SOCIAL CONTACT AND LINGUISTIC DIFFUSION: HIBERNO-ENGLISH AND NEW WORLD BLACK ENGLISH

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The historical relation between Hiberno-English and New World Black English is a fruitful research site for exploring the interplay of internal and external factors in linguistic diffusion. A recent hypothesis that NWBE habitual *be* derives from HE is first assessed through attention to the history of Irish/African contact in colonial America and the Caribbean, and then critically evaluated against six alternatives. On the basis of internal and external considerations, a hypothesis which involves decreolization from creole *does* (*be*), but incorporates possible influences from Hibernian and British varieties of English, is regarded as the single most viable hypothesis. Directions for further research on this issue are indicated, and relevance to larger theoretical concerns is identified.*

1. INTRODUCTION. The view of language as an autonomous system is a persistent one in linguistics—see Newmeyer 1983 for synchronically-based arguments in its favor—but an adequate theoretical understanding of linguistic variation and change must clearly attend both to internal factors (e.g. analogy and phonological environment) and to external ones (e.g. geography and social context). This recognition was implicit in the work of the 19th century historical linguists and dialectologists, and it has been reinforced by the studies of change in progress carried out by Labov and other sociolinguists since the 1960's (cf. Gumperz 1982:23–4).

Labov's teacher, Weinreich, had been convinced even earlier (1953) of the need to consider both structural and 'extralinguistic' factors in the study of language diffusion and shift. Others studying similar language contact phenomena have consistently reached the same conclusion (cf. Haugen 1953, Ferguson & Gumperz 1960, Fishman et al. 1968, Dorian 1981, Gal 1979). Some, indeed, have been led by the force of the empirical evidence to turn the autonomous view of language on its head, concluding that 'linguistic interference is conditioned in the first instance by social factors, not linguistic ones' (Thomason 1981).

Although the general importance of social context in linguistic diffusion is well-recognized, many details about the relationship between them still require clarification, and the subject is currently attracting considerable research. This research has two main strands. On the one hand, studies are being made of

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linguistic diffusion (or its absence) across different urban centers, social classes, sexes, and ethnic or age groups, usually on the basis of quantitative analyses of tape-recorded speech (Labov 1984a,b; Nichols 1983; Rickford 1985a; Trudgill 1983, 1984b). On the other hand, studies are attempting to account for current areal or social distributions of linguistic features in terms of settlement and contact patterns in preceding centuries, usually by attending to the geography and social history of the region and/or by detailed comparison of linguistic features in the languages concerned (Baker 1982, Bickerton 1984, Greenberg 1984, Hancock 1984, Holm 1984).

This paper is intended as a contribution to the second strand of research. Its focus is the possible diffusion of (*does*) *be*, as a marker of habitual or iterative aspect, from Hiberno- or Irish English to New World Black English (including the West Atlantic English-based creoles and American Vernacular Black English).[1] This possibility is repeatedly raised in the literature (cf. Stewart 1970:246, Davis 1971:93, Wolfram 1971:60, Traugott 1972:191, Sledd 1973, Rickford 1974:106–9, Hill 1975, C.-J. N. Bailey 1982). Linguistic comparisons of this and other features in Hiberno-English (HE) and New World Black English (NWBE) are usually cursory, however; and details about the socio-historical context in which such diffusion is presumed to have occurred are almost nonexistent. In the light of the literature on linguistic change and diffusion, these are serious limitations, and ones which this paper will attempt to redress.

I will proceed as follows. In the rest of this introduction, I will briefly distinguish some of the sources which NWBE features might have, then summarize the most recent proposal that NWBE *be* might represent diffusion from HE—that of C.-J. N. Bailey. Successive sections represent evaluations of his proposal. In §2, I will consider the conditions under which Irish and African populations might have come into contact in the New World, and the possibilities of diffusion between them. Available evidence suggests that HE influence on NWBE was most likely both in the Caribbean and North America in the 17th century, when Catholic bond servants from the southern provinces of Ireland worked alongside African servants and slaves on colonial plantations. But we must also take into account the fact that Irish immigration into 18th century North America was primarily from Ulster, rather than the southern provinces of Ireland, and that NWBE was subject to other influences. In §3, I will examine the merits of Bailey's diffusion proposal in terms of its internal linguistic assumptions, and will review other possible explanations for the origin of NWBE *be*. The hypothesis that this form represents decreolization from creole *does be* will turn out to be the single most persuasive one; however, this hypothesis incorporates the insights of revised diffusion hypotheses which

[1] 'Hiberno-English' (HE) refers collectively to distinctive varieties of English spoken in 'Ireland' (if one adopts the holistic Irish republican view) or the 'Republic of Ireland' and 'Northern Ireland' (according to the British partition). 'Irish English' is sometimes used with roughly the same meaning, but is sometimes restricted to the English of people who speak Irish Gaelic as a first language. 'Northern HE' refers to varieties spoken in the historical province of Ulster. 'Southern HE' refers to varieties spoken in the historical provinces of Connacht, Leinster, and Munster (see Map 1).

distinguish between northern and southern HE, and include possible influence from British dialects. In §4, I suggest directions for further research.

