

1. THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN ENGLISH

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THIS ESSAY OUTLINES some needs and considerations for historical research on American English (AE) from the seventeenth through the nineteenth century, a period of great dynamism, a time of extensive contact with other languages and between varieties of English, and indeed the formative period of most major regional and social varieties of present-day AE. In recent decades researchers have shown that quantitative variation within synchronic data sets often indicates ongoing change, even when that change does not proceed to completion, and in this regard, variation in AE over the past three to four generations of living Americans identifies important questions and issues for historical linguists. To exercise control, however, the ensuing discussion focuses on only the first three centuries in the part of North America that became the United States, except when research on present-day varieties has direct relevance for earlier ones. Our age has witnessed how thoroughly English penetrated other languages in the twentieth century and assumes that was the time of its most dramatic spread. While perhaps true for AE or for vocabulary, Bailey (1996) has shown that the English language dispersed, if anything, more widely in the nineteenth century. The eighteenth century likewise saw it spread, as English reached beyond the American littoral well into the interior, and also to Australasia and South Africa by the 1790s. Already in the seventeenth century, English was planted in the Caribbean and much of coastal North America, established a beachhead in India, and penetrated many parts of the east and north of Ireland.

For the first two and one-half centuries of the period of focus, little more is understood today about the character or formation of AE than 40 years ago, despite it being a model testing ground for issues of language contact (cf. especially Mufwene 2001) and text-

based sociohistorical linguistics (cf. Kytö 1991). Many factors have coincided with and helped bring this situation about, more than anything else the attraction of speech records to the neglect of written texts and knowledge of how to interpret them. As long ago as the 1920s Hans Kurath, director of the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada, posited that interviews with older, less-traveled speakers in the Atlantic states would offer the best basis for approximating the AE of the formative period and outlining transatlantic linguistic connections and for mapping major dialect areas (Kurath 1928). More recent quantitative research has also exploited speech records, that is, of older speakers in conservative communities, especially to examine morphological features. However, by using speech records internal reconstruction can proceed no farther back than the mid-nineteenth century at the very outer limit. For earlier periods, researchers must use commentary from travelers, grammarians, and lexicographers, representations of speech in plays and fiction, manuscripts such as private letters, and other elements of the written record (see Montgomery 2001, 96–104), collectively the only record for varieties of English beyond a century and a half ago. Beyond finding and utilizing older recordings more thoroughly and carefully, progress in reconstructing earlier AE depends to a large extent on pinpointing and interpreting speech-based documents of likely value. It is easy enough to say that we need more, larger, and earlier data sources, but two other research needs are equally important:

1. To identify and respect the limitations as well as the advantages of one's chosen methodology and data and to avoid unwarranted assumptions regarding them.

Linguistic studies, like pharmaceuticals, need to be labeled for potential side effects. Whether for convenience or otherwise, such caveats have often been neglected for research on African American English (AAE), as when researchers label data from a small, disparate sample or from a single small community as a socio-historical “variety” (Poplack and Tagliamonte 1989, *inter alia*), use dichotomous social categories such as “black” versus “white” that

obscure the complexity of rural communities, or divide and compare speakers by state (Schneider 1989; Rickford 1999; inter alia) rather than by cultural region (i.e., reflecting internal migration) or physiographic region (but cf. linguistic geography, especially Pederson 1986–92). Researchers need to be self-critical of their methodologies, their categories, and the generalizability of their findings. Too often social and linguistic categories and variables are adopted because they are dichotomous and permit binomial analysis.

2. To utilize knowledge of social history and the history of the English language.

Otherwise studies risk being overly enamored of their own methodologies, imposing modern linguistic categories and distinctions on historical data and making false starts rather than laying a secure foundation for further research. A great strength of linguistic geography, for example, has been its practitioners' willingness to learn from geographers. Too often the field of American English has seen a simplistic use of history or social profiles of communities, produced when linguists consult the work of historians only cursorily for a convenient quotation or summary to frame an argument. Labov (1972) notwithstanding, historians have been much better in understanding that each type of evidence has its problems and what those problems are. By comparison, linguists have much to learn (Fischer 1970).

