

Abstract

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The regional accommodation of earlier and contemporary African American speech remains one of the major issues in the debate over the development of African American English (AAE). Recent studies of African American speech in isolated rural communities (e.g. Wolfram and Thomas 2002; Mallinson and Childs 2003) suggest that the accommodation of regional dialect norms by African American speakers coexisted with a common core of distinct ethnolinguistic traits in earlier African American English. Regionality and local dialect accommodation thus have taken on increased significance in the examination of the development of AAE. The present study considers a different but analogous regional situation with respect to African American speech—Roanoke Island on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Roanoke Island is well known as the site of the Lost Colony, where the first settlement of British colonists disappeared in 1587. The untold story of Roanoke Island, however, is its role in the development of Outer Banks African American speech.

Many of the approximately 200 current African American residents of Roanoke Island can trace their ancestry back to a Freedmen's Colony of over 3,000 African Americans established on the island during the Civil War. Following the forced disbanding of the Freedmen's Colony at the end of the Civil War, the African American population of Roanoke Island was reduced to approximately 300 residents. Now, in the face of an increasing, permanent white population (approximately 2,000) and thousands

of tourists who inundate the island during the summer season, the African American community maintains strong intra-ethnic solidarity.

The 30 participants in this study were chosen using community social networks and the family-tree social network model in which different members of extended families are selected for interviewing. In addition to these tape-recorded sociolinguistic interviews, data from a series of oral history interviews with members of the only all-black lifesaving crew on the Outer Banks allow the analysis to include four generations of speakers.

The quantitative analysis of both traditional Outer Banks regional features (e.g. past tense *be* leveling to *weren't*, static locative *to* for *at*) and core diagnostic structures of AAVE (e.g. copula absence, third person singular *-s* absence, prevocalic consonant cluster reduction) allow us to determine patterns of local and supra-regional alignment over time.

The generational analysis indicates a pattern of increasingly regional accommodation with respect to phonological features (e.g. postvocalic rhoticity) rather than a movement toward the supra-regional AAE norm found in Wolfram and Thomas (2002). However, the analysis of morphosyntactic features (e.g. prevocalic consonant cluster reduction) indicates an increasing alignment with AAE across the generations. Also of interest, the first generation to attend integrated schools shows heightened percentages of AAE morphosyntactic features when compared to the other generations.

As we shall see in the ensuing analysis, the generational patterns revealed in this study depict differences and similarities in the AAE spoken on Roanoke Island over apparent time. However, significant levels of individual variation in each generation will

also be attested, challenging generalizations about consistent changes over time. The mixed dialect alignment among Roanoke Island African Americans supports the conclusion that regional speech patterns can serve an important role in the development of different varieties of AAE. Furthermore, the unique configuration of dialect features on Roanoke Island as compared to other isolated rural settings indicates alternative trajectories of change in different regional settings, influenced by such factors as population size as well as local and extended inter-ethnic contact situation.

**The Lost Community of the Outer Banks:
African American Speech on Roanoke Island**

by

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*For my swimmers, who constantly remind me both what is really important and who I
really am*

Biography

Jeannine Carpenter was born on March 16, 1976, in Columbus, Georgia, but her family moved to Cary, North Carolina, in December of the same year. Jeannine graduated from Cary High School in 1994 and from North Carolina State University with a BA in English in 2000. After two years of coaching swimming, Jeannine returned to North Carolina State to pursue graduate studies. With the completion of this thesis, Jeannine fulfills the requirements for a Master of Arts degree in English with a concentration in Linguistics.

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1. Introduction

Debate about the development of and trajectories of change in African American English (AAE) has dominated sociolinguistic inquiry into this variety for the past half-century (Kurath 1949; Stewart 1968; Dillard 1972; Baugh 1980, 1983; Holm 1984; Winford 1992; Poplack 1999; Poplack & Tagliamonte 2001; Montgomery & Fuller 1996; Wolfram 2000, 2003; Wolfram & Thomas 2002). The present study examines the validity and generalizability of hypotheses about the earlier and current evolution of AAE in its regional context by examining a unique sociolinguistic field site—the only enduring African American community located on the Outer Banks of coastal North Carolina.

Three main hypotheses about the origin(s) of AAE have been proposed over the course of these inquiries, with a fourth emerging in the last couple of years. The original hypothesis, called the Anglicist position (Kurath 1949; McDavid & McDavid 1971; Davis 1971), posits that AAE ultimately shares its source with other European varieties of American English and that the foundation of AAE is rooted in British-based varieties. Partly as a reaction to the Anglicist position, the Creolist position was advanced (Stewart 1968; Dillard 1972; Rickford 1977; Baugh 1980; Singler 1991); this theory holds that the origins of AAE are to be found in a form of Creole originally spoken by the Africans brought to North America. The third hypothesis is a reinterpretation of the Anglicist position (Poplack 1999), referred to as the Neo-Anglicist position by Wolfram (2000). This third perspective resulted from more recent studies that suggested that early European American and African-American varieties of speech were quite similar, and it postulated that divergence from the European norm in AAE is a twentieth century development (Poplack & Tagliamonte 1991, Montgomery, Fuller & Demarse 1993, Bailey & Maynor 1987).

The most recent hypothesis about the development of AAE, the substrate hypothesis (Wolfram & Schilling Estes forthcoming; Wolfram & Thomas 2002), contends that earlier AAE not only mirrored the regional dialect of localized, benchmark European varieties, but also reflected evidence of a persistent substratal effect. Wolfram and Thomas (2002) support the presence of a substratal effect in the AAE spoken in Hyde County, North Carolina, by demonstrating the durable ethnolinguistic dichotomy of the residents following centuries of relative isolation. Although older AAE and European American English (EAE) speakers may be perceptually indistinguishable to outsiders (Wolfram & Thomas 2002; Thomas & Reaser 2002, 2004), it is shown that a small set of ethnically distinct features persists in AAE spoken in Hyde County. The combination of ethnolinguistic distinction and the maintenance of a founder effect (Mufwene 1996, 2001) reflecting regional structural peculiarities of the area does not, however, resolve all of the questions about the development of AAE. The substrate hypothesis, which admits both local regional effects and enduring substrate effects from an earlier contact situation, prompts additional questions about the role of regionality in trajectories of change in African American communities.

Small, ethnic enclave communities may align differently with competing regional norms and the ethnolinguistic norms of a trans-regional AAE. For example, African American speakers in Hyde County have exhibited changing regional accommodation over the years, first accommodating toward regional dialect norms and then shifting their dialect patterning toward more trans-regional AAE norms. The African American speakers of Hyde County reveal different degrees of accommodation depending on the linguistic feature at issue and the social marking associated with it. Although the findings from Hyde County and other small enclave communities such as Beech Bottom (Mallinson 2001; Mallinson & Wolfram 2002) and Texana

(Childs & Mallinson 2003, forthcoming), North Carolina, appear to support the substrate hypothesis, further analyses of AAE spoken in regionally situated enclaves are necessary. The findings in Beech Bottom and Texana corroborate the findings in Hyde County inasmuch as there is evidence of regional accommodation and substratal effects coexisting, but the youngest African American generation in Beech Bottom and the youngest generation of African American speakers in Texana have clearly aligned with more salient European American regional norms when compared with alignment to trans-regional AAE norms as found in Hyde County (Childs & Mallinson 2003; Mallinson 2001; Wolfram & Thomas 2002, Wolfram 2003).

The present analysis of African American speech on Roanoke Island will complement these and other investigations into the development of AAE by further exploring the extent to which enclave communities demonstrate different trajectories of change. Beech Bottom and Texana are both communities in the mountains of North Carolina, and Hyde County is a mainland North Carolina coastal community. Roanoke Island contrasts with these geographic locations, as it is a part of the Outer Banks Islands off the coast of North Carolina. Texana and Beech Bottom are both part of the Appalachian dialect region of North Carolina (Mallinson 2001; Childs & Mallinson 2003, forthcoming), while Hyde County and Roanoke Island are part of the Pamlico Sound dialect region. European Americans on Roanoke Island are also speakers of the well-documented variety of Outer Banks English (OBE) (Wolfram, Hazen, & Schilling-Estes 1999; Schilling-Estes & Wolfram 1997; Schilling-Estes 1996).

Roanoke Island will also provide an additional perspective on the development of regionally situated AAE given the similarities and differences in demographic profiles for different African American enclave communities in North Carolina as set forth in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Populations of Comparable Field Sites (Wolfram 2003)

Field Site	Percent AA	AA Population	Regional Dialect
Hyde County	35%	approx. 2,000	Outer Banks
Roanoke Island	<10%	approx. 200	Outer Banks
Texana	<5%	approx. 150	Appalachian
Beech Bottom	<1%	6	Appalachian

Although the African American populations of Roanoke Island and Texana are numerically similar, the proportion of the Roanoke Island population that is African American is twice that found for Texana. By the same token, the size and percentage of the African American community on Roanoke Island clearly contrasts with that of the larger, neighboring Hyde County African American population.

An additional consideration in terms of the various communities is that Roanoke Island is the only site that functions as a hub of large-scale tourist activity, and consequently a significant population of non-residents resides on the island each summer. The interaction of these demographic and social variables creates a unique situation for studying dialect accommodation and ethnolinguistic distinction on Roanoke Island. Perhaps more significantly, the African American population on Roanoke Island is the only continuous minority population of its kind physically located on the Outer Banks of North Carolina, providing unique insights into African American speech in this geographical area. Though the African American community of Hyde County is located within the Outer Banks dialect boundary, it is located on the mainland, with a social dynamic and economic situation somewhat different from Outer Banks communities. While Outer Banks island communities were most reliant on marine occupations for economic viability, mainland Hyde County was more reliant on agriculture and farming. Also, the land area of Hyde County allows for a more diffuse, rural distribution of the population, unlike the close-knit centers of population on Roanoke Island, which is quite small in terms of land area.

As we shall see in the ensuing analysis, the generational patterns revealed in this study depict differences and similarities in the AAE spoken on Roanoke Island over apparent time. However, noteworthy levels of individual variation in each generation will also be attested, challenging generalizations about consistent changes over time. Comparative data from previous sites studied by members of the North Carolina Language and Life Project (NCLLP) (Reaser 2000; Beckett 2001; Schreier 2001; Mallinson & Childs 2003) indicate that some variation cannot be accounted for by grouping speakers on the basis of traditional generational demographic groups. Instead, personal history, interactional networks, communities of practice, and cultural values and attitudes have to be taken into account.

2. Sociohistorical Context

2.1 Geography

Roanoke Island is a thirteen-mile island between the Croatan and Roanoke Sounds (actually one body of water), located between the barrier islands of the Outer Banks and the mainland coast of North Carolina. It is a part of Dare County, North Carolina, the easternmost county in the state and one of the smallest counties in terms of land mass, only 384 square miles. The location of Roanoke Island in relation to the rest of the state can be seen below in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 Map of North Carolina

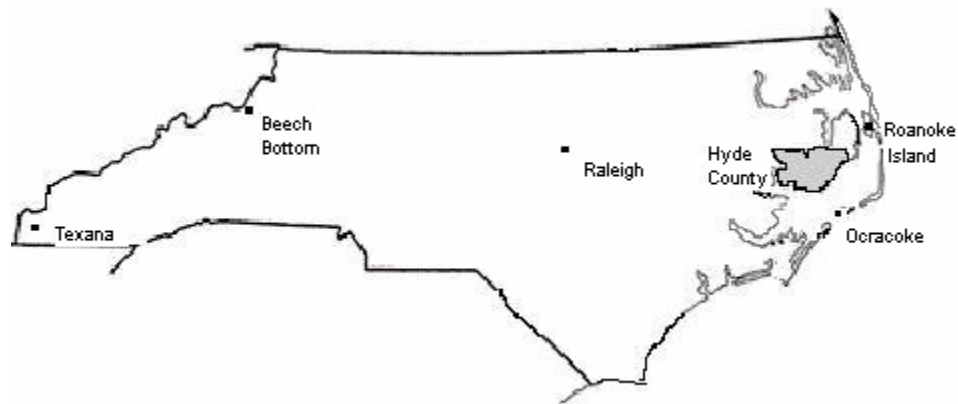
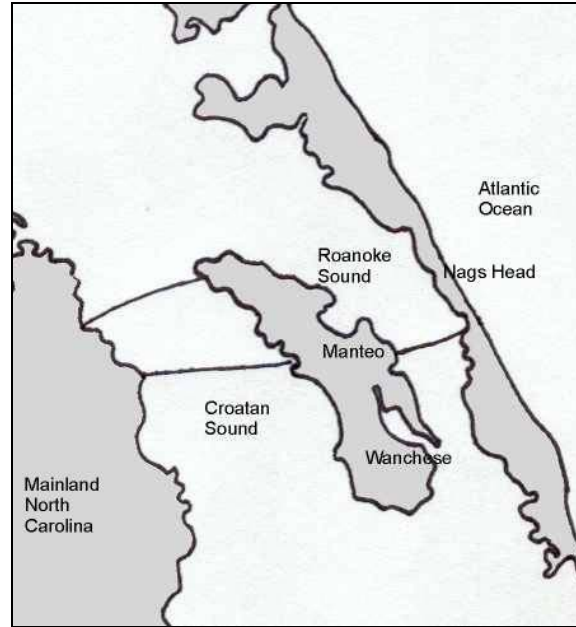


Figure 2.2 shows a closer look at Roanoke Island, the surrounding waters, and the two main centers of population on the island.