Both HE and NWBE are continua rather than single discrete varieties, originating in the acquisition of English by native speakers of Gaelic (Todd 1974:9) and of West African languages (Alleyne 1980), respectively. To say that a feature of NWBE represents diffusion from HE is to suggest that, at some point, speakers of varieties of HE and NWBE were in contact—and that black speakers borrowed the feature from Irish speakers in its original form, meaning, or both. (The diffusion could also have been indirect, via some third population; but since this possibility is not in question, I will not consider it.) Alternatively, the feature might represent the influence of other British dialects present in the contact situation, or transfer/continuity from the native languages of the West Africans who came to the New World (substrate influence). Finally, the feature might be the result of creolization or decreolization processes which took place in the course of the acquisition of English by these West Africans, or it might represent more general universals of language acquisition. (See Alleyne 1980 for the acquisition of English by West Africans in the New World; and cf. Hymes 1971:84; Bickerton 1975, 1981; Mühlhäusler 1980; Andersen 1983; Rickford 1983; Schumann & Stauble 1983 for models of pidginization, creolization, and decreolization in relation to language acquisition.)

As some linguists have noted (Traugott 1972:189–90, Bailey 1982), hypotheses that features of NWBE represent diffusion from earlier Irish English or British dialects are not automatically incompatible with hypotheses of decreolization or substratal influence, since the British dialects may have served as source or reinforcement for the creole feature. Bailey makes just this point about NWBE habitual *be*;[2] and since this form and his hypothesis about its origin are pivotal elements in this paper, I will summarize his arguments.

Bailey refers, on the one hand (238), to 'the large numbers of Irishmen that Cromwell shipped to Jamaica in the 1650's, before the heyday of the African slave trade', and, on the other, to 'the astonishing similarities in every detail . . . between Irish *be* and vernacular black English *be*.' Putting the historical and linguistic information together, he suggests that Irish English might have been the source of these and other features of NWBE, and he goes on to castigate 'opponents of the Irish source' for failures of 'logical argumentation':

[2] I shall use 'habitual' rather than 'consuetudinary' (Bailey's term) for events which happen repeatedly, regularly, or habitually. VBE *be* and creole *does* are sometimes referred to by other labels, including 'iterative' and 'distributive'—as defined and used in relation to these forms, mean essentially the same thing. Thus Bickerton (1975:63) describes *does* as 'clearly limited to iterative ("habitual") expressions'. Similarly, Fasold's observation (1972:151) that 'distributive *be*' is only used in iterative contexts to refer to states or events 'which are periodically discontinued and again resumed' accords with my characterization of 'habitual' above. However, the extent to which *does* and *be* are used for single events which are prolonged in time, but not habitual in the preceding sense, still requires further research. Baugh (1983:71–2) cites some VBE *be* examples of this type, and it might be possible to include them under Comrie's broad definition of habituals (1976:27) as 'characteristic of an extended period of time'.

> 'Not everyone seems to realize that there is no logical connection between accepting an Irish source for consuetudinary *be* in vernacular black English and rejecting the Afro-Creole hypothesis about the origin of the dialect ... *Be* could have come into Caribbean Creole from Irish English BEFORE the slaves were brought to the States. Thus vernacular black English could have derived *be* from Irish English and still have a creole source.'

To evaluate this claim about the origin of VBE *be*—frequently cited as the most distinctive feature of this variety of NWBE—it will be necessary to provide more detail about Irish/African contact in the New World than Bailey does, and to explore alternative hypotheses which he does not consider.[3] It is to these tasks that I will now turn.

2. CONTACT BETWEEN IRISH AND AFRICAN POPULATIONS IN THE NEW WORLD. Ideally, the examination of socio-historical data on the issue of HE/NWBE diffusion should be guided by a well-developed theory of constraints on linguistic diffusion. Despite recent progress in this direction, such a theory does not yet exist, particularly with respect to external factors.[4] However, Whinnom's discussion of barriers to hybridization (1971:92–7) provides a useful framework for determining what might be relevant, particularly if supplemented by the evidence of case studies.