As is evident, discussion of needed research is inseparable from a critique of existing research. Because ADS's previous *Needed Research* collections lacked coverage of history, this chapter will attempt a perspective somewhat broader than the past two decades. It will take "history" to refer to both internal and external developments, that is, changes within AE and how historical events and periods intersect with these. American English may be one of the most thoroughly documented language varieties (or collections of varieties) in the world, but the proportion of scholarship on its historical dimensions remains relatively small.

USING SPEECH RECORDS

A convenient division of language change research using speech records is that between cross-generational and cross-variety comparisons. The first approach has been used quantitatively and fruitfully, as by Bailey (1997) to posit that some features of “Southern American English” diffused rapidly both socially and geographically beginning around 1880. Even so, it remains premature to characterize many grammatical and phonological features of that and other varieties of AE as late-nineteenth-century innovations, inasmuch as few speech records predate that time and intensive manuscript research has hardly begun (cf. Schneider and Montgomery 2001; Montgomery and Eble forthcoming). The cross-generational approach needs much further development to enable researchers to move from apparent-time (e.g., that the speech of people born in 1850 but recorded in the 1930s represents that of their youth) to real-time analysis. The second approach is older and more established and dates back more than a century (Bailey 1992). It is premised on the use of conservative data from one or more speech communities or varieties.

CROSS-VARIETY COMPARISON. This approach proposes an inferential triangulation between two or more varieties that from historical sources are thought to have shared an origin or earlier history, though demonstrating the precursor(s) may not always be relevant. It uses data from interviews (usually with older, less literate speakers) to capture details of variation, takes apparent time for granted, and rarely compares generations of speakers. Adopted by linguistic atlas research on lexical and phonetic differences in AE, cross-variety comparison for phonological and morphological features was pioneered more recently by sociolinguistic and creole research, the best examples of which involve explicitly specifying contexts of variation, tabulating variant forms, and considering the distribution of forms in relation to other features. However, in equating conservative twentieth-century varieties with ones that existed one or more generations earlier, cross-variety comparison avoids using written records, undertaking instead comparative reconstruction before internal reconstruction beyond that permit-

ted by apparent time. As previously suggested, to posit input patterns from the eighteenth-century settlement period, extreme versions of this approach have sometimes been used, from early linguistic atlas work as conceived by Hans Kurath (1949) to Tagliamonte and Smith (2000), who use late-twentieth-century material collected and analyzed in the British Isles and Canada. The privileging of data from sociolinguistic interviews (and the exclusion of other data from consideration; cf. Myhill 1995) not only to quantify variation but also to claim that certain features did NOT exist is one result. But the absence of evidence is not necessarily the evidence of absence. Pragmatic conditions may always be at work screening grammatical features that are highly charged emotionally out of the written record as well as most conversations, but to date we have no principled account of what to expect to show up in a sociolinguistic interview and what not to.

In other cases, as when speech communities are not at issue, cross-variety comparison is more appropriate, as in comparing vowel systems of colonial varieties of English (Lass 1990). This is also the case for inventories of British and American speech relations (Laird 1970, 163–74; Ellis 1984; Schneider forthcoming) that use dialect dictionaries, linguistic atlas materials, and so on; even though the time-depth of a common ancestor is relatively shallow for such studies (usually the eighteenth century), the presumption of staticness needs to be recognized and calls for corroborative evidence from the written record whenever possible.

AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH. Most often cross-variety comparisons of pre-twentieth-century AE have involved AAE, one of many varieties whose historical development is still very much open to exploration. Three decades of work on AAE have produced mainly studies of verbal morphology but left many areas of grammar and phonology unknown, even with the publication of Mufwene et al. (1998). The research to date has been driven overwhelmingly by one overarching issue—the so-called creolist-versus-dialectologist origin of AAE, a large and important question that is now somewhat outmoded because most linguists accept a position somewhere between these extremes often used to frame arguments.

To make further progress, the “origins issue” would benefit enormously from a more thorough descriptive base, such as a comprehensive grammatical account along the lines of Schneider (1989) for nineteenth-century AAE (such a resource is needed for other varieties of AE as well). The WPA Ex-Slave Narratives (Rawick 1972) are the first quasi-speech documents on nineteenth-century AAE given to large-scale quantitative analysis, a process which required Brewer (1974) and Schneider (1989, 1997) to develop explicit methodologies and assess the utility of such texts for linguistic purposes. More researchers should follow their self-critical approach to the relative merits of the data they use. Kautzsch (2002), the only major work using and comparing written and spoken records, is also exemplary in this way.

English creoles and nineteenth-century AAE are not necessarily comparable entities (but see the arguments of Mufwene 1996). One can posit a common ancestor for Anglophone creoles in the Western Hemisphere on external grounds, but can the same be said for AAE and other varieties of nineteenth-century AE? The creoles have been in situ for generations and are the tongues of majority communities. AAE varieties, in contrast, have undergone profound changes in the past century and a half and, as spoken by minority communities, have been in constant contact with mainstream communities.

Recent work on emigre communities founded by African Americans in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century in Nova Scotia and the Dominican Republic (Poplack 2000; Poplack and Tagliamonte 2001) and in Liberia (Singler 1991) has attempted to approximate African American speech of a century and a half or more ago. Poplack and Tagliamonte’s ambitious, sophisticated research argues that people of African descent formed socially and linguistically distinct “enclave” communities abroad after leaving the United States. To extend the validity of data collected from speakers in these places in the 1980s and 1990s, they have likened linguistic patterns there to those found in the WPA Ex-Slave Recordings (Bailey, Maynor, and Cukor-Avila 1991) from the rural American South dating from two generations earlier. This effort to validate more recent data through cross-variety comparison offers

a welcome model. Nonetheless, two of their presumptions that need more critical evaluation are the monolithicity of geographically very dispersed nineteenth-century AAE (a view shared, it must be said, by many other researchers) and the staticness of diasporan varieties of AAE over the past two centuries (Afro-Nova Scotian English is not a “transplanted variety” but a descendant of one). Generational comparisons, not pursued by them but shown in the recent work of Wolfram and Thomas (2002) to reveal large-scale change in an “enclave community” in coastal North Carolina, suggest the dynamism at work between consecutive generations even in very rural areas. Thus, the reification of diasporan varieties as representing mid-nineteenth-century AAE is problematic. Though Poplack and Tagliamonte (2001, 39–66) do not mention it, the Nova Scotian communities featured intermarriage with whites in the first generation (Carol W. Troxler, pers. com., 21 June 2002), the implications of which need to be explored. In the crucial formative period, black and white communities there may not have been as distinct as they are now.

In editing transcripts and analytical essays on 11 interviews with former slaves, Bailey, Maynor, and Cukor-Avila (1991) made valuable use of recordings in the Archive of Folk Culture at the Library of Congress. Despite clamors for more such material, few researchers have seriously taken up the call to locate it. The same archive holds hundreds of stories, sermons, interviews, and other texts recorded in the 1930s yet to be consulted by linguists; they just happen not to be from ex-slaves. Two examples are “Hoodoo Story” (AFC 115 A1, recorded from an African American by John A. and Alan Lomax in New Orleans in 1935) and “The Capture of John Hardy” (AFC 2742 B3, recorded from a white by Herbert Halpert in Ferrum, Virginia, in 1939). Many texts come from speakers comparable in birth date with former slaves and can be strategically employed to enlarge the corpus of recorded material from speakers born in the mid-nineteenth century. In fact, the Ex-Slave Recordings have often forced those who have used them to generalize from an unhappily small sample of 11 speakers dispersed over five states, making it suspect to treat their speech as a coherent variety or to conclude that features did not exist in

nineteenth-century AAE because these few speakers did not use them.