Figure 2.2 Map of Roanoke Island



Like the rest of the Outer Banks, Roanoke Island was once inaccessible because of surrounding shoals and sandbars. However, more than the rest of the Outer Banks, the northern end of Roanoke Island is vulnerable to rapid erosion because of its unique exposure both to violent northeasters and “to surges from strong low-pressure centers” (Alexander & Lazell 1992:44). As a result, erosion has stripped away a large part of the island’s land mass since it was first inhabited.

Because of its coastal location and precarious shoreline, Roanoke Island, like the rest of the Outer Banks, is particularly vulnerable to severe weather. The combination of shoreline conditions and severe storms impacted the settlement of the island just as it influenced the geography and land formation. When Roanoke Island was first explored as a potential location for colonization, the Roanoke Inlet was a route from the Pamlico Sound to the Atlantic Ocean. This inlet, however, would eventually close and change the demographic development and perceived value of the island.

2.2 History and Settlement

Though the first written documentation of Outer Banks exploration was 1524, when Italian Giovanni da Verrazano reported to the king of France, the first account of exploration on Roanoke Island did not appear until 1584. Led by Philip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe, this English exploration sent by Sir Walter Raleigh actually landed on Hatteras Island, but befriended the neighboring Roanoke Indians and went to their village on Roanoke Island. Formal attempts to colonize the Outer Banks officially began with the Letters of Patent from Queen Elizabeth to Sir Walter Raleigh on March 25, 1584. After this decree and some additional exploration, Raleigh sent an expedition consisting of seven boats and over 600 men (300 of whom were soldiers) from England on April 9, 1585, to establish a settlement on Roanoke Island (Stick 1958). Upon arriving and exploring the island, surrounding waterways, and environment, Grenville, the leader of this expedition, returned to England and left 107 men on Roanoke Island under the leadership of Ralph Lane.

While in charge, Lane began the construction of a fort at the north end of Roanoke Island, but undermined the relationship with the Native Americans that Amadas and Barlowe had originally established. The deteriorating English and Native American relations culminated with an English invasion of a Roanoke tribe's village and subsequent murder of their chief, Wingina. This attack, under the guise of a friendly visit, perhaps fueled the future problems of English attempts to settle on Roanoke Island.

In June 1586, shortly following the attack on the Roanoke Indians, Sir Francis Drake arrived at the Roanoke Island settlement and offered Lane a vessel and supplies. However, a large approaching storm, presumed to have been a hurricane, compelled Lane and his troops to return to England with Drake instead (Alexander and Lazell 1992:40). Within two weeks of

Lane's departure from his post, Grenville returned to refortify it. Baffled by the disappearance of Lane, Grenville left fifteen men on Roanoke and again returned to England.

Raleigh, undeterred by these failures, sent three more ships from England in May 1587, this time under the leadership of artist John White. Prepared to find the fifteen men left by Grenville, White's expedition returned to neither a fort nor the men. According to the Croatan Indians (Stick 1958), the men had been killed in an act of revenge for the earlier English murder of Wingina. Nonetheless, White began building the "Cittie of Raleigh" in hopes of establishing a permanent settlement (Stick 1958:19). Because the ultimate goal of White's expedition was permanent settlement, this voyage had, for the first time, included women and children. During the initial construction of the Raleigh settlement, the first child born of English parents in the New World, Virginia Dare, was born on August 19, 1587. On August 27, 1587 the ships from Roanoke Island returned to England for supplies and more colonists, leaving a small settlement behind. This was the last time that the 110 Roanoke Island colonists, including newborn Virginia Dare, were ever seen.

When White finally returned with provisions in August 1590 the Roanoke Island colony had disappeared. Because of England's war with Spain, White's plans for immediate return to the island had been delayed. The fort had been taken apart and the colonists were gone, having either been the victims of another attack or moved elsewhere. The mystery of the "Lost Colony" has since been commodified on Roanoke Island and is the most famous historical account related to the island, despite all of the other rich history that followed.

After the disappearance of the Raleigh settlement, Roanoke Island was practically ignored for close to a century. In 1663, when King Charles II issued the Carolina Charter, the Outer Banks and parts of the coastal region of present-day North Carolina were separated from

Virginia. Following this charter, the first recorded deed of land for Roanoke Island dates to 1669, was when Samuel Stephens, then governor of Carolina, received a grant to the island and began raising cattle there. After this first deed, Roanoke Island was sold a number of times before settlement.

Even though there was not a center of settlement such as a town, many colonists moved to Roanoke Island in the late 1600s and established permanent residence. In many cases, these settlers were trying to gain a place in the new colony and the location seemed promising. What makes the absence of an established town on Roanoke Island most curious is that prior to 1700, a majority of the vessels bound for Carolina entered the colonies via Roanoke Inlet, adjacent to Roanoke Island. According to David Stick, in 1715 “an act was passed for establishing ‘a Towne on Roanoke Island for the Encouragement of Trade from Foreign Parts,’ but the project failed” (1958:25).

As time passed, the need for a town on Roanoke Island lessened as shoals developed in Roanoke Inlet and the surrounding waters became shallower. The depth of the inlet was approximately ten feet in 1715 and had become unsafe for many vessels to travel (Alexander & Lazell 1992). As a result, trade moved away from Roanoke Island.

After initial settlement, one of the primary struggles for the residents of the island was transportation. Roanoke Island, like the rest of the Outer Banks, was accessible only by boat. As a result, there was an emphasis on maritime activities for the majority of residents. Even though a large number of residents on Roanoke Island claimed to be farmers by occupation, they still depended on fishing as their primary source for food, income, and economic survival.

The economy of Roanoke Island following the American Revolution continued to depend primarily on fishing. There were also some farms and raising of livestock such as cattle and

hogs, but there was a noticeable decline in these endeavors. The residents of Roanoke Island and of the Outer Banks also engaged in salvaging valuable materials from the frequent shipwrecks along the coast or from the aftermath of storms (Wright & Zoby 2000). In fact, salvaging was so viable that some islanders actually subsisted on this activity.

The majority of the African Americans on Roanoke Island during and following the revolutionary period were slaves of small farmers and fishermen. According to Kay and Cary, “North Carolina’s original slave population, probably numbering around 1,000 during the first decade of the eighteenth century, came, along with their masters, from Virginia” (1995:72). Following the American Revolution, the residents who had moved to Roanoke Island were fairly well established. A number of family names prominent in the late 1700s on the island—Baum, Beasley, Daniel, Dough, Etheridge, Midgett, and Wescot—are still highly visible in the life of Roanoke Island today. Originally, these were the names of the European residents of the island, but when their slaves were later emancipated, they would continue to use these same family surnames. Also, there were some free African-Americans who probably had migrated down from the Virginia settlements. As Wright and Zoby explain, because these free blacks were of “little economic threat ... [they] shared the limited resources on more or less equal footing with their white counterparts” (2000:24).

When the Civil War began in 1860, North Carolina’s population was more than one-third black. Carbone (2001), in *The Civil War in Coastal North Carolina*, wrote, “North Carolina has 331,059 slaves and 30,463 free blacks” (87). As would be expected, the number of slaves in a given area directly corresponded to the degree of agricultural work in the region. Although slaves were also used as maritime laborers, the need for large numbers in the maritime industry was not as essential as it was in agriculture. Nonetheless, the census figures for 1850 give the

total population of Roanoke Island as 610 and the slave population as 168 (Stick 1970:89). This means that at the onset of the Civil War, the Roanoke Island slave population constituted almost 28 percent of the total Roanoke Island population.

2.3 The Civil War

The white residents of the Outer Banks and of Roanoke Island were neither strong Union nor strong Confederate supporters. Ironically, this otherwise neutral area would be an important turning point in the Civil War and ultimately integral to the Union victory. Unlike the Revolutionary War, which essentially bypassed the island, Roanoke Island was a key battlefield in the Civil War.

After the Union army conquered and occupied neighboring Hatteras Island, Roanoke Island was the next target of the Union army war effort. The Confederates who had retreated to Roanoke Island from other conquered Confederate forts, as well as the Roanoke Island residents (both black and white), knew that the Roanoke Island battle was forthcoming. Cecelski (2001), in *The Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina*, recounts the episode of a "lone black man named Ben" who sailed from Roanoke Island to the Federal camp on Hatteras on November 17, 1861, to provide General Burnside with knowledge of the Confederate status on the island (137). Another black man from Roanoke Island, a 16-year-old named Thomas Robinson (Cecelski 2001:157), provided the Union with essential information on Roanoke Island as well. In part, because of the information given by these men, General Burnside was able to plan an effective attack against Roanoke Island. In one day, on February 7, 1862, Burnside was able to capture Roanoke Island and convert it to Union territory. The Battle of Roanoke Island was the "end of Confederate resistance along the Outer Banks and in the

sounds” (Stick 1958:152-3). Critical to the eventual Union victory and emancipation, the Confederates had lost one of their most important maritime routes for provisions.

Although the Union victory on Roanoke Island was instrumental for the free black people and slaves in the region, the longtime white, land-owning residents lost land, crops, livestock, and most means of prosperity as a result of the Union occupation. The island farms were subject to “raids” and pillaging from the Union soldiers and the residents were forced to sign “Oaths of Allegiance” to the Union (Wright & Zoby 2000:53). This occupation also impacted the population of the island as a number of the long-time slave residents joined with the Union troops and left the region, albeit often temporarily, to fight the war. Due to the combination of pillaging and loss of slaves, the economic future of the residents and the island economy became uncertain.

As the Union army moved further into Confederate territory, runaway and freed slaves would go to the locations where Union armies established camps. The runaways were seeking refuge and the Union army officers were willing to protect them, calling them *contraband*, as if they were spoils of war. While some of the runaway slaves found solace on the outskirts of Union strongholds, the number of slaves seeking such a haven increased at an unexpectedly rapid rate. According to Cecelski, “By mid-1862, more than 10,000 contrabands had converged on the North Carolina coast” (2001:158). A primary impetus for this movement to the North Carolina coast was the Union victory on Roanoke Island.

Anticipating this same kind of migration to Roanoke Island, General Burnside appointed Vincent Colyer to be “Superintendent of the Poor” beginning on February 8, 1862 (Stick 1958:161). Wright and Zoby further explain: “the black recruits, before signing on, demanded guarantees that their families would be taken care of should anything happen to them in the

field” (2000:56). This, along with the influx of runaway slaves, compelled the creation of the Freedmen’s Colony of Roanoke Island by General Burnside.

The first thing the freedpeople on Roanoke Island built was a church, and they immediately began conducting services even though “North Carolina law had prohibited black men from preaching since 1831” (Click 2001:35). By the end of the first month of the developing Freedmen’s colony, two new churches had been built on Roanoke Island. In the same amount of time, the community’s first school was opened to students. These initial projects reflected not only the priorities of the people, but also their commitment to becoming an enduring and independent community.

On Roanoke Island, “Post Commandant Rush Hawkin’s contraband policy, issued on 12 March 1862, ... respected and helped reinforce the [former] slaves’ family and community ties” (Click 2001:37). This policy declared that the freedpeople would be paid to work for the Union army with rations, money, and clothing. After this change, in April 1862, Colyer finally began to fulfill the responsibilities of his appointment by building forts and docks and seeking to employ as many of the former slaves as possible.

In July 1862, Reverend James Means, a former hospital chaplain from New England, replaced Colyer and continued his work. After the Emancipation Proclamation in January, the numbers of blacks fleeing to the Union camps increased even more rapidly. In order to deal with the population surges in Union camps and on their outskirts, the “American Freedmen’s Inquiry Commission” was formed in March 1863 (Click 2001:40).

After Means’ unexpected death in April 1863, Reverend Horace James, an evangelical congregational minister, was appointed “Superintendent of all the Blacks” in North Carolina. One of his first orders was to create the Roanoke Island community into an “organized colony”

(Click 2001:40). “James viewed the establishment of the colony as an opportunity to prove some of his ideas about freeholding and free labor in a permanent self-supporting community of former slaves” (Click 2001:42). Unlike other large groups of former slaves, often called *contraband camps*, who lived outside of and dependent on Union settlements, Roanoke Island’s Freedmen’s Colony was intended to become a unique, self-sufficient community.

