in terms of the degree to which they affect the fluctuation of variants (Labov 1969; Cedergren and Sankoff 1974; Guy 1993). Although some recent studies of dialect connections in transported dialects of English (Tagliamonte 1999) have argued that parallelism in the hierarchy of the various constraint effects might offer important clues for determining the historical affinity between a source and a transported variety of English, there are important qualifications that need to be made about such a connection. Variable constraints, like other dimensions of structural development, may show independent development over time. Thus, remnant varieties that stem from a common source may end up with different hierarchies of constraint effects.[12]

We noted earlier that the set of remnant varieties considered here shares levelling to *weren't*. At the same time, the systematic constraints on the variability of this feature show important differences in Lumbee English versus Ocracoke English. One of the important constraint effects on regularisation to *weren't* is subject type. Figure 6.4 shows the results of a VARBRUL analysis comparing

[12] Another reason one must be careful about conclusions of common lineage based on parallel constraint effects is that, while some constraint effects on variability are language-specific, many others are universal, derived from principles of structural and functional naturalness. Thus, it is quite possible for variants from quite different sources to end up with similar constraint hierarchies due to the application of universal structural and functional constraints.

the effects of different subject types on levelling to *weren't* in the two communities. The types of subjects relevant in this comparison are first person singular (e.g. *I weren't there*), third-singular noun phrase (e.g. *The dog weren't there*), third-singular pronoun (e.g. *She weren't there*) and existential *there/it/they* (e.g. *There/it/they weren't a garden left after the flood*).

Figure 6.4 shows a significant contrast in the subject type constraint for the two dialect communities. For Lumbee English, levelling to *weren't* is clearly favoured for first-singular subjects and disfavoured with existentials, whereas in Outer Banks English, levelling to *weren't* is favoured with existentials but disfavoured with third-singular NPs. We see, then, that the constraint effects apparently have developed in quite different ways in these varieties, even though they are among the small number of American English varieties that share this dialect trait.

Finally, we should note that change may also involve parallel independent development, or 'drift' among remnant dialect communities due to the operation of the general processes of analogy and universal tendencies to move toward unmarked forms. For example, all of the varieties examined here show various tendencies towards regularisation of irregular plurals (e.g. *two sheeps*), the regularisation of past-tense forms (e.g. *They growed up)*, negative concord (e.g. *They didn't do nothing*) and the stopping of syllable-onset, interdental fricatives (e.g. [dɪs] 'this'). These general traits are shared not only by these remnant communities but by a host of other vernacular communities of English that include but are not restricted to American English. As Chambers (1995: 242) points out, '[C]ertain variables appear to be primitives of vernacular dialects in that they recur ubiquitously all over the world.' These developments are simply part of the natural processes that guide changes quite independently of diffusion or language contact. More than anything, analogical pressures to regularise and generalise linguistic rules distinguish socially subordinate remnant communities from the prescribed standard English norm which is, according to Chambers (1995: 246), 'more strictly tightly constrained in its grammar and phonology' due to the social pressures to resist some natural changes. Certainly these system-internal processes must be factored into the description and explanation of these varieties as they configure and reconfigure themselves over time in ways that are both uniform and diverse.

7 Language contact

No remnant community of English is a linguistic island, standing continually apart from all contact with outside dialect communities. Regardless of the situation, there is some inevitable interaction and communication with other groups. The remnant communities considered here are no different in this regard, and each of them has had contact with other groups in their past, as well as varying types of contact more recently (Schilling-Estes 2000a, 2002). For example, in Robeson County, North Carolina, where a longstanding tri-ethnic situation

has existed, it is evident that the contact situation with Anglo-Americans and African Americans has played a role in the configuration and reconfiguration of the dialect over time as the Lumbees have experienced shifting levels of contact with outside groups.

As noted earlier, the backed/raised variant of /ai/ among the Lumbee apparently arose during a period of relative isolation, but it has receded with the declining isolation of the Lumbee in the post-World War II years. Not only did the Lumbee regain contact with the wider world in the latter half of the twentieth century, but they also were brought into more contact than ever before with neighbouring ethnic groups through the desegregation of county schools in the early 1970s. Thus, it is not hard to imagine that the distinctive backed/raised /ai/ variant would recede in the face of contact with more widespread variants, especially the variant that is most prevalent throughout the entire South, [aː]. By the same token, on the island of Ocracoke, the backed/raised variant is being supplanted not by southern [aː] as found in the adjacent mainland, but by a non-southern variant [aɪ]. This coincides with the inundation of the area by tourists and new residents predominantly from northern regions.