One large corpus is transcripts of interviews conducted mainly in the late 1930s by Harry Middleton Hyatt with hoodoo doctors in towns and cities across much of the eastern United States (Hyatt 1970–75). Heretofore they have been analyzed for only the verb *be* (Viereck 1988; Ewers 1996), though the main title of the latter author's book (*The Origin of American Black English*) implies a broader-based analysis, not to mention one using earlier material. The Hyatt transcripts form, after the WPA Ex-Slave Narratives, the largest corpus of material from speakers of AAE born in the nineteenth century and deserve a book-length treatment comparable to Schneider (1989). They are of considerable value for features such as verb principal parts, noun plurals, and others. Questions about their validity (and indeed that of other transcripts) can be explored by internal validation with reference to other data sources rather than only by external validation with reference to the circumstances in which they were produced. How can one explain, for example, the fact that habitual *be* (and *bes*) is often found in the Hyatt materials, but apparently not at all in “enclave” varieties? Can this be attributed entirely to wholesale change at the end of the nineteenth century? If AAE allegedly changed so much from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century, would we not have expected it to have done so in other ways in the nineteenth century? Is it sufficient to claim that it was “insular” or spoken only in “enclave” communities during that time? Should data other than that from interviews from such communities be in effect discounted even though it cannot be analyzed with the same methodology? How do we reconcile it with nineteenth-century evidence in the *Dictionary of American Regional English* (DARE 1985–) on habitual *be*, for example?

Other collections of early AAE speech records, including interviews, are not hard to find. Typically data from linguistic atlases, because of its inventorial nature (Montgomery 1993), has been used for correlational (Dorrill 1986) rather than quantitative variationist analysis. The Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States (LAGS) project, however, is fundamentally different, in that all interviews were recorded, contain significant amounts of free conversation,

and are archived at Emory University and the University of Georgia. The oldest African American speaker in LAGS was born in 1884 (an 88-year-old man from Edwards, Mississippi, who was interviewed for four hours and ten minutes); 13 others were also born in the 1880s (Pederson 1986–92, vol. 1).

The lack of work using recordings to explore other nineteenth-century varieties, especially white ones, has meant little progress on a host of major questions, some to be identified below. In some ways, then, the consuming interest in reconstructing AAE has been a mixed blessing.

FROM SPEECH RECORDS TO WRITTEN RECORDS

Interest in twentieth-century varieties has been fueled by diverse, often large collections of technologically produced and analyzed data, but research using speech records often raises issues that can be productively pursued for earlier stages of AE. For example, acoustic equipment certainly permits the measurement of details of vowel articulation that can rarely be guessed at from the written record (Thomas 2001; Labov, Ash, and Boberg forthcoming), but it also lays the groundwork for much further work on vowel changes as revealed in good impressionistic phonetics (Boberg 2001) and in occasional spellings found in manuscripts (Stephenson 1967).

Written records rarely, if ever, feature the vernacular language that linguists most prize, but to the extent that they exhibit non-standard forms, they can provide many insights to the spoken AE of former days. Despite the fact that literary attestations involve perhaps the most uncertainties of assessment because their relation to real-life models is uncertain, they have been used routinely, but uncritically, in attempts to document and reconstruct AAE (e.g., Stewart 1970b; Dillard 1972). Nonetheless, evidence from literary dialect in the speech of stock characters in drama and fiction can be used in an appropriate, principled, and restrained manner. In fact, the study of eighteenth-century ethnic varieties of AE relies largely on such material, which is extensive for several ethnic character types, including Irish, German, Scottish, African American, Amerindian, and Yiddish (Cooley 1995). By the mid-

1700s, when it began in the American colonies, literary dialect drew on British traditions of comic stereotypes. It probably often reflected conventions imported from Britain rather than native to the United States, but this has been investigated in only one case (Cooley 1997).