Whinnom's first barrier is 'ecological', dealing with the nature of the contact between linguistic groups. One factor in this category is population size: the fewer the speakers of language A, relative to B, the less likely and the slower will be diffusions from A to B (Bloomfield 1933:462). Another relevant factor is the length and intimacy of contact. Gumperz & Wilson 1971 show that local varieties of Urdu, Marathi, Kannada, and Telugu in the South Indian village of Kupwar have converged dramatically as a result of close contact and code-switching between their speakers for over four hundred years. The acquisition of neighboring Bantu features by non-Bantu Mbugu in Tanzania is another case in point—leading Bynon (1977:255–6) to conclude that, 'given a certain intensity and duration of language contact, there is nothing that may not be diffused across language boundaries.' Other relevant factors in this category are physical, demographic, geographic, and political constraints on the diffusion of features (see Bloomfield, 321–45; Trudgill 1983:31–87). Less commonly mentioned, but particularly relevant here, is the relative order in which immigrant populations settle in a new area. Thus Le Page (1960:65–6) argues that Twi-speaking slaves significantly influenced the lexicon of Jamaican Creole—not because they were in the majority (they were not), but because they established their leadership earliest, 'and by the time the slave trade expanded in the eighteenth century there had been several generations of their Creole descendants whose linguistic habits were already formed to cope with life in the plantations.'

[3] These remarks are not meant to belittle Bailey's contribution, which was intended as a suggestive note rather than a definitive statement. The point remains, however, that his hypotheses can be assessed only in the light of more extensive socio-historical and linguistic evidence.

[4] As Heath (1984:382) has noted, research on language mixing tends to involve particularistic case studies rather than the synthesizing of general principles. Heath's paper itself shows that synthesizing, when it does occur, deals with linguistic patterns of diffusion rather than social constraints.

Other examples are provided by Bickerton (1975:8) and by Mintz & Price (1976:25).

Whinnom's second barrier is 'ethological' or emotional, involving the attitudes of populations in contact toward each other, and toward each other's languages. Schumann 1978 considers factors of this type under the heading of 'social and psychological distance' between second language learners and target language speakers, while Niles (1980:71–2) refers to them as 'psycho-linguistic/psycho-cultural' factors. More specifically, Weinreich (84–5) noted that, because of the higher prestige of German in Switzerland, 'While German elements in Romansh speech are tolerated practically without any limit, the reverse trend—Romansh influence in German speech—is kept within bounds.' In general, we would expect positive attitudes toward a group to favor adoption of its norms, and negative attitudes to disfavor it (Rickford 1985a, Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985); however, the linguistic effects of these attitudinal factors may be relatively weak (Labov 1980:379), and sometimes imperceptible (Labov 1972:318, Blom & Gumperz 1972, Cooper 1982:11). Social prohibitions against the imitation of features across groups, despite frequent interaction (Stewart 1974:19; Gumperz, 39), are also a subtype of ethological barrier.

Whinnom's third and fourth barriers are 'mechanical' (factors of outer or phonological form) and 'conceptual' (inner form—perception as shaped by syntactic and semantic structure). They can be grouped together as internal constraints on diffusion. Although still not perfectly understood (Weinreich, 103–4), internal factors of this type have been more thoroughly explored than external constraints. On internal grounds, invariant *be* and similar habitual markers have an intermediate likelihood of diffusion across language boundaries: less than if they had purely lexical and no grammatical meaning, but more than if they were bound morphemes (Haugen 1956:66–7).

The preceding factors do not exhaust the set of possible influences on interlingual diffusion (cf. Weinreich, 83–110); but they allow us to hypothesize the kinds of Irish/African contact which would have favored HE/NWBE diffusion. For example, the presence of large numbers of Irish in the English colonies before Africans started to arrive—followed by relatively close, sustained, and harmonious contact between the groups—would have favored the diffusion of *be* and other features. We will attend to factors like these as we go through the relevant histories of the Caribbean and American colonies.

2.1 THE CARIBBEAN. I will concentrate in this section on the early settlement history of Barbados—generally regarded as a very favorable English colonial setting for the acquisition of white dialect features by blacks, because of the high proportion of whites there from early on (Hancock 1980:22, Niles). For comparison, I will also provide briefer sketches of the situation in two other colonial settings: Jamaica and the Leeward Islands.

In the first quarter century of Barbados' colonization by the English (1627–52), tobacco and cotton were the main crops; farms were small and numerous; and blacks were outnumbered by whites, many of whom were servants serving indentures of four or five years. As the island shifted to sugar cultivation,

however, the importation of African slaves stepped up considerably; at the same time, white immigration decreased and white emigration increased (Sheppard 1977:27–39). By the 1670's, blacks outnumbered whites by two to one, as shown in Figure 1; and the margin kept increasing (Handler & Lange 1978:28).