The freedmen’s colony supposedly occupied a two-mile stretch on the northwest end of the island. There were three straight avenues and twenty-six cross streets in the colony, the most effective roadways on the island up to that date (Click 2001:48). There were plots of land distributed to the freedpeople for homes, which they quickly built, and gardens, which they quickly planted, before the winter of 1863. However, there were still large numbers of African Americans arriving on Roanoke Island, and because of the distribution of land to the earlier members of the community it was difficult for the newcomers to find a place in the community. This population surge hindered the community’s efforts to support its inhabitants, and unfortunately, James neglected to inform any government or civic authorities about issues related to the over-population.

Despite these problems, many positive outcomes were realized in the Roanoke Island community. In January 1863, the American Missionary Association committed to send teachers to help the freedpeople of the island (Click 2001:71). And by September 1863, the island had an operative sawmill, providing potential for more permanent structures. The schools continued to educate children and adults alike and the community became increasingly more autonomous and organized. These economic moves and the continually developing educational system would be lost, however, when the war ended in 1865.

After the war Horace James encountered a number of government obstacles hindering his efforts to benefit the freedmen. The land that the freedpeople's colony occupied was returned to the former owners and there was no compensation for the African Americans who were displaced. Additionally, James abandoned his supposed efforts and gave up on the idea of providing land on the island for the African Americans to purchase. It seems that

Seeing blacks as of a sort and not individuals with particular lives and histories, James was prepared to indiscriminately remove all of them from the island. With their land gone, freedpeople on Roanoke Island were left homeless, their hospital and schools closed. James radically cut rations, and before long, large groups began being exported inland. In January 1867, the black population, once nearly 3,500 strong, stood at just 950. ... The African colony – indeed, the black presence in the Banks – seemed doomed to extinction (Wright and Zoby 2000:123).

The African American residents of Roanoke Island's Freedmen's Colony did not all leave the island in the face of these hostile circumstances. According to Bowser and Bowser, "In 1868 eleven men purchased a tract of land from the Thomas Dough heirs and divided it among themselves," and "Richard Etheridge acquired land on the north End of the Island and he sold land to other blacks" (2002:23). By 1900, a group of 300 African Americans had resolved to stay on the island and formed their own neighborhood called California (Wright & Zoby 2000:124). The legacy of this community is, of course, still evident in the contemporary African American community of Roanoke Island—the field site under consideration in this study.

2.4 Contemporary Roanoke Island as a Linguistic Field Site

After the Civil War, Roanoke Island's population grew considerably. The area by Shallowbag Bay developed into what could be considered a permanent settlement. Fortunately for the employment of residents on Roanoke Island, the federal government also established a number

of lifesaving stations, weather stations, and post offices in the coastal area (Stick 1958:168). One of these life-saving stations, Pea Island, was an exclusively African American station that employed a number of prominent African American residents of Roanoke Island. In 1873, the first town, Manteo, was incorporated on Roanoke Island, solely because a post office was built there. Until this time, the two main areas of settlement had been called the upper end and the lower end of the island, referring to present day Manteo and Wanchese, respectively.

An African American population remained, but their battles were not over. The 1896 decision of Plessy vs. Ferguson that ratified the doctrine of separate-but-equal was recognized on the island and institutional racism was routinely practiced. The year after this landmark court decision, the politically powerful white citizens of the island formed the Manteo White Supremacy Club.

The first hard surface road on the island was finally built in the 1920s, and two different canals were dug for the island so that mainlanders would have a place for their boats when visiting Manteo – the since-designated county seat of Dare County. However, the road and these canals were not enough to facilitate travel to the island or to the Banks beyond the island. There was still no way to get there by road. In 1928, the first bridge across Roanoke sound was finished – charging one dollar per car toll to get across in order to make up for the debt incurred by the county to build it. There were very mixed emotions about the bridge – many islanders were worried that instead of bringing people to the island, it would give people on the island a way to get off. And although the intentions of the builders were that the bridge would increase tourism, the island still only had the one hard surface road and was not connected to mainland North Carolina.

In 1931, a bridge connecting Roanoke Island to the mainland was finally built and the tourism industry had the necessary means for growth. Visitors then had easy access to both Roanoke Island and the celebrated North Carolina beaches. This same year construction on the Wright Brothers' Memorial was begun and tourism continued to increase. By June 1934, the restoration of Fort Raleigh was initiated so that the island itself had a major tourist attraction. The emphasis on tourism continued on Roanoke Island through the 1930s. In 1937, *The Lost Colony* outdoor drama began showing at the reconstructed Fort Raleigh. It was then the first and is now the oldest outdoor drama of its kind.

Following this boom in tourism, however, World War II erupted. This war had a major impact on the Outer Banks region. The war effort took a number of citizens away from the work force, necessitating, for example, a suspension of the Park Service. Also, many older residents remember German submarine activity that took place just off the coast of North Carolina during the war.

After World War II, the Park Service reopened and Roanoke Island became part of the North Carolina coast's haven for tourists. The residents were no longer dependent on the water for their livelihood, as the tourism industry became the economic backbone of the island. Despite this large-scale economic realignment, the town of Wanchese on Roanoke Island is still the most productive commercial fishing area left on the Outer Banks.

The African American experience on Roanoke Island is perpetually minimized or absent from most historical accounts of the area. African Americans on the Outer Banks and on Roanoke Island did not experience large-scale desegregation until the National Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964. Notwithstanding the court edicts on desegregation, most African Americans on Roanoke Island are still living in the same area, with limited movement into the traditionally

“white” parts of the island. Census figures indicate a concentration of African Americans in Manteo, still living in the area once called California. According to the 2000 Census, the total population of Manteo was 2,579 people, 117 of whom were African Americans. Based on our experiences, this number is somewhat low, as half of the African American community considered by locals to be in Manteo is not actually within the limits of the incorporated town.

The primary impetus for acknowledging the contributions of African Americans on Roanoke Island is a group of women who have formed the Freedmen’s Colony Association, whose goal is to increase recognition of this African American community and its lasting legacy. There is an annual celebration of the Freedmen’s Colony, and Roanoke Island was recently recognized as a station on the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom (February 14, 2003); an addition to the Freedmen’s Colony monument at Fort Raleigh bears this recognition.

Because of the relative isolation and continuity of the black community on Roanoke Island, this site provides an excellent opportunity to pursue hypotheses about the development of earlier and contemporary African American English. Many of the African American community members today on Roanoke Island can trace their families back to the Freedmen’s colony and have taken an interest in preserving the history and traditions of the African American community on the island. The history of the African American community on Roanoke Island is unlike that of any other African American community on the Outer Banks islands; in fact, it is the only long-term, minority population of its kind in this geographical area. Although the land area of Roanoke Island is relatively small and has only two essential centers of population, a strong element of intra-ethnic solidarity on the island continues. The overwhelming majority of African Americans on the island reside in the same area that has served as the hub of the African American community for as long as current residents can remember. In fact, the post-Civil War

settlement of the island continues to be divided by the main road going through the town of Manteo – black folks on one side and white folks on the other.

There is, however, a notable flow of outsiders into the residential areas surrounding the African American community. Many of the older speakers in the Roanoke Island corpus talk about the increasing number of strangers in the community, as well as the rapidly growing Hispanic community on the island. This new minority community has also developed on the minority side of the highway. This insurgence of outsiders is certainly a product of Roanoke Island's current accessibility and status as the gateway to the Outer Banks.

The historical isolation, continuity, size, and embeddedness in regional norms of the African American community on Roanoke Island make it a prime sociolinguistic situation for investigating patterns of language change in African American speech over time.

3. Methodology

3.1 The Sample

This analysis is based on data from a series of interviews conducted by members of the North Carolina Language and Life Project (NCLLP), as well as a collection of oral history interviews with members of the Pea Island all-black lifesaving crew on the Outer Banks and their relatives, courtesy of the Outer Banks History Center in Manteo. The first NCLLP interviews on Roanoke Island were conducted in October 2002, as part of an ongoing study into the development of AAE and the effects of regional dialect variation on small, African American enclave communities in the rural South.

Speakers were located by a combination of the social network procedure of locating a friend of a friend (Milroy 1987), family-tree social networking (Green 1998), and door-to-door solicitation in the African American neighborhood on Roanoke Island. Conversations during the interviews focused on topics of interest to the subjects, as well as a strong orientation toward oral history interviews with older participants. In some cases, the interview questions found in Appendix 1 were used to initiate and guide the interviews. However, interviewers tried to focus on topics that met the guidelines of a natural conversation sociolinguistic interview (Labov 1966; Wolfram & Fasold 1974).

Since beginning work on Roanoke Island, the NCLLP staff has conducted more than 45 interviews with residents of Roanoke Island. Although the focus of the Roanoke Island work thus far has been on African American speech, a small number of interviews have also been conducted with members of the white community for comparative analyses. The range of speakers in the corpus currently spans over 80 years in apparent time, with speakers born as early as 1904 and as recently as 1991.

This analysis is based on 30 of the African American speakers in the Roanoke Island corpus, divided into four generational age groups according to the date-of-birth parameters found in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Generational Divisions for Subject Pool

Gen I/Oldest:	1905-1924
Gen II/Older Middle:	1928-1942
Gen III/Younger Middle:	1953-1969
Gen IV/Youngest:	1976-1991

The criteria for these generational divisions were determined using major historical events and familial relationships, rather than arbitrary divisions as suggested by Bailey (2001). The oldest, or Gen I speakers were all born before 1925, a period of segregation during which Jim Crow laws were firmly in effect and before there was bridge access to the island. The older middle, or Gen II speakers, were all born and beyond school age by the time of integration on Roanoke Island. Gen III, or the younger middle generation, consists of individuals who were in school during the period of integration, which began in 1964; and the youngest, or Gen IV speakers, are children or peers of children in Gen III. The division between Gen I and Gen II depends, in particular, on the parent/child relationships between Speakers 103 and 204 and Speakers 102 and 205. In addition, information from the interview with Speaker 201 about his social networks suggests he was part of a different peer group than the speakers in the first generation. Two of the extended families in the corpus have speakers in each of the four generations. A comprehensive breakdown of the speakers can be found in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Subject Pool Demographics

Age Category	Speaker Number	Year of Birth	Sex
Gen I	101	1905	M
	102	1912	F
	103	1915	M
	104	1921	F
	105	1924	F
Gen II	201	1928	M
	202	1929	F
	203	1932	F
	204	1933	F
	205	1935	M
	206	1937	F
	207	1938	F
	208	1939	F
	209	1941	F
	210	1942	M
Gen III	301	1953	M
	302	1954	M
	303	1956	M
	304	1960	F
	305	1961	F
	306	1963	M
	307	1964	M
	308	1969	M
Gen IV	401	1976	M
	402	1980	F
	403	1983	F
	404	1984	M
	405	1987	M
	406	1988	M
	407	1991	M

Because this analysis looks primarily at the development of African American speech on Roanoke Island across different generations, economic status and gender were not considered as factors in this account. It is noteworthy, however, that all of the speakers live in the small, traditionally African American community of the island regardless of socioeconomic differences in income or education. All of the speakers were raised on and are currently permanent residents of Roanoke Island, with varying amounts of time spent away from the island. Also, of the 30

speakers, 14 are female and 16 are male with speakers from each gender in each of the generational groups.

3.2 The Data

For each of the phonological and morphosyntactic features examined in this analysis, tokens were taken from tape-recorded sociolinguistic interviews. Phonological features such as pre-vocalic consonant cluster reduction and rhoticity were impressionistically categorized, taking either all available tokens or a minimum of 100 tokens from each speaker. All morphosyntactic tokens from each of the interviews were used in the analysis.

In addition to descriptive statistical analysis of the data, a probabilistic-based, multivariate statistical procedure was applied. VARBRUL calculates the relative influence of various social factors (e.g., age group or gender) and linguistic factors (e.g., subject type, phonetic environment) vis-à-vis the variability of fluctuating forms (Guy 1993). VARBRUL assigns a factor weight between 0 and 1 to each of the factors, where a weighting greater than .5 denotes a favoring effect and a weighting less than .5 denotes a hindering effect. In addition, a Chi square per cell value from the VARBRUL analysis indicates the relative “goodness of fit”: a lower value indicates a better fit than a higher value (Young & Bayley 1996). To achieve statistical significance in the application, a Chi square score of 1.5 per cell is generally expected (Young & Bayley 1996).

4. Diagnostic Linguistic Variables

Two phonological variables are analyzed in this study: pre-vocalic consonant cluster reduction as in *slice_ apple* for *sliced apple*, and rhoticity or absence of rhoticity as in *cah* for *car*. Seven morphosyntactic variables are also analyzed in this study: positive past tense *be* leveling as in *We was watching TV*; negative past tense *be* leveling as in *I weren't watching it* or *They wasn't there*; copula absence as in *they hungry* for *they're hungry* or *he cool* for *he's cool*, copula leveling such as *they is right*; third person -s absence as in *The dog eat_*; third person -s attachment as in *The dogs eats*; and the use of static locative *to* as in *When I was to the store* for *When I was at the store*.