One of the more noteworthy kinds of restructuring in Lumbee English is taking place for finite *be* in the current generation, as patterns of contact shift once again. This development coincides to some extent with the integration of public schools in the early 1970s. This event brought Lumbees into increasing contact with African Americans even as the Lumbees continued to maintain a strong sense of separate cultural identity. As noted earlier, the use of finite *be(s)* in constructions such as *That's how it bes* is one of the traits that has come to characterise the Lumbee (Dannenberg and Wolfram 1998). By the same token, habitual *be* in constructions such as *Sometimes they be acting nice* is a well-known feature of twentieth-century African American Vernacular English (AAVE) (Bailey and Maynor 1987). Among older Lumbee speakers, *be(s)* may be used in habitual contexts, but it is not restricted to this use. Younger Lumbee speakers show the increased use of *be* in verb + *-ing* constructions with a habitual reading, the contemporary form of grammaticalised *be* in AAVE. At the same time, however, the form may attach verbal *-s* when occurring with third-singular subjects (e.g. *The train bes coming every day at noon*) and, to a lesser extent, third-plural subjects (e.g. *The trains bes coming*). This pattern is unlike its contemporary AAVE use, which does not typically take inflectional *-s* concord. So we see that *be* has partially accommodated the grammaticalisation that has taken place in AAVE while retaining parameters of the concord system of Lumbee English.

One of the most intriguing cases of interethnic contact in a peripheral dialect situation is found in the English of African Americans in mainland Hyde County. This region was first inhabited by English-speaking Europeans in the first decade of the 1700s, making it one of the oldest Anglo-American settlement communities in North Carolina. Shortly thereafter, African Americans were brought to the area (Kay and Cary 1995), and the groups have lived together in relative isolation

from the early 1700s until the mid twentieth century. This region, which has maintained a stable African-American population of between a quarter and a third of its residents for well over two centuries, has provided an ideal setting for examining several critical issues regarding the historical development of African-American speech (Wolfram and Beckett 2000; Wolfram, Thomas and Green 2000; Wolfram and Thomas 2002), as well as issues about language contact in long-term bi-ethnic situations.

On the one hand, our data suggest that some earlier dialect features of the English spoken by African Americans in Hyde County were quite congruent with the localised varieties of English spoken by their Anglo-American cohorts. For example, earlier African Americans and Anglo-Americans shared a uniform vowel system and many localised morphosyntactic features such as levelling to *weren't* in negative contexts. But there is also evidence for some long-standing structural differences between Anglo-American and African-American varieties, as well as evidence for interdialectal structures (Trudgill 1986). For example, although African Americans and European Americans shared a common, localised vowel system and phonological traits such as postvocalic rhoticity, the African-American community was distinguished by some of its phonotactic patterns. For example, Childs (2000) shows that the propensity for syllable-coda, prevocalic consonant cluster reduction (e.g. *wes' area* for 'west area') has apparently differentiated African Americans from their Anglo-American cohorts for as long as the two communities have coexisted in this area. We have attributed this trait to the persistence of a transfer effect derived from the original contact situation in the African diaspora in light of the general typological absence of syllable-coda consonant clusters in the heritage West African languages. It is probable that the African Americans of Hyde County already exhibited this trait when they were brought to the area and simply maintained it despite generations of isolation with Anglo-Americans. A survey of dialects of English with significant prevocalic cluster reduction by Wolfram, Childs and Torbert (2000) shows that only varieties that have been subjected to extensive contact with languages without syllable-coda clusters are likely to exhibit extensive prevocalic cluster reduction. The fact that this distinctive phonotactic trait has persisted while the vowel systems of Hyde County African Americans accommodated early to those of the local Anglo-American population suggests that the structural level on which the trait exists may be a factor in explaining why some traits persist from earlier contact situations while others are accommodated. It also demonstrates that some small, isolated communities with important social and ethnic boundaries may retain long-standing dialect differences across social and ethnic subcommunities even though some features (and sometimes even entire systems) diffuse readily across social divides. Thus, Wolfram, Hazen and Tamburro (1997) show that a single African-American family living on the island of Ocracoke maintained some distinctive dialect features that set them apart from their Anglo-American cohorts even after 130 years of continuous residency on Ocracoke as the lone

African-American family. In this connection, we need to note that community isolation and/or smallness do not, in and of themselves, lead to linguistic homogeneity (Dorian 1994; Wolfram and Beckett 2000).