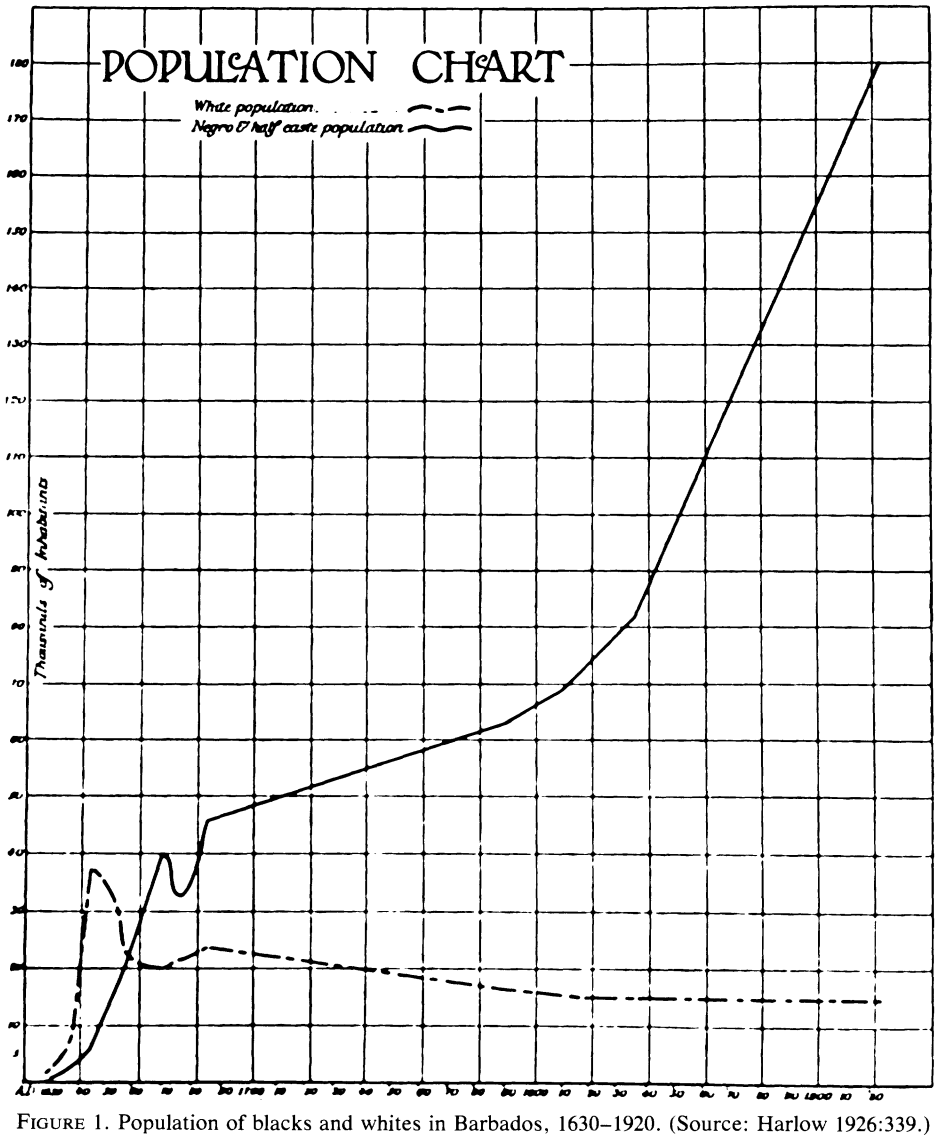

FIGURE 1. Population of blacks and whites in Barbados, 1630–1920. (Source: Harlow 1926:339.)

Niles (58–60) suggests that black/white contact continued on the plantations into the second half of the 18th century, but the demographic conditions for direct white influence on black speech were clearly most favorable in the first quarter century of Barbados' settlement by the English, becoming steadily less

so thereafter. This is also evident from the data on an even more pertinent ecological unit, namely the individual plantation. In 1646, Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper's 205-acre plantation included 21 white servants and 9 black slaves; but in 1654, Robert Hooper's 200-acre plantation included 35 servants and 66 slaves; and in 1667, the 350-acre plantation of an unidentified planter included 5 servants and 125 slaves (Dunn 1972:68). As Dunn notes, the statistics for these plantations may not be entirely representative, but they convey the general population trends over time. It is possible, of course, that blacks who acquired white linguistic features in the earliest and most favorable contact period could have continued to diffuse them among later black populations (compare the case of Twi speakers in Jamaica, cited above); but direct linguistic diffusion from whites to blacks after the mid-17th century is less likely than before—and after the mid-18th century, even less so. There are no exact statistics on how many white servants in the first quarter century were Irish, but they were apparently numerous. By the 1630's, 'Ireland was already a prime source of supply for servants' (Dunn, 56–7). In 1652, there were 8,000 white indentured servants in Barbados, said to be 'mainly Scots and Irish' (Smith 1947:332–3). Although emphasizing the meagerness of the evidence, Bridenbaugh & Bridenbaugh (1972:17) conclude that, 'in the English West Indies in 1650, the Irish settlers constituted more than half of the entire population and outnumbered even the English.'

Furthermore, Irish servants worked alongside African slaves, as other white servants did on Barbadian plantations (Dunn, 69; Smith, 256; Wood 1975:54). They were also more similar to them than any other white group in terms of social standing and political rebelliousness. Of all white servants, the Catholic Irish were the least favored, and the most restricted and reviled by their Protestant English masters (Bridenbaugh & Bridenbaugh, 364; Smith, 289). There are reports, from the mid 1650's on, that they joined black slaves in running away, rebelling, and conspiring against the English planters (Sheppard, 23; Cruickshank 1916:65; Burns 1954:396).