Each of these variables is a highly attested linguistic feature of regional and ethnic dialects in American English (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 1998, forthcoming). Some features, such as pre-vocalic consonant cluster reduction, are particularly affiliated with AAE (Guy 1980; Wolfram 1969; Baugh 1983; Wolfram & Thomas 2002), while others are more frequently associated with Outer Banks English (OBE), such as negative past-tense *be* leveling to *weren't* (Wolfram et al. 1999; Schilling-Estes & Wolfram 1997). The range of variables is deliberately inclusive of regional and ethnic features in order to assess regional or ethnic accommodation of dialect patterning on Roanoke Island. Through the examination of both distinct regional features and marked features associated to AAE across different generations of speakers, we will be able to determine the interplay of region, ethnicity, and linguistic variation in the trajectory of change for African American speakers in Roanoke Island.

4.1 Morphosyntactic Variables

4.1.1 Leveling to *was*

Regularization of past tense *be* from *were* to *was* is a well-documented feature of AAE (Labov et al. 1968; Wolfram & Fasold 1974; Cukor-Avila 2001; Green 2002), Southern White Vernacular English (SWVE) (Feagin 1979; Wolfram & Christian 1976), and OBE (Wolfram et al. 1999; Wolfram & Thomas 2002), as well as other vernacular varieties. In fact, leveling to *was* is a universal tendency found in the vernacular dialects of English world-wide. Given the fact that *be* is the only verb in English that shows past-tense subject agreement, this leveling process is a natural, systemically motivated change.

Labov et al. (1968) observe that *was* leveling in AAE demonstrates a preference for plural subjects, but do not specifically address the possibility of a subject constraint on variability in detail. Tagliamonte and Smith (2000), however, note that noun phrase subjects appear to favor *was* leveling in a Nova Scotian African American transplant community. Wolfram and Thomas (2002) also find this subject constraint in Hyde County AAE. Cukor-Avila (2001) notes that leveling to *was* in SWVE seems to be rapidly declining among the younger speakers of SWVE, while *was* leveling for African American younger speakers persists as a prominent dialect feature. Patterns of *was* leveling in OBE, similarly, demonstrate a preference for leveling following existential and plural noun phrase subjects over pronoun subjects (Wolfram et al. 1999). However, African American speakers in neighboring Hyde County seem to be gradually decreasing their use of *was* leveling, while still maintaining a heightened percentage of leveling compared to European American cohorts (Wolfram & Thomas 2002).

In order to determine how past tense *be* leveling operates in Roanoke Island, all tokens of affirmative *was* and *were* for each of the speakers were extracted. Cases in which the subject-verb concord did not match that of Standard English were classified as leveled. Thus, a sentence like *They were there* is considered unleveled, as it meets the criteria of standard English grammar, but *They was there*, for example, is considered leveled. Data for affirmative past tense leveling to *was* by each generation of African American speakers on Roanoke Island are given in Table 4.1, which includes the descriptive statistics and results of a VARBRUL analysis.

Table 4.1 Data for affirmative *was* leveling by generation on Roanoke Island
(No. levelled/N)

Generation	Noun Phrase		Pronoun		Existential		Total	
	No/T	%	No/T	%	No/T	%	No/T	%
Gen I	3/16	18.8	0/44	0.0	9/18	50.0	12/78	15.4
Gen II	15/38	39.5	3/99	3.0	12/16	75.0	30/153	19.6
Gen III	9/17	52.9	4/23	17.4	3/3	100	16/43	37.2
Gen IV	7/14	50.0	8/44	18.2	5/9	55.6	20/67	29.9

VARBRUL Results

Input probability = .15

Subject Type

pronoun = .26, noun phrase = .77, existential = .93

Generation

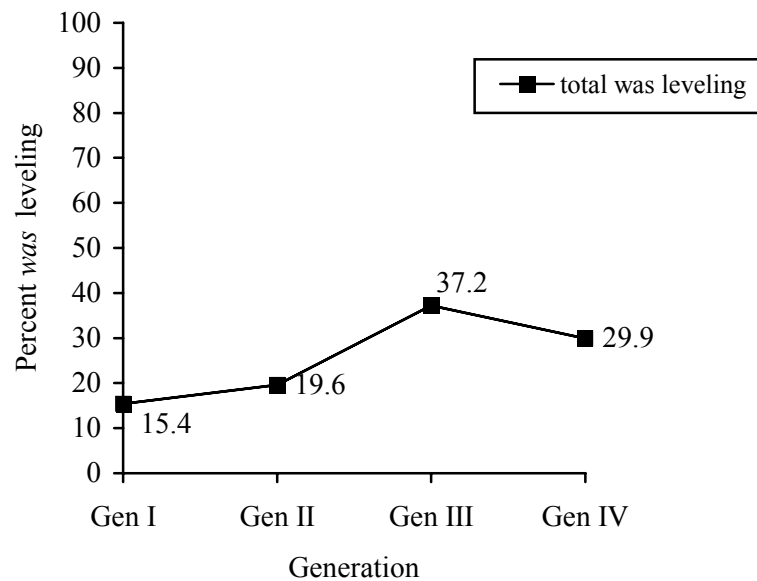
Gen I = .27, Gen II = .49, Gen III = .72, Gen IV = .65

Total Chi square = 9.265, Chi square per cell = .772

The descriptive generational data, plotted by the percentage of leveling to *was*, illustrates a definite increase from Gen I through Gen IV, with an intensification of leveling to *was* in the third generation. VARBRUL results for subject type and generation confirm these trends in past tense *be* leveling. While *be* regularization is highest in the third generation, the factor weight for the first generation shows the lowest likelihood for *was* leveling. Also, the subject constraints show a clear disfavoring effect for leveling with pronoun subjects, while both noun phrase and

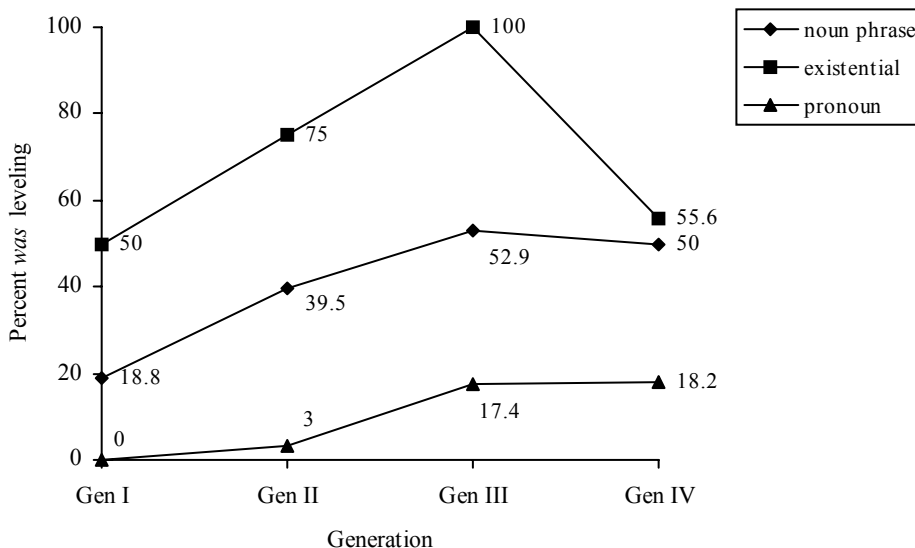
existential subjects show factor weights that favor leveling. Figure 4.1 depicts the overall generational trends in leveling.

Figure 4.1 Total *was* leveling by generation



When the descriptive generational data are broken down by subject type constraints (noun phrase, pronoun, or existential), a slightly different pattern of past tense *be* regularization is revealed, as in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 *was* leveling by subject type



It is clear from Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 that *was* leveling is maximized in Gen III, although there are differences in terms of the subject constraints. In fact, for pronoun subjects, only Gen III increases the incidence of leveling; Gen II and IV maintain comparable levels to their respective preceding generations. Also, if the trajectory for existential subject type *was* leveling continues at the current rate, the young African American speakers on Roanoke Island could soon show a much lower rate of *was* leveling with existential subjects than even the oldest generation of speakers. This is a sizeable change compared to increasing rates of *was* leveling with existential subject types demonstrated by the earlier generations and may be related to the diminishing use of existential *it* for existential *there* in constructions such as *It were ten of them* for *There were ten of them*.

4.1.2 Leveling to *were* and *weren't*

Leveling of *were* to *was* is a very common pattern throughout the English-speaking world, but some dialects show a minority pattern in which *was* is leveled to *were*, as in *I were there* for *I was there*. Though this pattern is quite extensive in some British varieties (Britain 2002; Tagliamonte & Smith 2000), it has been documented only to a limited extent in American dialects, most notably, those in the coastal areas along the Southeastern coast that extend to Outer Banks varieties (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2003, Wolfram et al. 1999). As Roanoke Island is situated in the Outer Banks geographic region, some of this minority pattern leveling could be expected in the variety spoken on the island. However, only limited numbers of affirmative leveling to *were* are attested in the current data. Six speakers, including at least one from each of the four generational groups, demonstrated this pattern, each with three or less occurrences, and in all cases the percent usage by those individuals was less than four percent. By comparison with overall rates of affirmative *was* leveling, which are above 15 percent for all generations, these variable occurrences of *were* do not reflect any overall pattern of *were* leveling, though these patterns are not out of line with the limited cases of leveling to *were* found in Outer Banks English on Ocracoke Island (Schilling-Estes & Wolfram 1994; Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2003).

Although AAE and OBE patterns of regularization for past tense *be* in affirmative constructions are similar, negative constructions follow a distinctly different pattern. OBE and other coastal dialects of the Southeastern United States have been documented as showing a unique pattern of past tense *be* regularization in which polarity determines the form of the past tense *be*. (Schilling-Estes & Wolfram 1994; Wolfram et al. 1999; Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2003; Shores 2000). In these dialects, negative constructions level to *weren't*, as in *I weren't*

listening or *We weren't looking*, while affirmative constructions variably level to *was* as noted above. Patterns in AAE, on the other hand, show an affinity for leveling to *was* regardless of polarity (Labov et al. 1968; Weldon 1994). Because of these opposing patterns for regularization, past tense *be* in negative constructions may be diagnostic of regional dialect alignment for African American speakers on Roanoke Island.

In order to determine the patterns of past tense *be* regularization in negative constructions, all instances were extracted and classified as leveled or not leveled based on standard American English grammar. Unfortunately, the Roanoke Island data contained too few instances of negative past tense *be* to warrant graphic representation or statistical analysis, since past *be* in negative constructions occurs much less frequently than past *be* in affirmative constructions. The data contained tokens of *weren't* leveling for only two speakers, a Gen I speaker with two instances of leveling and a Gen III speaker with a single instance of leveling to *weren't*. Although there are only two speakers who exhibit this regional dialect feature, several tokens of leveling to *wasn't* in negative constructions were noted. Total numbers of negative past tense *be* regularization are found in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Occurrences of negative past tense *be* leveling by generation on Roanoke Island
(No. leveled/N)

Generation	Leveled to <i>weren't</i>		Leveled to <i>wasn't</i>	
	No/T	%	No/T	%
Gen I	2/14	14.3	3/10	30.0
Gen II	0/44	0.0	5/21	23.8
Gen III	1/18	5.6	3/5	60.0
Gen IV	0/15	0.0	0/2	0.0

Although admittedly the data are limited, the speakers of Gen I through Gen III exhibit a tendency toward leveling to *wasn't*, therefore aligning with an AAE norm rather than a regional one. Nonetheless, the vestiges of the regional variant are indicated for a few of the speakers,

who may individually accommodate to the regional pattern. Other data from older European American speakers (Gen II) in the larger Roanoke Island corpus indicate robust degrees of leveling to *weren't*. Thus, this particular regional dialect variable seems never to have been a part of the AAE on Roanoke Island, but is still present at notable degrees in the speech of European American OBE speakers. Otherwise, it should be noted that no conclusions could be drawn from the absence of leveling to *was* in negative constructions by the fourth generation, as both of the tokens in that generation were taken from the same speaker and no other tokens were found.

4.1.3 Copula absence

Copula absence is perhaps one of the best-attested and most diagnostic features of AAE. Numerous studies have now investigated copula absence in African American communities in the United States (Labov 1969; Fasold 1972; Baugh 1980; Rickford 1998, 1999) and in transplant black communities from the United States (Poplack & Sankoff 1987; Walker 1999). While copula absence is frequently used as evidence of creole origins (Stewart 1968; Rickford 1977; Singler 1991), AAE actually displays a unique configuration of copula absence as compared to the English-based creoles that also feature copula absence (Reaser 2000). In AAE, the only forms subject to deletion are *is* and *are*, and only in positions where the copula can be contracted (Labov 1969; McElhinney 1993; Fasold & Nakano 1996; Wolfram & Thomas 2002). Notably, copula absence is not associated with OBE and is therefore quite diagnostic of an alignment to the trans-regional norms of AAE when used by the African Americans on Roanoke Island. Furthermore, the rate of *is* absence is perhaps a more salient marker of ethnic dialect alignment; *are* absence has been observed among some European Americans, especially in non-

rhotic regions of the rural South (Wolfram 1974; Feagin 1979; Bailey & Maynor 1985), while *is* absence is almost exclusively an African American dialect trait.