Another way to reach beyond the time limitations of tape recordings is to extract commentary from accounts by the extraordinary variety of people (clergymen, journalists, explorers, etc.) who toured or sojourned in the American colonies or the young nation and then wrote of their experiences and impressions of local people, occasionally citing or evaluating the speech they heard. Read (1933) pioneered this research from sources being read for the *Dictionary of American English*, but few linguists other than Dillard (1972) have invested much effort in digging such commentary out. As shown in Clark's *Travels in the Old South* (1956), it dates from the early seventeenth century and is particularly voluminous for the antebellum period. Though limited and often reflecting prejudices and misconceptions, such popular observations complement other types of period evidence on speech patterns. In them lie not only citations of linguistic forms, but labels and perceptions of local and regional speech. They are perhaps the best sources for undertaking perceptual dialectology of pre-twentieth-century AE, but nineteenth-century schoolbooks, usage manuals, and the like can also be mined in this regard (e.g., the extensive section on "Provincialisms" in Kirkham 1829). Manuals describing the uncertain English of minority-language communities should also be of interest.

As already suggested, however, it is manuscript documents—in particular, letters from semiliterate writers—that hold the most value. They include personal letters, petitions, depositions (Wright 2003), and so on that have single authorship and preferably no amanuensis. Despite some manifest limitations (e.g., the lack of personal information about the writers), such documents often offer the only data with time-depth greater than a century and a half. Montgomery (1999) and Schneider and Montgomery (2001) show that it is untenable to argue that the effects of standard spelling and grammar inevitably obscure or distort the speech of a

writer and make semiliterate writing too problematic to analyze. Manuscript documents are often speech-based, that is, writers compose and spell by ear rather than by written model. Beyond their direct evidence, they are invaluable for corroborating inferences from establishing the input of Irish and British English to American colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Just as sociolinguists must grapple with the all-too-familiar “observer’s paradox” (Labov 1972), sociohistorical linguists face two analogous paradoxes regarding the vernacular in written records. First, it is much more difficult to find evidence of it antedating the twentieth century, yet to rely solely on data collected in the twentieth century and inferences from that leads to scholarship that is easily overstated and possibly unreliable. Second, individuals of lower social stations whose speech intruded more directly into their writing usually wrote infrequently and were less likely to have their writing preserved.

TYPOLOGY OF LETTER WRITERS. One way to overcome the latter paradox, or at least to reduce considerably the necessary time in locating appropriate documents, is to identify persons of little education having a compelling reason to write (preferably with some frequency, to a government official or an estate, for example) and thus who might have their letters preserved in collections of official or family papers. A tentative typology (Montgomery 1997) includes at least three kinds of individuals: functionaries (those who were required by their occupation to submit periodic reports), lonely hearts (who were separated from loved ones), and desperadoes (who needed help). An example of a lonely heart is the farm boy who became a Civil War private, left his family for the first time, and wrote home to dispel the pain of separation. A typical desperado was a Civil War soldier who, unjustly arrested, punished, or deprived of pay or privilege, wrote to a military or governmental official for assistance. A functionary was a plantation overseer who supervised slaves in the field and reported periodically on the progress of crops and other affairs to an absentee plantation owner. Though linguists have recently begun to use recordings of Civil War veterans (Thomas 2001), they have yet to

exploit the primary source on the language of the day, letters from privates. In a classic essay, “Dear Folks,” Wiley (1978) suggests how rich they are. We know very little about the status of dialect boundaries in the nineteenth century except by extrapolating from twentieth-century linguistic atlas records, though the availability of Civil War letters and diaries, among other documents, makes this question quite approachable. Profitable comparisons could be made between the letters of white and black Civil War soldiers, who were sometimes from the same areas. How did AE migrate as a result of the war and other large-scale demographic and social events of the nineteenth century?