Under these relatively favorable ecological and ethological contact conditions, we might imagine that the acquisition of white dialectal varieties of English by blacks (if not the reverse) might have proceeded quite expeditiously, and early reports appear to confirm this:

> 'As early as 1667 a writer from Barbados claimed that, there being so many white SERVANTS in the island and poor whites who worked in the fields, and so many Negroes having become tradesmen, "now there are many thousands of slaves that speak English."' (Le Page 1960:18)

Some scholars suggest more specifically that the IRISH influence was particularly strong and lasting:

> 'The "Salt-Water" Negro picked up what he could of his master's English, but learned most of his speech from white bond servants—the first field hands—hence the Irish brogue so prevalent in the West Indies today.' (Bridenbaugh & Bridenbaugh, 352)

Sanguine though all this sounds for the proposal that HE might have influenced NWBE in the 17th century, two major considerations reduce this possibility. One is that, even if the ecological and ethological conditions of black/

white contact were as favorable as some scholars have suggested (and there are reasons to be skeptical about this),[5] Africans were more likely to have been exposed to native English dialects than to HE. Drawing on the historical evidence of white indentured servants shipped out of London and Bristol from the 1640's onward, Niles (22–54) concludes that most whites in 17th century Barbados were from the Southwest of England. Figure 2 graphically displays her conclusion that Somerset and other Southwestern English dialects were the main varieties spoken among the white population—outnumbering other English, Irish, and Scots dialects. This is an important point, to which we will return below.

	White Population 22,000		Black Population 33,000	
Native region:	Southwest England	Other Great Britain	Africa born: Gold Coast Senegal, Gambia, Sierra Leone Windward Coast Whydaw Other Africa	Barbados born
Languages:	Southwest English dialects	Other English dialects, Irish, Scottish	(1) African languages and dialects (2) Some English	(1) English (2) Some African

FIGURE 2. Estimated distribution of major language groups in Barbados about 1675. (Source: Niles 1980:77.)

The second key consideration is that most Irish indentured servants arriving in Barbados during this period probably spoke varieties of Irish or Gaelic, rather

[5] Although the Irish servants were sometimes referred to as 'white slaves' (Lockhart 1976:63), the two groups apparently did not live together (Smith, 256); this lends support to Stewart's contention (1974:23) that, 'in terms of total time speaking, the amount of verbal interaction with whites must have been minimal for most plantation Negroes.' Furthermore, there were important legal, socio-economic, and political differences between white servants and black slaves (Galenson 1981:172). The white servants' freedom was virtually guaranteed after their indenture terms were over; they were entitled to take their masters to court and serve in the militia; and so on. Smith (264) observes that the indentured servants were 'practically never "class-conscious" to the point of seriously threatening the order of society'—and that, despite a vague fear of slave/servant uprisings, planters 'soon became convinced that white men would stick together, and looked upon the importation of more servants as adding to the security of the islands rather than imperiling it.' Finally, the picture of black/white relations in Barbados which one gets from Handler & Lange (41) and from Sheppard (119) is less rosy than the one painted by Niles (10 ff.) and by Williams (1985:37); this suggests that class solidarity did not always outweigh ethnic distinctiveness.

than English. Bliss 1977 reminds us that, although English was first introduced to Ireland during the Norman invasion in the 12th century, it did not become widespread; modern HE developed in Ireland only after the Cromwellian settlement of the 1650's. He concludes (p. 16) that 'the general acquisition of the English language by the people of Ireland hardly began until after 1800.' De Fréine (1977:75) reaches the same conclusion, indicating that, in 1800, three-quarters of the Irish coastline—including ports like Limerick and Kinsdale, from which many indentured servants had been shipped to Barbados—'was practically all Irish speaking.' Lockhart (128) has suggested that one of the reasons for the relatively slow absorption of Irish servants in colonial America (compared with other immigrants from the British Isles) was their 'use of the Irish language', which helped to make them 'as distinctive among the colonial population as the negro'. By the mid-18th century, there is documentary evidence, at least for the American mainland, that Irish bond servants were speaking varieties of English, from the 'very broken and backward' speech of one Mr. M'Innis (Smith, 290) to the 'good English' of one James Mackelliek, who could also 'talk Irish' (Read 1937:97). But in British colonies of the 17th century, it was probably true for Irish servants, as for African slaves, that most knew little or no English when they came.[6] Since Irish servants were present in Barbados before African slaves began to arrive, they would have had a head start in learning English; and distinctive features of their English—perhaps influenced by their native Irish, in ways similar to the HE which was to become established in Ireland later—could have been diffused to the new arrivals. However, contrary to widespread opinion, no cohesive, well-established model of HE existed for Irish bond servants to bring with them from Ireland to the 17th century Caribbean or America. Major influences on the English acquired by both the Irish and the Africans would have been the dialects of British speakers in the colonies, and the grammars of their own native languages.