In order to determine levels of *is* and *are* absence among Roanoke Island speakers, all cases of *is* and *are* in contractible forms were extracted. Non-deleted forms included both contracted (e.g. *you're nice*) and full forms (e.g. *you are nice*). Table 4.3 gives the numbers and percentages of copula deletion by generation and by copula form, along with the VARBRUL results, based on the factor groups of form and generation.

Table 4.3 Data for copula absence by generation on Roanoke Island
(No. absent/N)

Generation	<i>Is</i>		<i>Are</i>		Total	
	No/T	%	No/T	%	No/T	%
Gen I	3/57	5.3	4/25	16.0	7/82	8.5
Gen II	6/226	2.7	52/102	51.0	58/328	17.7
Gen III	24/252	9.5	52/121	43.0	76/373	20.4
Gen IV	23/246	9.3	41/88	46.6	64/334	19.2

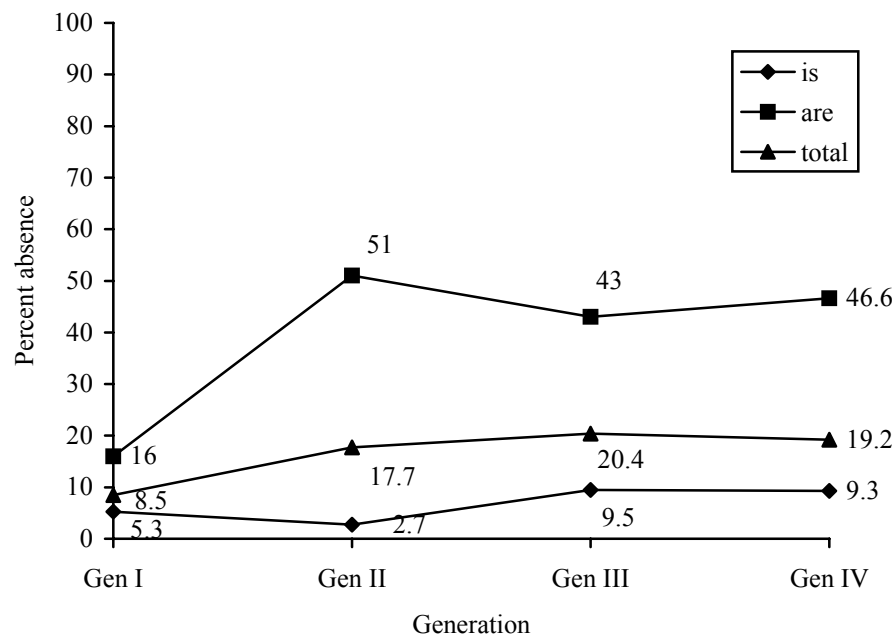
VARBRUL Results
Input probability = .14
Copula form
is = .33, *are* = .84
Generation
Gen I = .26; Gen II = .48; Gen III = .52; Gen IV = .55
Total Chi square = 12.829; Chi square per cell = 1.604

The results indicate a favoring effect for *are* over *is*, and a generational effect in which successive generations increase the absence of copulas. The most notable generational factor weight is disfavoring of copula absence for the oldest generation of speakers. In this respect, they are the least aligned with the classic AAE norm of copula absence. The Chi square scores for copula absence are marginally higher than those desired for a confident fit with the data due to a slight interactional effect between generation and *is/are* deletion for Gen II. VARBRUL

assumes independence between factor groups, but this is not always the case when social groups such as generation are mixed with linguistic factors such as the form of the copula.

Figure 4.3 graphically represents the descriptive generational data for levels of *is* and *are* absence, as well as the total copula absence for each of the four generations of speakers.

Figure 4.3 Generational copula absence



The generational trends for *is* and *are* show an inverse pattern; *are* peaks for Gen II, declines in Gen III, and levels out for Gen IV, while *is* absence reaches its lowest use levels for Gen II, rises in Gen III, and then levels out for Gen IV. This patterning could be in part a result of Gen II hyper-accommodating to their European American cohorts by maintaining the presence of *is*, the more markedly ethnolinguistic feature.

4.1.4 Copula leveling

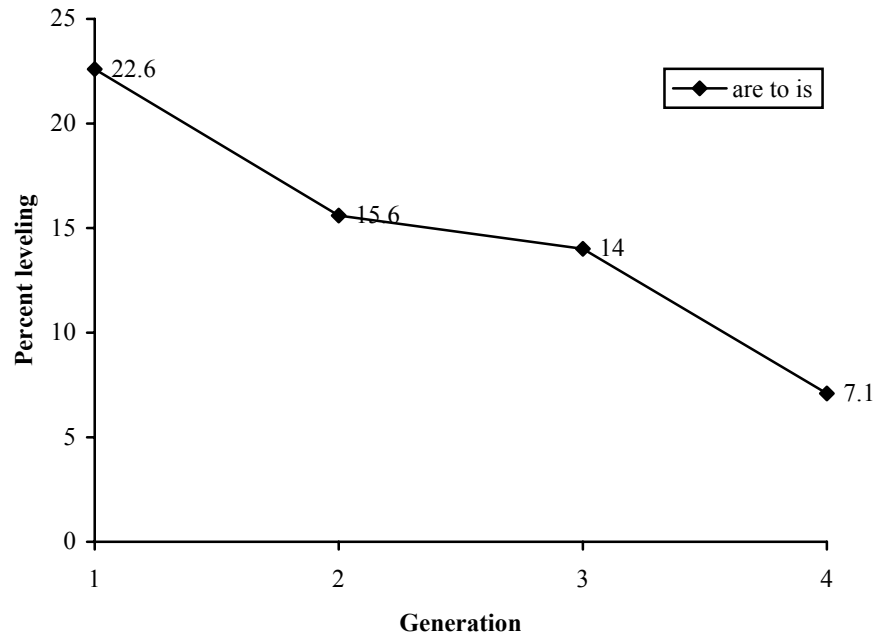
To complement the patterning of copula absence and past tense *be*, we now consider the leveling of present tense forms of *be*. In extracting for present tense *be* leveling, a token was considered leveled if it occurred in a non-standard construction, such as *She are smart* or *We is on our way*. Cukor-Avila (2001) notes comparable levels of copula deletion and copula leveling among AAE speakers in Springville, Texas; a similar degree of leveling was likewise observed by Bailey & Maynor (1985) in Mississippi and Texas. In these studies, copula leveling was only noted with *is* as the pivot form. Likewise, the Roanoke Island data included less than one percent for leveling from *is* to *are* for the entire corpus. The numbers and percentages of *are* to *is* leveling by generation are found in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Data for copula leveling by generation on Roanoke Island
(No. leveled/N)

Generation	<i>are</i> to <i>is</i>	
	No/T	%
Gen I	7/31	22.6
Gen II	21/135	15.6
Gen III	25/179	14.0
Gen IV	8/112	7.1

The trajectory of copula leveling across the generations appears to be one of declining incidence, as shown in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4 Generational copula leveling from *are* to *is*



This pattern is probably due to the increasing effects of prescriptive norms in which subject-verb agreement for *be* has iconic status, much as we shall see later for changing rates of bimorphemic consonant cluster reduction.

4.1.5 Third person -s absence

The absence of inflectional -s in third person singular verb forms is a benchmark variable of contemporary AAE (Labov et al. 1968; Wolfram 1969; Rickford 1999; Fasold 1972; Green 2002). By contrast, OBE has always been an -s third person singular marking region (Wolfram et al. 1999). Therefore, the absence of this inflection in the speech of the African Americans on Roanoke Island would certainly align them with the more broadly based AAE ethnolinguistic pattern.

To determine the patterning of third person *-s* markers for the Roanoke Island speakers, each instance of a singular third person, present-tense verb form was extracted. Tokens were then categorized by subject form - pronoun or noun phrase - and the absence or presence of the *-s* marker was noted. The descriptive figures and percentages for *-s* third person absence by generation are found in Table 4.5, along with a VARBRUL analysis by generation and type of subject.

Table 4.5 Data for third person singular verbal *-s* absence by generation on Roanoke Island (No. absent/N)

Generation	Noun Phrase		Pronoun		Total	
	No/T	%	No/T	%	No/T	%
Gen I	3/13	23.1	0/22	0.0	3/35	8.6
Gen II	10/51	19.6	16/105	15.2	26/156	16.7
Gen III	10/41	24.4	40/136	29.4	50/177	28.2
Gen IV	13/52	25.0	19/138	13.8	32/190	16.8

VARBRUL Results

Input probability = .20

*Subject type:

noun phrase = .56; pronoun = .48

Generation:

Gen I = .28; Gen II = .45; Gen III = .63; Gen IV = .46

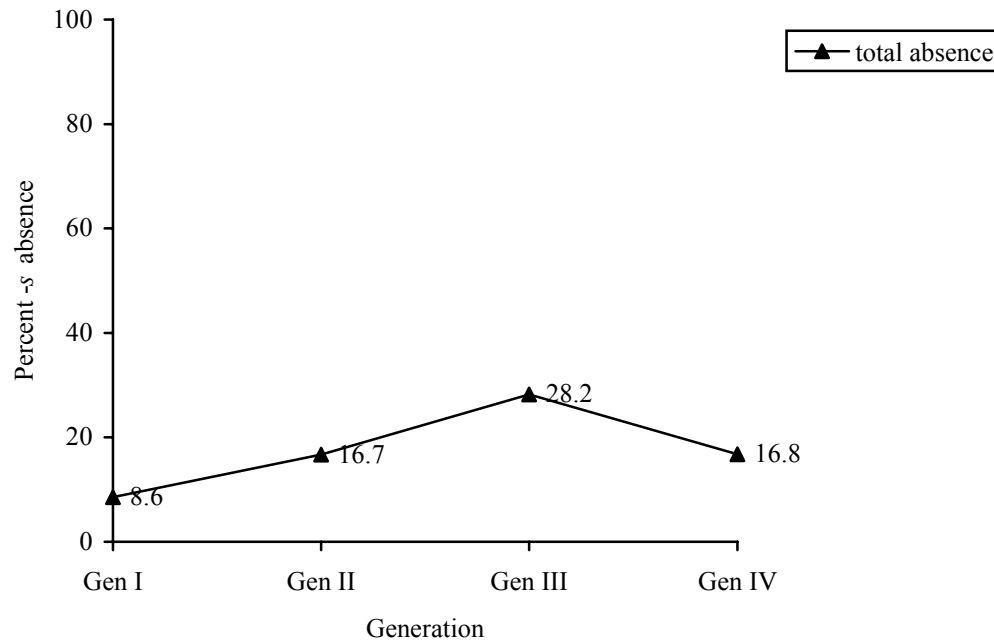
Total Chi square = 7.218; Chi square per cell = .902

* thrown out on step-down analysis

For the attachment of third person singular *-s*, the type of subject has a minimal effect—or no effect at all. In the VARBRUL analysis, subject type was thrown out in a step up/step down procedure, indicating that it is not a viable variable. The VARBRUL results indicate that Gen I disfavors *-s* third singular attachment most significantly and Gen III favors it the most. This, of course, is the same pattern that was found for past tense *be* leveling, but the difference between Gen III and the following Gen IV is even more marked. Overall, there is an increasing percentage of *-s* absence from Gen I through Gen IV. The increasing levels of overall absence

seem to indicate an increasing pattern of AAE marking for this feature. Figure 4.5 shows the graphic representation of this descriptive data by generation.

Figure 4.5 Generational -s absence



Absence of third person singular -s marking is more common in speakers of Gen IV than in those of Gen I. However, Gen IV has an equivalent percentage of -s absence when compared to Gen II, unlike other features where increasing accommodation to AAE norms showed more rapid rates of change. In this case, the occurrence of third -s absence is barely increasing across the overall generational groups. Nonetheless, the higher levels of -s absence in Gen III coincide with the peak levels of features associated with AAE such as overall copula absence and *was* leveling.

4.1.6 Third person -s attachment

Third person verbal -s attachment, unlike third person verbal -s absence, is a historically common pattern of concord in the Outer Banks dialect region (Hazen 1996, 2000; Wolfram et al.

1999). In fact, -s attachment to third person plural subjects has historically been found in varieties of English whose founding influences are the same as those for dialects in the Outer Banks region, e.g., Appalachia (Montgomery 1989; Wolfram & Christian 1976). Although previous studies of OBE indicate the presence, to variable degrees, of verbal -s marking, this same feature is not associated with southern varieties of AAE. Therefore, the presence or absence of -s attachment, as in *They eats cheese* for *They eat cheese*, in the speech of African American residents on Roanoke Island will further indicate the regional or AAE alignment of their dialect patterning.