These three situations cut sharply across the social spectrum because people of various social stations faced loneliness, deprivation, or the requirement to inform others of their work. More important, they motivated people to write for themselves and put words to paper regardless of their literacy. Someone pleading for mercy or relief may well pay little attention to the form (spelling, capitalization, grammar, etc.) of his or her writing, being more concerned with getting a message across. The written version of the observer’s paradox is accordingly mitigated.

Beyond collecting such letters and analyzing them in case studies, historians of AE need to take the next logical step: assembling corpora of them using principled criteria (work has begun with Schneider and Montgomery 2001 and Van Herk and Poplack forthcoming). The challenge is quite different from that faced by other historical corpora of English because of the very different nature of “representativeness” of the texts of interest.

INPUT VARIETIES AND EMIGRANT LETTERS. The study of donor or input varieties to AE has come a long way since becoming an interest to American linguists in the 1920s (Krapp 1925; Kurath 1928; for a review, see Montgomery 2001). Collectively written records enable researchers to detail, not only approximate, aspects of input varieties. Research to date has little utilized early letters and other contemporary documents, though they afford more reliable internal reconstruction and can often be used to confirm or disconfirm connections arrived at by cross-variety comparison

alone. For example, habitual *be* has been attributed by Stewart (1970a), Rickford (1986), and others to contact between Irish emigrants and African slaves in the antebellum South because it is found in strikingly similar patterns in modern Irish English and AAE. Manuscript evidence from Irish emigrant letters, however, shows that habitual *be* arose in Ireland almost certainly too late for input or transfer to AAE (Montgomery and Kirk 1996). Emigrant letters indicate that it spread rapidly as a result of language shift from Irish to English in Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century.

Emigrant letters especially hold promise for documenting input varieties to AE because they date to the early eighteenth century (Miller et al. 2003), are numerous, and provide the most continuous record of the language of lesser-educated individuals from the British Isles (Montgomery 1995). Research using them requires an understanding of emigration history, however, because not all regions contributed significant numbers of emigrants and not all varieties came to North America or to the same parts of the continent in the same proportion. Emigrant letters from New England have never been analyzed or, apparently, even collected. The settlement of the region by East Anglians is well documented, but very little had survived there by the time New England speech was first described in the late nineteenth century. What are the possible explanations for this? Was it lack of transfer, due to heterogeneous input that was quickly leveled, the standardizing influence of a highly literate society, or something else? Was it lack of evidence, due to lack of documentation? We do not know, perhaps because to date no one has scoured the archives and county record offices in Essex and Sussex in search of letters of local, often ephemeral, literature such as promotional and other propagandistic tracts and letters. Nor has anyone done this in the north Midlands of England to document the language of thousands of Quakers who came from there to the Delaware Valley between 1680 and 1720, or in southwestern England to document the input varieties to the mid-seventeenth-century Chesapeake (Fischer 1989). The vast collections of the Colonial Office at the British Public Record Office could occupy a team of researchers to ferret out documents.

A long-range goal of the study of Old World/New World linguistic relations, involving languages and varieties from the British Isles, continental Europe, and Africa, is a predictive model for which linguistic features, on linguistic and extralinguistic grounds, would have survived and which would not have. In this regard, historians of AE have much to learn from creole studies, as shown by Mufwene (2001).

EARLY AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH. Interest in reconstructing the earlier history of AAE has motivated fruitful research for more than three decades and not a few assessments of the state of knowledge and calls for more data. Rickford (1998, 157–63), for example, cites seven types of useful information: (1) sociohistorical conditions; (2) textual attestations of AAE from earlier times (examples from fiction, drama, poetry, travelers' accounts, and court proceedings, as well as interviews with former slaves and other African Americans); (3) diaspora recordings; (4) creole/AAE similarities; (5) African language/AAE similarities; (6) English dialect/AAE differences; and (7) comparisons across age groups of African American speakers. He rightly contends that the reconstruction of AAE has often fallen short because linguists have been content to draw inferences from only twentieth-century data and have done too little to identify and use earlier data sources.