Since we have explored the ramifications of the situation in Barbados in such detail, I will say less about the Leeward Islands and Jamaica, merely highlighting some pertinent historical and linguistic aspects of the Irish presence in both regions.

The Irish presence in the Leewards—particularly in Montserrat—was proportionately greater than in other British colonies in the late 17th century, and also more dramatic. The French invasion in 1689 of St. Christopher (later renamed St. Kitts) was facilitated by an armed uprising in which '130 armed Irish servants rose up in the name of King James and sacked the English plantations on the windward side' (Dunn, 134). Table 1 (overleaf) shows the exceptional preponderance of the Irish in Montserrat. But apropos of the point made in the discussion of Barbados, and contrary to the claim of Bridenbaugh & Bridenbaugh cited above, note that the English outnumbered the Irish significantly

[6] Contemporary reports cited in Bridenbaugh & Bridenbaugh (352), Littlefield (1981:117), and Rickford 1985b indicate that many Africans arriving in the Caribbean in the 17th–19th centuries knew no English. Some slaves probably arrived knowing Guinea Coast Creole English or something similar, but as Hancock himself suggests (1980:32, fn. 15), 'only a tiny minority of slaves would have come into prolonged contact with GCCE in Africa ...' See Hancock 1985 for further discussion.

in each of the other Leeward Islands, and that blacks were the single biggest sector of the population in every territory except Montserrat.

	Nevis		Antigua		St. Christopher		Montserrat		Total	
English	2,670	(36%)	1,600	(36%)	1,322	(40%)	761	(21%)	6,353	(34%)
Irish	800	(11%)	610	(14%)	187	(5%)	1,869	(51%)	3,466	(18%)
Other whites	51	(1%)	98	(2%)	388	(12%)	52	(1%)	589	(3%)
Blacks	3,849	(52%)	2,172	(48%)	1,436	(43%)	992	(27%)	8,449	(45%)
TOTALS	7,370		4,480		3,333		3,674		18,857	

TABLE 1. Population of the Leeward Islands, 1678.
(Adapted from Table 12 in Dunn 1972:134.)

From the demographic evidence, Montserrat would seem to have been an ideal setting for the acquisition of HE features by the local African population. But after comparing features of present-day Montserrat Creole English with those of southern HE, Wells (1983:129) reached the following negative conclusion:

> 'In terms of linguistic influence, then, the Irish contribution to Montserrat has been vanishingly small. Of the vaunted "soft Irish brogue", the Emerald Isle of the Caribbean retains barely the tiniest trace.'

Jamaica was not colonized by the British until 1654, when an expedition sent by Cromwell to attack Hispaniola (unsuccessfully, retreating after a loss of 1,000 men) turned instead to the more poorly defended island of Jamaica. It is not clear how many of the 8,200 men in the Cromwellian force were Irish; since 3,500 of them were recruited in Barbados, and 1,200 in the Leeward Islands—both with large Irish servant populations at the time—we may assume that a considerable number were Irish. But through starvation, disease, and other factors, only 2,200 men remained by 1660 (Dunn, 152–3). Smith also mentions (169) a notorious Cromwellian proposal in 1655 to transport 2,000 boys and 1,000 girls to Jamaica 'to breed up a population for that newly acquired possession'; but as he notes, there is no evidence that this scheme ever materialized.

Although Jamaica attracted white servants from other parts of the Caribbean and the British Isles in the last thirty years of the 17th century (Dunn, 157), and received more well into the 18th century (Smith, 310), the striking feature of 17th–18th century Jamaica is not how MANY white servants it had, but how FEW. Smith's statistics (335) support Dunn's observation (157):

> 'By 1713 Jamaica had a larger slave population than Barbados and a far higher ratio of blacks to whites ... The large block of poor whites to be found in all of the eastern Caribbean was missing.'

Similarly, Le Page (1960:18) has noted:

> 'In this slow growth of the English-speaking community in Jamaica, compared with the rapid growth of the slave population, is to be found one of the major factors which has differentiated the Creole dialect of this island from that of Barbados.'

In the circumstances, there was probably less influence from HE or other white dialects on the speech of the African population in Jamaica.[7]

2.2. THE NORTH AMERICAN COLONIES. Some Irish English might have come to North America during the colonial period by way of the West Indies—through Irish servants who migrated to the North American colonies after completing their indentures in the Caribbean, or through slaves who were imported from the Caribbean after being 'seasoned' and perhaps influenced by Irish English there (C.-J. N. Bailey, 238). But by the 18th century, North American colonies were generally getting most of their slaves from Africa rather than the West Indies (Turner 1949:24; Wood, 340–41). Since so many Irish immigrants came directly to North America between the 17th and 19th centuries, the possibility of Irish English influence on Black English there can be considered quite independently.