To determine the absence and addition of third person -s markers for the Roanoke Island speakers, all instances of third-person, present-tense verb forms were extracted. Each of these tokens was evaluated as singular or plural, as relating to a pronoun or noun phrase subject, and the absence or attachment of the -s marker was noted. Unfortunately, the data for this variable were not suitable for graphic or statistical evaluation. Much like the data indicate for *weren't* leveling, the Roanoke Island speakers considered in this study exhibit near-categorical absence of this dialect feature. Total numbers for third person verbal -s marking are found in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Data for third person verbal -s attachment by generation on Roanoke Island
(No. attached/N)

Generation	Noun Phrase		Pronoun		Total	
	No/T	%	No/T	%	No/T	%
Gen I	1/6	16.7	0/15	0	1/21	4.8
Gen II	4/36	11.1	4/60	6.7	8/96	8.3
Gen III	2/41	4.9	0/86	0	2/127	1.6
Gen IV	0/31	0	1/62	1.6	1/93	1.1

As these figures indicate, very few occurrences of -s attachment appear in the Roanoke Island data. While the eight instances of -s attachment in Gen II may appear to indicate a different generational alignment, it is notable that six of those tokens were taken from a single speaker

within the generation. Thus, while remnants of the regional pattern are shown by a few of the speakers in each generation, the prevalent absence of -s attachment indicates a distinct dialect alignment away from use of this marked regional variable.

4.1.7 Static locative *to*

Static locative *to*, or *to* for *at*, as in *I worked to the crabhouse* for *I worked at the crabhouse*, is a well-attested regional dialect feature of American English. The Dictionary of American Regional English (Volume V; Hall forthcoming) documents the use of this form on the eastern seaboard of the United States, throughout New England and even to some extent in the Midwest. Nichols (1986) also noted locative *to* as a salient feature of Gullah on the Sea Islands of South Carolina. Historically, on the Outer Banks of North Carolina, it has been a robust dialect feature, and Wolfram, Hazen, and Schilling Estes (1999) comment on the substantial use of locative *to* in Ocracoke Island, North Carolina. By examining the use of static locative *to*, a marked OBE feature without a contrasting AAE variant, we can further evaluate the degree of regional dialect alignment for the African American speakers on Roanoke Island.

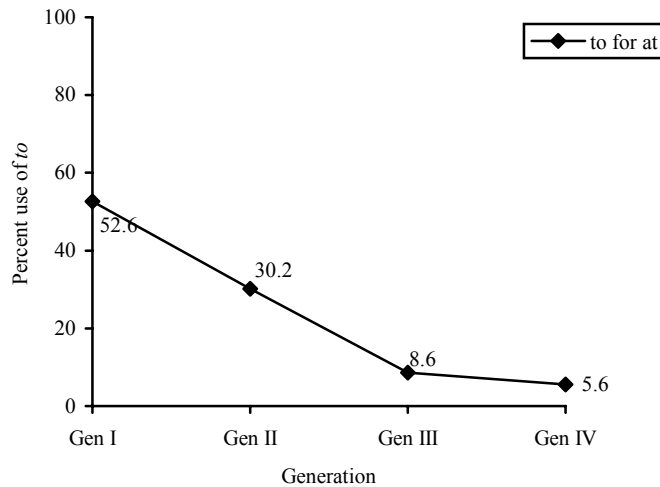
In order to determine rates of static locative *to* use for the Roanoke Island speakers, all instances of static locative *at* and *to* were extracted for each of the thirty speakers in the corpus. The number of instances of static locative *to* out of the total number of occurrences of static locative constructions (i.e. those that could potentially take *at*) for each of the four generations, as well as total Chi square and *p* values for Chi square runs between successive generations, are found in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Data for locative *to* use by generation on Roanoke Island

Generation	<i>to</i> for <i>at</i>	
	No/T	%
Gen I	20/38	52.6%
Gen II	16/53	30.2%
Gen III	3/35	8.6%
Gen IV	1/18	5.6%
Chi square results:		
Gen I/Gen II total Chi square = 4.662; $p \leq .05$		
Gen II/Gen III total Chi square = 5.819; $p \leq .025$		
Gen III/Gen IV total Chi square = .155; not significant		

These descriptive data indicate a rapid reduction in use of this particular lexical item on Roanoke Island. While Gen I speakers were likely to use either *to* or *at* equally in static locative constructions, just two generations later, speakers used *to* in less than ten percent of the environments in which it might have occurred. This trend away from locative *to* use is represented graphically in Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6 Generational locative *to* use



As this graph illustrates and the p values for the Chi squares indicate, there is a significant difference in the levels of locative *to* use between Gens I and II and Gens II and III; however, the two youngest generations do not differ significantly from each other in the incidence of locative

to. It appears that the decline of locative *to* use culminates in the third generation and appears only as a vestigial, antiquated form in Gen III and Gen IV. Like the changing rates of plural *-s* attachment, the reduction of locative *to* across time indicates a movement toward a less regionally marked morphosyntactic dialect patterning for the African American speakers on Roanoke Island.

In fact, the overall trajectory of change for the morphosyntactic features examined here clearly indicates movement toward a more ethnically marked variety, though the rate of change is not necessarily an even one. At the same time, regional distinctiveness is receding, though all traces of regionality are not necessarily lost – as evidenced by the continued presence of regional markers such as *weren't* and *-s* attachment for individual speakers. For variables such as past-tense *be* leveling, third-person singular-*s* absence, and copula absence, Gen III is leading the movement towards more ethnically marked speech. It should be noted that Gen III is the first generation of speakers who attended integrated schools on the Island, suggesting that the social dynamics of institutional desegregation actually served to heighten rather than diminish ethnic marking through speech.

4.2 Phonological Variables

4.2.1 Rhoticity

Historically, the Outer Banks geographical region of North Carolina and the Pamlico Sound dialect region of the Southeastern coast are described as rhotic areas (Wolfram et al. 1999; Kretzschmar et al. 1994; Kurath & McDavid 1961), unlike the inland parts of North Carolina and the majority of the mainland South which have historically been described as exhibiting high degrees of postvocalic *r* vocalization (Kurath & McDavid 1961; Kretzschmar et al. 1994).

Although Southern White Vernacular English (SWVE) has been described as exhibiting high levels of *r*-lessness, Bailey (2001) notes that the frequency and contexts of *r* vocalization differ in this regional variety from AAE norms. In contrast to the rhotic norm of OBE, AAE has been described almost exclusively as a post-vocalic *r*-less dialect, regardless of region (Bailey & Thomas 1998; Labov et al. 1968; Wolfram 1969; Wolfram & Thomas 2002). The *r*-lessness associated with AAE is more widespread and of higher frequency than the *r*-lessness of traditional white Southern speech. In neighboring Hyde County, North Carolina, Wolfram and Thomas (2002) found that across time and generations, the African American speakers were increasing their use of *r*-vocalization. The general dynamics of rhoticity in the South and the regional situation in the Outer Banks make this variable particularly diagnostic for Roanoke Island.

To determine the rhoticity of the Roanoke Island speakers, up to 150 tokens of post-vocalic *r* were extracted from the interviews with each of the speakers in this analysis. These tokens were broken down into three *r*-types and impressionistically characterized as either retroflex or vocalized. Each of the three *r*-types has been shown to exhibit different degrees of vocalization in various dialects of American English and the quantities of vocalization of the different types are diagnostic of these varieties. The three *r*-types were stressed, nuclear *r*, as in *thirst* or *girl*, stressed non-nuclear *r*, as in *corn* or *farm*, and unstressed syllabic *r* as in *favor* or *twister*. Almost always, stressed, nuclear *r* was realized as rhotic by all speakers of each of the four generations. The few exceptions to this are noted in Table 4.6, which provides all descriptive numbers of vocalized and retroflex *r*'s that were extracted for each speaker. The pattern of rhotic stressed, nuclear *r*'s is similar to what Wolfram (1969) found in African American speech in Detroit and to what Thomas (2001) noted in his work on North American

English variation. Nuclear, stressed *r*'s are not favored for vocalization in AAE or other non-rhotic dialects. For this reason, as well as the relatively few tokens for vocalized nuclear *r*'s, the stressed, nuclear *r* data were excluded from the rest of the analysis.

Unlike the consistent rhoticity of stressed, nuclear *r*, non-nuclear *r*'s (both stressed and unstressed) demonstrate patterns of vocalization in both AAE and SWVE. As Bailey and Thomas (1998) and Bailey (2001) attest, non-nuclear stressed and unstressed syllabic realizations of *r* in AAE are becoming more rhotic at a notable but gradual rate. The importance of this trend lies not so much in the changing pattern of rhoticity, as in the way it bears on the noted non-rhotic norms for *r*-pronunciation in AAE. This same rhotic norm is visible to some degree in the descriptive statistics and VARBRUL results for *r*-vocalization given in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Data for *r* vocalization by generation on Roanoke Island
(No. vocalized/N)

Generation	Nuclear		Stressed, non-nuclear		Unstressed		Total - Stressed and Unstressed	
	No/T	%	No/T	%	No/T	%	No/T	%
Gen I	2/92	2.2	69/194	35.6	113/264	42.8	182/458	39.7
Gen II	3/194	1.5	60/518	11.6	159/447	35.6	219/965	22.7
Gen III	3/160	1.9	32/444	7.2	83/392	21.2	115/836	13.8
Gen IV	1/128	0.8	31/362	8.6	64/297	21.5	95/659	14.4

VARBRUL Results

Input probability = .19

r-type

stressed = .38, unstressed = .63

Generation

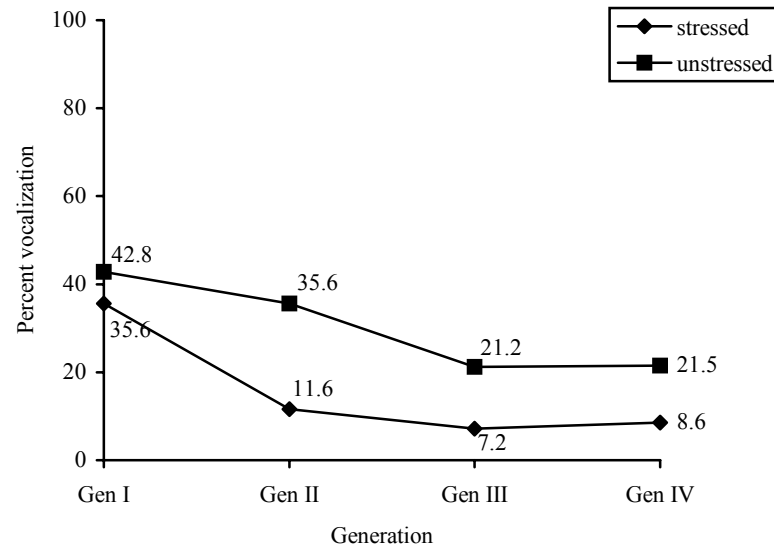
Gen I = .72, Gen II = .55, Gen III = .39 Gen IV = .41

Total Chi square = 20.941, Chi square per cell = 2.618

As these descriptive data indicate, *r*-vocalization, a traditionally attested feature of AAE, appears to be decreasing across time, as shown by the generational percentages of both the stressed, non-nuclear and unstressed *r*-types. A graphic representation of this trajectory can be

found in Figure 4.7, where the percentages of vocalization are indicated for stressed and unstressed tokens, disregarding the tokens for stressed, nuclear *r*, which are almost always rhotic.

Figure 4.7 Generational *r*-vocalization by *r*-type



As this graph indicates, the Roanoke Island speakers are becoming progressively more rhotic across generations. In particular, a notable trajectory toward rhotic pronunciation took place from Gen I to Gen III, while the rates of *r*-vocalization for Gen IV remained relatively constant with those exhibited by the preceding generation. The VARBRUL analysis indicates this same process of regional accommodation with respect to rhoticity. Gen I statistically shows a definitive preference for *r*-vocalization; Gen II neither favors nor disfavors the vocalization of *r*; and Gens III and IV indicate a hindering effect or are more likely to produce rhotic pronunciations. The Chi square figure for this VARBRUL run indicates a less favorable goodness-of-fit, again most likely related to the interplay between social and linguistic features. In particular, this interplay between variables is a result of heightened levels of stressed *r* vocalization in Gen I. The overall pattern of rhoticity, however, differs markedly from the

morphosyntactic alignment seen in the data for these speakers, whose morphosyntax appears to be moving toward a more trans-regional AAE variety.

4.2.2 Consonant cluster reduction

Although most speakers of American English will sometimes reduce word-final consonant clusters in pre-consonantal positions, as in *work late* for *worked late*, the reduction of pre-vocalic word-final consonant clusters is a dialect feature mainly associated with AAE and with other vernacular dialects arising from language contact (Wolfram et al. 2000; Wolfram & Thomas 2002). In fact, this distinct feature is frequently cited as a defining variable of AAE, due to the greater breadth and extent of its occurrence compared to other American English dialects (Bailey & Thomas 1998). Accordingly, this variable has been attested trans-regionally in AAE. As a result, the level of prevocalic consonant cluster reduction noted across time and generation for the African American speakers on Roanoke Island reveals another aspect of the degree of ethnocentric dialect alignment. If this variable is maintained across generations, it will be indicative of trans-regional and trans-generational AAE alignment rather than accommodation to regional OBE.