Rickford advocates quantitative analysis of dialect representations found in literary texts for features such as zero copula but makes no mention of manuscripts from semiliterate writers. The usefulness of the latter has in recent years been demonstrated for African Americans who were Civil War soldiers from the 1860s (Montgomery, Fuller, and DeMarse 1993), who migrated from North America to Sierra Leone in the 1790s (Montgomery 1999), and who left the American South to found Liberia in the 1830s–1850s (Van Herk and Poplack forthcoming). How clearly evidence from such documents supports or fails to support a creole background to AAE has only begun to be determined. Such material can be found in both American and British archives. A number of reliable transcripts have been published (Starobin 1974; Miller 1978; *inter alia*).

DESCRIPTIVE STUDIES

Interest in basic description has waned considerably in research on early AE, partly as a result of emphasis on quantitative approaches, which consider narrowly circumscribed sets of variable features and deem others unworthy of examination. The long-term result of this is the lack of comprehensive works such as Krapp (1925) (yet to be superseded for the history of American pronunciation, but badly needing updating) or Eliason (1956), an exemplary account of the diverse linguistic landscape of one state, drawing on the widest range of written records. Such work has been replaced by newer scholarship that is often sociologically richer but culturally much poorer.

LANGUAGE CONTACT AND SPEECH COMMUNITIES. Given recent advances in the field of language contact, it is time to consider afresh issues of borrowing from other languages into AE. To date research has dealt with lexis, except for the influence of German in Pennsylvania and a few similar cases. This is not to say that lexical borrowing from other languages has been adequately assessed (not since Marckwardt 1958 has the field had a general overview), but *DARE* offers extraordinary new possibilities for investigating the topic. In tandem with the two indexes produced for its first three volumes (von Schneidemesser and Metcalf 1993; von Schneidemesser 1999), many studies of items labeled by *DARE* as having a particular language source are possible, especially lexis and semantics having nonnative sources. Hamilton (1998) shows brilliantly how *DARE* can be exploited in one case study. Other possibilities include Spanish, German (inside and outside Pennsylvania), Dutch, and Algonquian. The influence of other languages is ripe for investigation using approaches and sources other than *DARE*. The Cherokee, for example, contributed much to the culture of southern Appalachia, but next to nothing to the English of western North Carolina—apparently. Many Cherokee borrowings may in fact lurk as loan translations in the names of local plants and other items there. In this case and others, too little language contact research has been undertaken by those who know the

donor language well. This includes influence from African languages, which because of the numerous and varied inputs, remains inadequately understood and still a subject for much conjecture. The influences of some languages having contact with English in the colonial period (e.g., Scottish Gaelic in eastern North Carolina, Irish Gaelic in eastern ports) has never been researched, but there is little point in investigating these and many others if researchers are not adequately schooled about what groups settled where, what language(s) they spoke (speakers from Ireland or Scotland were frequently bilingual), the types of communities they formed, how intact these communities were, what contacts communities had with others, what social networks they participated in, what role(s) the emigrant language played in educational, religious, and community functions, and so on. They should begin with case studies of locales by detailing the order of arrival and numbers of speaker groups and what language(s) they spoke. What interactions did people have with different language and dialect groups? How important was linguistic solidarity with members of one's own linguistic group?