The flow of emigrants between Ireland and the North American colonies lasted so much longer than it did in the Caribbean, was so much more voluminous, and displayed such differences from one colony or state to the other, that there is virtually no end to the details which one could include in its description. I will depict only the most general trends, and urge interested readers to consult the cited references for more information.

In the 17th century, most Irish emigrants to North America, like those who went to the Caribbean, were 'native Irish' from the southern and overwhelmingly Catholic provinces of Connacht, Munster, and Leinster (see Map 1). In both areas, white servants at first constituted the bulk of the plantation labor force (Lockhart, 10). They were soon joined, however, by increasing numbers of Africans, who came first as servants with fixed terms, later as slaves for life (Foner 1975:190).

Similarities with the Caribbean were most marked in the southern colonies: both in Barbados and South Carolina, blacks constituted over 60% of the total population within fifty years of initial settlement by the British. In New York, they were only 16% of the population as late as the 1750's, one hundred years after British settlement; and in Boston the comparable figures was only 8% (Foner 1975:256). Virginia, a tobacco-growing Chesapeake colony, had intermediate statistics: the black population was 2% in 1625 (Smith, 328), but 25% by 1730, and 47% by 1776 (Foner 1975:189)—making it comparable to the

[7] One salient grammatical difference between Jamaican and most of the other Caribbean English creoles is that, while it does have preverbal durative or continuative *de*, it does not appear to use this morpheme as a habitual—or to have habitual *does*. Jamaica does not differ significantly from other Caribbean territories with English creoles in terms of the sources of its African slave population, and its lack of this feature may relate instead to its historically low white servant population. This is a tantalizing possibility, which would have to be assessed in the light of documentary evidence (examples in Cassidy & Le Page 1980 suggest that preverbal *da* is sometimes habitual, and we are not sure that habitual *does* was NEVER used there), and with a view to other possible explanations (see Bickerton 1981:255–6). But if it turns out to be valid, it would suggest that diffusion from pre-existing or co-existing white groups might have been an important influence on the FORMS in which the habitual was realized in NWBE (compare the hypothesis in §3.2).

MAP 1. Ireland, showing historical provinces.

Leewards in 1678 (Table 1). From these figures, we may assume that linguistic diffusion from white to black was most likely in the North, and least likely in the deep South; most likely in the first years of settlement, and least likely thereafter.

Many of the whites in the northern and Chesapeake colonies, where diffusion was most likely, may have been Irish; but this impression is derived from qualitative assessments rather than precise figures. Smith (324) cites a contemporary estimate that 600 or 700 servants, 'chiefly Irish', were imported to Maryland in 1698. Lockhart (4) notes that the trade in Irish servants to Virginia was established on a regular basis earlier (1619–1620) than in any other British colony, and that 'By 1700 the Irish were common in every colony from Newfoundland southwards to the Carolinas' (10). But even if the white servants included many Irish, who had reasonably good contact with Africans, we should remember once again that adoption of HE features by Africans would have been limited by socio-psychological factors (Herskovits 1941:115, Stewart

1974:17–20), and by the fact that both groups would have been learning English from British speakers in the colonies.

Irish immigration to the Caribbean had declined considerably by the dawn of the 18th century; but in North America, it actually increased. Some of the Irish who came in during this period were 'native Irish' from the southern provinces (Lockhart, 50); but the vast majority of them were Presbyterian 'Ulster Scots' or 'Scotch Irish' from the northern province of Ulster (Dickson 1966). The estimates of Scotch Irish immigration during this period are huge: 250,000 to 300,000 between 1717 and 1766 (Nichols 1985, Doyle 1981:59), and 385,000 to 400,000 for the entire 18th century (estimates cited by Lockhart, 60).[8]

These immigrants were frequently referred to simply as 'Irish' in America, and modern scholars sometimes fail to distinguish the 'Scotch Irish' from the 'native Irish'; but it is important to observe the distinction. The roots of the Scotch Irish go back to the 'plantation of Ulster' in the early 1600's, after an Irish/Catholic revolt was crushed by the English, and Ulster land was distributed to Scottish and English settlers as a means of ensuring security (Fallows 1979:13). By 1640, some 100,000 Scottish and 20,000 English settlers had been established in Ulster (Dickson, 3), and 50,000 more Scottish families settled there between 1689 and 1715 (Lockhart, 19). The Scottish settlers, who came primarily from Southwestern counties of Scotland, outnumbered the English settlers by almost six to one; and the Ulster Scots dialect consequently shows considerable influence from Lowland Scots (Aitken 1984:518–19, Harris 1984).