In order to determine the levels of consonant cluster reduction, all cases of prevocalic consonant clusters consistent with the parameters set forth in Wolfram, Childs and Torbert (2000) were extracted for each of the speakers in the corpus. The presence or absence of the final consonant sound was then evaluated impressionistically for each extracted token. Each token was also characterized as either monomorphemic, as in *mist*, or bimorphemic, as in *missed*. Descriptive data, as well as VARBRUL results based on morphemic status and speaker generation, are found in Table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9 Data for pre-vocalic consonant cluster reduction by generation on Roanoke Island (No. reduced/N)

Generation	Monomorphemic		Bimorphemic		Total	
	No/T	%	No/T	%	No/T	%
Gen I	27/51	52.9	12/68	17.6	39/119	32.8
Gen II	48/115	41.7	28/119	23.5	76/234	32.5
Gen III	54/131	41.2	10/70	14.3	64/201	31.8
Gen IV	37/98	37.8	16/85	18.8	53/183	29.0

VARBRUL Results

Input probability = .31

Morphemic status

bimorphemic = .35, monomorphemic = .63

Generation

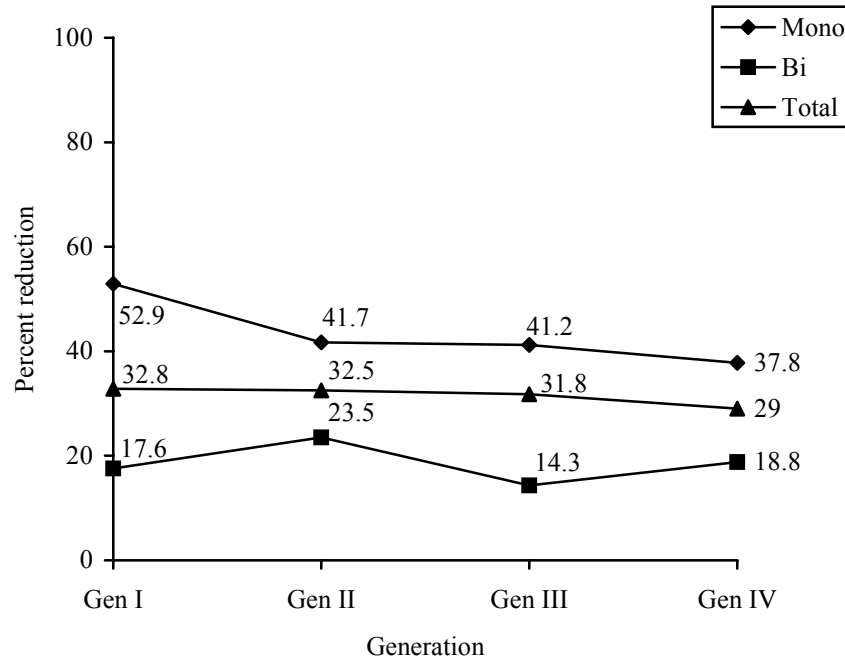
Gen I = .55; Gen II = .52; Gen III = .47; Gen IV = .47

Total Chi square = 3.426; Chi square per cell = .428

As the percentages indicate, consonant cluster reduction in bimorphemic environments is consistently less prominent than consonant cluster reduction in monomorphemic environments for each of the four generations. The status of the *-ed* suffix in bimorphemic constructions is morphologically meaningful, and its reduction is sometimes treated prescriptively as a loss of the ability to signal past tense. Hence it has become a marked feature of vernacular speech. Monomorphemic reduction, meanwhile, is maintained at a high rate across all four of the generations; however, this rate is decreasing gradually across time so that the highest rate of reduction is seen for Gen I and the lowest rate of reduction is present in Gen IV. As indicated by the VARBRUL results, the gradual lessening of this feature is not as statistically relevant as the percentages may imply. The factor weights for Gen III and Gen IV are the same, indicating that the gradual retention of final consonant sounds in monomorphemic constructions by Gen IV is mitigated by the slight increase in bimorphemic cluster reduction. Thus, after Gen I, the following generations have shown a fairly consistent rate of pre-vocalic consonant cluster

reduction. Graphic representation of these trends can be seen in Figure 4.8, for the different morphemic contexts as well as overall reduction.

Figure 4.8 Generational consonant cluster reduction by morphemic status



As the Chi square per cell indicates in Table 4.9, these data maintain a strong goodness of fit, so that the maintenance of rates of pre-vocalic consonant cluster reduction over time is a statistically supported pattern of the dialect. Thus, while rates of rhoticity are markedly changing, this phonological feature is characteristically representative of AAE alignment over time and does not seem to be undergoing any marked trajectory of accommodation through the generations. As this phonological analysis indicates, there is some regional rhoticity that sets the Roanoke Island community apart from African American communities elsewhere.

5. Individual variation and generation

Generationally, the phonological dialect features show regional accommodation across time in Roanoke Island whereas morphosyntactic dialect features demonstrate a tendency toward external AAE accommodation; however, individually the speakers exhibit a great deal of variation in terms of their dialect alignment. In order to better conceive of the relation of the individual to the group in these generational trends, we will look more closely at the individuals of Gen III and the extent of trans-regional AAE dialect features in their individual morphosyntactic patterning. Certainly the different levels of accommodation by individual speakers to these dialect norms reveal the complexity of individual dialect accommodation.

The Gen III speakers are members of the generation in school during or immediately following integration and whose group morphosyntactic data indicate a heightened degree of AAE accommodation. Table 5.1 lists the individual speakers in Gen III, including information about year of birth, gender, time away from Roanoke Island, and domains of involvement in the African American community.

Table 5.1 Gen III individual speaker data (Carpenter & Hilliard 2004)

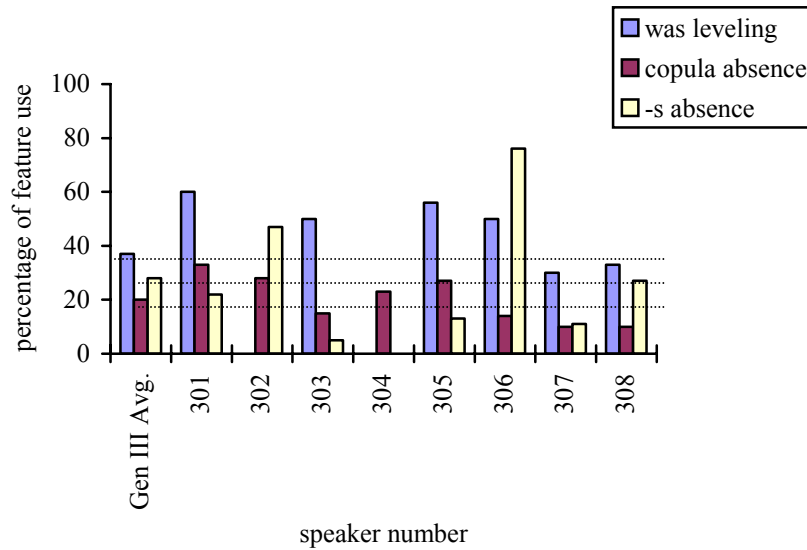
Speaker	YOB	Gender	Residence	Community Involvement
301	1953	M	away 2 years in military	extended family, business, recreation
302	1954	M	away 3-4 years in military	extended family, recreation, church
303	1956	M	lifelong	extended family, business, youth work
304	1960	F	lifelong	extended family, business
305	1961	F	lifelong	family, youth work
306	1963	M	mainland NC from 14-24	family
307	1964	M	lifelong	extended family, business, recreation
308	1969	M	lifelong	family

Specifically, the community involvement labels can be defined as follows: *family* is centered on immediate family, i.e. parents, children, spouses; *extended family* refers to regular interaction with kin relations outside of the immediate home, i.e., grandparents, cousins, nieces, nephews;

business and *recreation* labels refer to local businesses within the African American community and recreational activities such as autoracing and hunting that the community members engage in together; *youth work* refers to extensive involvement with local youth activities, whether in an official capacity, as a coach or teacher, or in an unofficial capacity, as a self-appointed mentor; and *church* refers to active membership in one of the two African American churches in the Roanoke Island community (Carpenter & Hilliard 2004). As this table represents, the African American speakers in this analysis have varying levels of community involvement and three of the speakers also lived away from the community for brief amounts of time. However, there is only minimal interaction between these personal variables and the individual variation in the morphosyntactic data.

As attested by the earlier data and analyses, the group of Gen III speakers exhibits marked accommodation to AAE norms in terms of their morphosyntax. While it would be easy to ascribe this pattern to the integration of schools and a heightened need to express in-group identity in the face of major social change, the column graph representing the generational average and individual averages for each feature, found in Figure 5.1 illustrates that there was no pervasive, overarching group trend toward AAE alignment. The dashed horizontal lines in the graph, from top to bottom, represent the generational averages for *was*-leveling, *-s* absence, and copula absence to better illustrate the individual variation with respect to the generational percentages of use.

Figure 5.1 Morphosyntactic feature use by Gen III individuals



In fact this graph shows that the morphosyntactic alignment of the individuals is tremendously varied. *Was* leveling, in particular, does not seem to follow any marked pattern of dialect use in reference to any of the profile attributes assigned to each of the speakers. Speakers 302 and 304, for example, show no evidence of *was* leveling in their speech at all, though they are also demographically distinct. Speaker 302 is a man who spent time away from the island while Speaker 304 is a woman who never left; however, both do show family involvement in the community. On the other hand, Speakers 301 and 305 exhibit the most heightened use of *was* leveling in their speech patterns and are equally dissimilar in terms of gender and residency, but once again similar in terms of family and community. Overall, each of these four speakers is similar to the others in the personal domain of family dynamics in the community but distinct in terms of *was* leveling and other personal dynamics.

Individual speakers maintain marked levels of difference with respect to copula and *-s* absence, as well. Speaker 306 shows very high levels of *-s* absence, while Speakers 303 and 304 show very low levels of *-s* absence in singular verbs. The individual variation is notable.

However, taking a closer look at the community involvement of the speakers does help contextualize their dialect variation.

Rather than gender, age order, or mobility away from the Roanoke Island community determining the extent of trans-regional AAE features in the morphosyntax of the Gen III speakers, current involvement and desired position in the community seem to play a much greater role. Specifically, the more involved speakers are in the local African American community in Roanoke Island, the less they will accommodate to the trans-regional AAE features that would mark their speech as non-native. Take Speaker 303, for example. Not only is this speaker integrated into the community because of his involvement with youth athletics (he coaches the neighborhood and the middle school basketball teams); furthermore, he is also part of one of the Roanoke Island families who can trace their ancestry back to the Freedmen's Colony. His mother is a matriarch of the community and his sister is involved in local politics. When Speaker 303 recently entered a relationship with an outsider to the African American community, he moved her into the community right down the road from his sisters rather than leave the community and move near her house. This speaker is both personally involved in the community based on his own involvement and integrated into it by virtue of the positions of his family. Perhaps even more importantly, he says that he will never leave the island, and he also encourages his children's involvement in the community. These factors may help explain why he maintains some of the least AAE-aligned levels of *-s* and copula absence in Gen III.

This same kind of personal emphasis on community involvement also correlates with the speakers who do accommodate their dialects more African American dialect norms. Speaker 305 is a lifelong, active resident of the Roanoke Island African American community. In fact, she is the niece of Speaker 303 (although because of their closeness in age, they grew up more

like cousins). However, Speaker 305 has a distinctly different alignment with the African American community. While she says that she values her own relationships within the community, she is very much engaged in external activities for her children. Speaker 305, as a mother, strongly encourages her children to be mobile so that they will have opportunities for advancement and success beyond those that she perceives as available in the immediate community. She has one daughter at a historically black university in Raleigh, North Carolina, and has a 15 year-old son who is extremely active in AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) basketball, focused on playing basketball in college, and integrated into a community of practice centered around basketball. Perhaps because of these external foci of involvement, Speaker 305 also aligns with AAE norms and exhibits high levels of AAE morphosyntax. This pattern of community alignment, involvement, and membership loosely correlates with the degree to which the individuals in Gen III align their morphosyntax with trans-regional AAE norms.

Arguably then, the dialect alignment of the individual speakers in Gen III is related more to their own personal affiliations and attitudes toward external norms than any overarching generational trends influenced by a major historical event, such as the experience of attending newly integrated schools, that defines their generation. However, this is not to say that the individual data belie the patterning by generation. As the generational data for Gen IV indicate, the increased accommodation to AAE norms for morphosyntax for Gen III does not continue at such heightened levels for this next generation. It would seem that other social factors, such as the impact on group identity stemming from integration of the schools, did in fact have a marked influence on the speech of Gen III as a group. And although the influence of integration and other group factors was clearly mitigated individually by personal affiliations within and outside

of speakers' respective communities, there was a noticeable decline in this heightened accommodation to AAE features in the following generation.