Naturally, linguistic accommodation is not a matter of categorical structural acceptance or rejection. In fact, the situation with respect to *-s* verbal marking in the Hyde County African-American community demonstrates the ways in which dialect patterns brought by two different groups can be accommodated in ways that result in *interdialectal forms* – that is, 'forms that actually originally occurred in neither dialect' (Trudgill 1986: 62). The Anglo-American community of Hyde County indicates the so-called 'northern verbal concord rule' (Montgomery 1999) in which *-s* is attached to verbs occurring with plural subjects such as *The dogs barks*. This rule is strongly constrained by the type of subject and subject–verb proximity, so that it is strongly favoured with NP subjects as opposed to pronouns (e.g. *The dogs barks* > *They barks*), and favoured with noncontiguous subjects (e.g. *The dogs in the field barks a lot* > *The dogs barks*). Elderly African Americans have largely accommodated to this pattern, with an important modification: they relax the noun phrase constraint so that Hyde County African American English does not have a strong subject-type effect. This type of overgeneralisation is, of course, a fairly typical characteristic of the kind of accommodation that takes place in language contact situations (Weinreich 1953; Thomason 2001). At the same time, the African-American community also manifests optional marking on *-s* third-singular forms in sentences such as *The dog bark at the birds*. Although third-singular absence is found in some regions of the British Isles, such as East Anglia (Trudgill 1998), it is not found at all among elderly Anglo-Americans in Hyde County.

For African Americans in Hyde County, it appears that donor dialects have worked in tandem with language contact strategies in the configuration of the earlier African American speech in the isolated context of Hyde County. The *-s* marking pattern among elderly African Americans in this remnant community stands between the model found in the Hyde County Anglo-American version, strongly influenced by the northern verbal concord rule of the founder dialects, and the widespread model of contemporary AAVE. The Hyde County pattern may be summarised as follows:

The Anglo-American Model: 3rd *-s* attachment with pl. NP, e.g.
The dogs likes the ducks, but NOT **They likes the ducks*
She likes the ducks, but NOT **She like_ the ducks*

The Elderly Hyde County African-American Model: 3rd *-s* attachment with pl. NP and Pro; optional 3rd sg. *-s* attachment, e.g.
The dogs likes the ducks AND *They likes the ducks*
She like_ the ducks AND *She likes the ducks*

Contemporary AAVE: 3rd sg. *-s* absence, e.g.
The dogs like the ducks but NOT **The dogs likes the ducks*
She like the ducks

In understanding the dynamics of remnant dialects, intra-community and inter-community contact must be recognised, not only in the formative stages of such dialects, but also as the varieties reconfigure themselves at various points over time, and as they emerge into postinsularity. The contact dynamics of the different remnant communities we have discussed here certainly must be taken into account as we consider the myriad factors that have made them what they were in the past, what they are presently, and what they are becoming as they progress towards postinsularity as the world becomes ever more interconnected.

Of course, as we noted earlier, increasing levels of contact do not necessarily entail escalating assimilation (whether linguistic or cultural) among groups, and group identificational considerations have to be reconciled with simple contact relations. This seems to be the case in Smith Island, where dialect intensification is taking place even under conditions of increased contact with outsiders. It is quite probable that identificational as well as interactional factors play a role in guiding the directionality of change in other remnant communities as well.

8 Conclusion

We have seen that the mid-Atlantic and southern coastal remnant varieties of the United States are indeed dynamic and cannot be described simply by appealing to dialect conservatism. We have seen that issues of donorship can also be quite complex and may require the consideration of several layers of dialect transportation. Even if we could sort out the influence of various dialect groups at various points in time, we would have to admit that alternative mechanisms may lead to the development of similar structural forms. Although we have treated explanations as if they were largely mutually exclusive, language contact, diffusion and system-internal processes may actually converge and reinforce each other (cf. Thomason 2001). This understanding underscores the need to consider the overall structural patterning of dialects rather than focus on single structures as we seek to explain the occurrence of particular forms. It is extremely precarious to identify donor language varieties on the basis of single, isolated structures which may be derived through alternative processes.

A complex array of linguistic, sociolinguistic and sociohistorical factors must be considered in the attribution of source dialect structures and the configuration and reconfiguration of remnant dialects through time. Linguistic factors include structural markedness and the structural level of items within the system. Sociolinguistic considerations include social marking, communication networks and language attitudes. Sociohistorical issues include migration, contact ecology and population demographics. If nothing else, the complexity of the factors involved and the possibility of multiple causality ought to caution us to be wary of unwarranted assumptions about how remnant dialects were formed and how they have been moulded and remoulded over time. Remnant varieties may reveal some important affinities with one another but they also may be remarkably dynamic and robust in their individual development.

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