How or when did a generalized version of AE develop? Did regional varieties exist at the time of the American Revolution? To what extent can we detect in early AE principles of dialect contact presented by Trudgill (1986)? Such broad questions require the introduction of concepts and analytical tools from language contact and sociolinguistic research to scenarios of early AE. The work of one scholar in particular has confronted such questions. Dillard (1992) has argued that regional British English contributed next to nothing to early AE because emigrants spoke contact varieties like Maritime Pidgin English before departing. Dialect contact after arrival leveled input varieties further and produced a koiné by the mid-eighteenth century (modern regional varieties of AE arose in the early national period from social factors and other types of language contact). While Dillard's stressing of the fluidity of colonial life is a healthy corrective to presumptions about transatlantic connections made by linguists such as Kurath, leveling did not occur uniformly everywhere, nor almost certainly did a single leveled variety of AE develop in the eighteenth century. Some of

the counteracting factors would have included the following: (1) Americans were multistyle speakers from the beginning, and dialect rivalry and contact may have reinforced if not increased their range of styles. If newcomers learned a new variety, they did not necessarily discard their old one(s). Koinéization may have affected more public styles of language but probably left private ones more or less unaffected. (2) Covert prestige probably became associated with many linguistic forms in colonial times, screening them from the written record. (3) New arrivals tended to seek their national or ethnic group and to reinforce existing communities. (4) Rivalry between regions and colonies was common in the eighteenth century and has remained strong ever since. The perception, and most likely the reality, of regionally distinct speech must have been based in part on selective maintenance of British regional patterns. (5) American colonies were autonomous from one another—they were founded separately, had lives of their own, and were usually bound by commercial and cultural ties more closely to Britain than to one another. And (6) each colony would have had its dynamics, if not its distinct inputs, producing different dialect mixtures. In short, the complexity of early American speech communities, which always involved contact and were often multilingual, needs much scholarly attention.

OTHER NEEDS AND POSSIBILITIES. As suggested above, more work needs to use the written record to seek a historical perspective on sound changes, many of which may not be twentieth-century phenomena. Thomas (2001) has made a splendid start on this, but his coverage, often with only one speaker for a large territory, is not deep. More intensive studies can exploit the extraordinary wealth of recordings from the 1930s to the 1960s by folklorists and oral historians, many of whose speakers were born in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Nor does Thomas analyze consonants. Reconstruction of rudiments of the intonation of AE and its varieties has hardly been contemplated, but perhaps it is time to consider what the appropriate research questions would be. Popular commentary in the eighteenth and nineteenth century frequently

made reference to voice quality (e.g., the “whine” of New England or the “twang” of the South), offering possible starting points.

In tandem with the two *DARE* indexes, one can explore the development of many regional vocabularies. For example, the first three volumes of the dictionary label 228 items “Appalachian” or “southern Appalachian.” The English of these regions is widely believed to be among the most conservative in the country, yet only a fairly small portion of items now concentrated there (e.g., *budget* ‘pouch, valise’) are evidently archaisms. This suggests that, at least for vocabulary, Appalachian English is strikingly and fundamentally a new variety of AE.

CONCLUSIONS

Good research on early AE begins with well-informed questions and the willingness to employ a variety of methods and sources. Just as diachrony and synchrony need one another, so do speech records and written records. The latter dichotomy is in any case a false one, because the records overlap chronologically and intersect in numerous ways, and some sources (e.g., historical dictionaries) draw on both. As often as feasible, researchers of AE should utilize both speech records and written records to prompt questions, to seek the broadest (in type of source) and widest (in time period) support for their projects, and to confirm their findings.

Good research on early AE is motivated by larger comparative and historical questions concerning language and identity, language status, and language evolution. Much more than at the time of the last report on *Needed Research* twenty years ago, the empirical perspective, basic research tools, and refined, diverse methodologies are at hand to tackle such questions. More than for most other research areas in our field, however, good research on early AE is interdisciplinary. The work of Schneider and Montgomery (2001) on overseer letters would have been impossible without the help of historians to identify documents, help decipher them, and offer assistance in other ways. Collaboration between linguists and their colleagues in other disciplines is the lifeblood of such research.

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