Thus, as suggested by previous studies of individual variation, there are a number of factors, such as community demographics, group affiliations, local or community involvement, and personal attitudes that may impact the dialect alignment of speakers and of groups. The morphosyntactic pattern found in Gen III on Roanoke Island, in particular, indicates that major historical events, particularly those that impact the day-to-day lives of communities, are another factor that may influence both group and individual dialect accommodation and development. Furthermore, the impact of the dialect choices by individuals within groups is integral to the group alignment as a whole.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Generational trends on Roanoke Island

As the generational data for morphosyntactic and phonological dialect variables indicate, African American speakers on Roanoke Island are accommodating their dialect to different norms depending on what level of their speech is being considered. The morphosyntactic features show variable trends in their ethnic and regional dialect accommodation, while there is a notable overall tendency toward ethnolinguistic accommodation. In other words, in their morphosyntax the speakers are ultimately aligning more with trans-regional AAE norms than with regional norms. The data reported by Wolfram and Thomas (2002) for Hyde County AAE also indicate a steady progression toward AAE norms, rather than regional accommodation. However, the data from Texana, which is demographically closer in size to Roanoke Island, show a decreasing presence of AAE features and an increasing alignment with regional Appalachian English norms (Childs & Mallinson forthcoming).

The Roanoke Island pattern of dialect accommodation is particularly noticeable when considering the Gen I and Gen IV speech patterns for a feature like copula absence. Gen IV is substantially more likely to exhibit copula absence than Gen I. Complementing the movement toward trans-regional AAE alignment is the trend away from marked regional variables such as negative past-tense *be* leveling to *weren't*, third person *-s* attachment, and locative *to* for *at*. Also, the trend toward increased past tense *be* leveling to *was* indicates a covert prestige associated with markers of vernacularity, while the decreasing incidence of copula leveling simultaneously indicates a tendency away from some iconic symbols of ungrammaticality that are also linked to vernacularity. Thus, the changing alignment of morphosyntactic features is variable depending on the specific feature and the symbolic status of each feature.

In addition to these marked trajectories with regard to morphosyntactic dialect features, the generational data for Roanoke Island also indicate a unique pattern for Gen III. Gen III, the generation of speakers who were in school during or immediately following the time of integration on the island, show markedly heightened levels of past tense *be* leveling to *was* and third person *-s* absence as compared with the other generations. There is also a notable increase in the degree of copula absence for this third generation. The cross-variable presence of this pattern indicates a appreciably heightened AAE alignment in the speech during this critical phase in the history of African American experience and the Roanoke Island community. A similar kind of pattern can be seen in the morphosyntactic data from Texana and for *-s* absence in Hyde County.

Examination of the morphosyntactic data, however, must be complemented by the analysis of the pattern of the phonological data across generations on Roanoke Island. The rhotic pronunciations of *r* across generations are becoming more in line with the regional OBE dialect standard, rather than with the AAE standard of *r*-lessness. This trend is especially striking as the Outer Banks dialect region is embedded in a larger Southern mainland region that has historically exhibited *r*-lessness, so that the progressively more rhotic tendencies of the Roanoke Island speakers are explicitly regional. Furthermore, the rates of consonant cluster reduction are neither accommodating toward a more regional nor toward a more ethnic dialect alignment, but essentially maintaining the same levels across time.

These phonological trends are especially interesting when compared to the findings from Wolfram and Thomas's (2002) study of neighboring Hyde County. Although the patterns of rhoticity are becoming more ethnolinguistically aligned in Hyde County, they are doing so at a rate very similar to that of the changing pattern of rhoticity on Roanoke Island – albeit toward

AAE norms rather than toward regional norms. Also, both Hyde County and Roanoke Island exhibit persistent levels of pre-vocalic consonant cluster reduction across generations. The similarity between the two communities with respect to consonant cluster reduction, a similarity that does not exist with respect to other diagnostic variables, supports the unique status of consonant cluster reduction as a probable long-term substrate effect - as Wolfram and Thomas (2002) have suggested.

Thus, there are different emerging patterns in the dialect alignment for generational groups of speakers, depending on the types of variables being considered. Moreover, the rate of accommodation or divergence for each of the dialect features varies extensively; there may be a gradual change as in the case of copula absence, virtually no change as in the case of consonant cluster reduction, or a very marked change as in the case of rhoticity. These discernible differences underscore the importance of continued studies of ethnic enclave communities in regions with strong regional identities and dialects to determine what factors influence the different trajectories of change and development of community dialect patterns.

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Appendix

Roanoke Island Interview

I. DEMOGRAPHY/HISTORY

1. This is (PERSON'S NAME) and the date is (DATE).
2. And where were you born?
3. How about your parents? Where was your mother born? Your father?
4. How long have you lived here, in (COMMUNITY NAME)? Where have you lived besides (COMMUNITY NAME)? How long did you live in (OTHER PLACES)?
5. Can you trace your family's history back a long way?
 - .1 Where did your family come from? Do you know what part of (COUNTRY OR STATE)?
 - .2 Do you have a family tree?
 - .3 Are there any stories in particular that you remember about your family here in the old days?
 - .4 What do you suppose Roanoke Island was like when your family first moved here?
6. Have you traveled much off the island? Where have you gone? What was your favorite place? Why?
7. Can you tell me what kinds of things you and your (husband/wife) have done for a living? (Be aware and sensitive of those who may not have worked outside of the home!)
8. One of the most popular attractions for tourists to the island is the legend of the "Lost Colony." What do you think happened to that colony and/or what kinds of ideas have you heard about what may have happened to those colonists?
 - .1 What other stories do you know about the island's history?
 - .2 What about the Civil War on Roanoke Island? Have you heard anything interesting about the Battle of Roanoke Island? Have you ever heard anything interesting about the Freedmen's Colony on Roanoke Island?
 - .3 Have you ever heard any legends or stories about ghosts on Roanoke Island? Can you tell me about it? Have you ever known anyone who has seen a ghost or says that they have seen a ghost?
9. IF A LONG TERM RESIDENT: Does it seem like (NAME OF COMMUNITY) is changing a lot these days?
 - .1 What kinds of changes have you noticed? How do you feel about them?
 - .2 What sorts of changes do other people talk about? How do they feel about them?
10. IF A NEWER RESIDENT: Why did you move here?
 - .1 What was it like, working your way into the community?
 - .2 How were you treated when you first moved here?

II. GAMES AND LEISURE

1. What games did you play as a child?
 - .1 Which ones did you play the most?
 - .2 Could you describe your favorite one to me?
2. Who did you play with?
 - .1 What kinds of games did you play together?
 - .2 Did you play sports? Which ones? How is (XXX) played?

3. What do people here do for entertainment?
 - .1 Do people watch a lot of t.v.? Can you think of one of your favorite programs? Tell me about it.
 - .2 How about movies? Do you have a favorite movie? What was it about?
 - .3 What about card games? Have you or do you play any of those? How do you play (XXX)?
 - .4 Do people play board games?
 - .5 I suppose that people do a lot of fishing around here. Do you/your spouse fish? What kinds of fish do you catch? Do you eat the fish? How do you prepare them?
 - .6 Are there other outdoor activities that people do a lot of?

III. MARRIAGE/DATING

1. How did you meet your husband (wife)?
 - .1 How did he ask you to marry him? OR How did you ask her to marry you?
2. Do most (young) people marry from within the community?
 - IF NOT:
 - .1 Where do they meet people?
 - .2 Do they bring their spouses back here to live?
 - .3 Did people used to marry more within the community than they do now?
3. What kind of advice would you give someone who is getting ready to get married?
4. What makes a marriage work/not work?
5. How about the way that everybody seems to be getting divorced these days? How do you feel about that? Why do you think that it is happening?
6. What do you think about the way that people date now compared to the way they used to date?
 - .1 Do you think that times have changed as far as dating?

IV. WEATHER

1. What was the worst storm that you've ever been in?
 - .1 What was that like?
 - .2 Did it do much damage?
 - .3 Were the roads okay?
2. Are there many problems with flooding on the island? Do the roads get washed out a lot?
3. Do you think that you are getting more storms now than you used to? Why do you think that is?
4. Have you ever been in a hurricane?
 - .1 What was that like?
 - .2 What did you do during the storm?
5. Have you ever been in a situation where you thought, "This is it, I'm going to die"? What happened? Will you tell me about it?

V. PREMONITIONS

1. In lots of families, there's someone who gets a feeling that something is going to happen and it does happen.
 - .1 Is there anybody like that in your family?
 - .2 Do you remember anything like that that came true?
 - .3 Have you ever experienced déjà vu? What was that like?

2. Some people have the same dream all the time. I always have this dream where (INSERT INTERESTING DREAM SCENARIO HERE). Do you ever have the same dream over and over again?
3. What about nightmares? Have you ever had any really frightening dreams?

VI. LOCAL COMMUNITY

1. Do people here get together a lot?
 - .1 What are some of the things you do with neighbors?
 - .2 Who are you friends with? What kinds of things do you do with them?
2. How about leaders in the community? Who are some of the people that you consider community leaders?
 - .1 Why is he/she a good leader?
 - .2 What do you think makes a good leader?
3. Can you think of any ways that the members of this community really come together to help each other out and to work together? What about in storms?
4. Do you think that this is a good place to live? Why or why not?

VII. FRIENDS

1. Who is your oldest friend?
 - .1 How did you meet?
 - .2 What makes him/her so special?
 - .3 How about some of your other friends? How would you describe the type of people that you are friends with?
2. What kinds of opportunities do you have for making new friends here? Is it easy to meet and talk to new people? How come?

VIII. LIVING CONDITIONS

1. What sorts of jobs do people have around here?
 - .1 What do most people do?
 - .2 Are jobs hard to find around here? Has it always been this way?
 - .3 Are any new businesses moving into the area?
 - .4 Are any new people moving in? How do they seem to fit in with the community?
2. How's the economy here? Does it seem to be in bad shape like the rest of the country or are people doing okay?
 - .1 What about the people who have tourist businesses? What do they do to make money in the winter?
 - .2 What about other seasonal jobs, like fishing? What else do those people do?
3. What sorts of things do people here like to eat?
 - .1 Lots of local seafood?
 - .2 Do people here plant gardens?
 - .3 What about the restaurants? Do people eat out much or are they mostly for the tourists?
4. Where do people do most of their shopping?
 - .1 Where do people buy clothes?
 - .2 Do locals dress differently from tourists?

IX. CHURCH AND RELIGION

1. How many churches are there around here?
 - .1 Do you attend one of these churches?
 - .2 Who else goes to your church?

- .3 Who goes to the other churches?
2. What kinds of social activities are there at your church?
- X. SCHOOL/EDUCATION
 1. Did you go to school on Roanoke Island?
 2. Do you think that you got a good education here?
 - .1 What would you change or do differently about your education, looking back?
 3. How many schools were there on the island when you were a student?
 4. What were your teachers like?
 - .1 Do you remember a favorite teacher? What was he/she like?
 - .2 How about a teacher that you didn't like? What was he/she like?
 5. Were there certain groups of kids who always hung out together in school? What were these different groups like?
 6. What are some of your best memories from in school?
 7. Do you think that schools have changed on the island since you were there? How?
- XI. TOURISM/CHANGES
 1. What do you think of all the tourists that come around here in the summer?
 - .1 What kind of people are they?
 - .2 Can you tell a tourist from an islander just by looking at them? If so, how?
 - .3 What sorts of problems do tourists cause?
 - .4 Do tourists ever do really silly things that natives would never do? Have you ever heard any stories like that?
 2. How do you think that tourism has changed the island? Is it for the better or for the worse/
- XII. LANGUAGE
 1. Have you ever noticed differences between the way people from Roanoke Island talk and the way other people talk? What kinds of differences?
 2. What about people from other parts of the Outer Banks? Do they sound like the people from Roanoke Island? Are there any differences that you can think of?
 3. How do you think residents of Roanoke Island sound different from one another?
 - .1 Do the older and younger native residents sound the same?
 - .2 Do you think that language is changing much on Roanoke Island?
 4. Have you ever tried to change something about the way you talk?
 - .1 Do you think that people should try to change their speech?
 - .2 If you could change the way you talk, what would you change?
 - .3 Is there anything that bothers you about the way people speak?
 5. Would you mind if I asked you about a few words that I've heard?
 - .1 Have you ever heard the word "mommuck"? What does it mean? Will you use it in a sentence for me?
 - .2 same for "yaupon"
 - .3 same for "proggin"
 - .4 same for "airish"
 - .5 same for "goaty"
 - .6 same for "mommuck"
 - .7 same for "quamished"
 - etc.