This is important from our perspective: when the Scotch Irish emigrated from Ireland to America in huge numbers between 1718 to 1775—settling primarily in Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Georgia (Crozier 1984:313–16)—it was this Ulster Scots variety of HE which the majority must have brought with them, rather than the southern HE characteristic of earlier Irish emigrants to the Caribbean and North America. Descriptions of HE dialects are available in Braidwood 1964, Gregg 1964, Adams 1977, Bliss 1984, and Harris 1984; and one of the most important differences among them is that habitual *be* is characteristically northern, while *do be* is characteristically southern (Bliss 1972, Guilfoyle 1983). In §3.2, we will consider a revised version of the HE diffusion hypothesis which takes this northern/southern difference into account, but for now we can simply note its existence.

Having emphasized that most 18th century Irish immigrants to America were Scotch Irish, and that they must have spoken a northern (Ulster Scots) variety of HE, we must still ask what kinds of opportunities they had for social contact with blacks—and linguistic diffusion to them—during this period. Scotch Irish immigrants were better-off as a group than native Irish. More of them emigrated as families rather than individuals; and more traveled as redemptioners or fee-paying passengers, rather than bond servants, particularly in the 1770's (Dickson, 97). More of them worked in skilled occupations, and became backwoods

[8] Motivations for this emigration included economic suffering and religious persecution in Ireland, and hope of religious freedom and economic improvement in America (Dickson, 80–81).

frontiersmen or successful landowners. Because of these factors, they are likely to have had less contact with and linguistic influence on American blacks than the native Irish servants who had preceded them.

At the same time, the Scotch Irish would generally have been fluent speakers of English, unlike 17th century native Irish immigrants; and 18th century reports do show Irish and African populations coöperating and working together in a number of ways. For instance, the group that attacked the British soldiers in the Boston Massacre of 1770 was, in the words of John Adams (quoted in Franklin 1974:86), 'a motley rabble of saucy boys, Negroes and mulattoes, Irish Teagues and outlandish Jack Tars'. Foner reports (1975:277) that black slaves 'worked side by side with white indentured servants' in Pennsylvania; and that fugitive slaves of the 1790's obtained forged passes from some whites, 'among whom the Irish were most often mentioned' (503). We do not know how many of these 'Irish' were Scotch Irish (Doyle, 73, suggests that two-thirds of the Irish population in America in 1790 were Scotch Irish), or how much social contact they had with blacks in everyday life; but coöperative relations of the type referred to in this paragraph would have favored linguistic diffusion.

In the 19th century, the flow of Irish immigrants to America increased astronomically, largely as a result of crop failures in Ireland from the 1830's onward. Over 200,000 Irish are estimated to have arrived in America in the 1830's; between 1847 and 1855, 892,000 Irish immigrants arrived in New York alone (Coleman 1972:325; Fallows, 23). Wakin (1976:8) estimates that 4,500,000 people emigrated from Ireland in the 19th century, and that most went to America. Unlike their 18th century counterparts, these immigrants were predominantly Catholic, almost half of them coming from six counties in Munster and Connacht: Cork, Kerry, Tipperary, Limerick, Galway, and Mayo (Wakin, 20). As a result, most of them would have spoken southern HE.

Despite the huge volume of 19th century Irish immigrants, their English is less likely to have diffused among black Americans (and vice-versa) than might have been the case in preceding centuries. In the first place, 19th century Irish immigrants settled primarily in northern cities at a time when many blacks were still rural and southern. According to the 1880 US census, 46% of all foreign-born Irish were concentrated in only four northern cities: Boston, Brooklyn, New York, and Philadelphia (Wakin, 65). To the extent that free blacks lived in these cities, both they and the Catholic Irish were commonly reviled; thus an advertisement in the 1830 New York *Courier and Enquirer* included the notorious words 'No Blacks or Irish Need Apply' (ibid., 52). But whereas common oppression in the 'closed' plantation environment of the 17th century colonies had led to common identification, joint conspiracy, and rebellion, the blacks and Irish scrambling for employment in the 'open market' of 19th century America viewed each other as competitors and enemies, kept to themselves, and expressed open hostility toward each other across the ethnic divide. In the 1850's, Frederick Douglass lamented the fact that blacks were being 'elbowed out of employment' by immigrants 'whose hunger and color' favored them (Foner 1983a:214–15). As early as 1834, Irish shipwrights 'hostile to the Ne-

groes as job competitors' formed part of the mob which set fire to the Shelter for Colored Orphans and attacked the black Bethel Church in Philadelphia (Foner 1983a:432). By the 1860's, black/Irish riots over limited jobs were raging in many of the major cities, including Toledo, Cincinnati, and Brooklyn (Foner 1983b:392–5).[9]

In the years to follow, as blacks in the post-emancipation period migrated to northern and western cities, they joined ethnic enclaves with others of their own kind, just as the waves of Irish immigrants who continued to pour in found their way to Five Points, New York, and other Irish neighborhoods (Fallows, 33). Labov 1984a,b reports that the speech patterns of working-class blacks and whites in Philadelphia still remain separate—and in fact become increasingly so, as each group identifies more narrowly with neighborhood values in the face of increasing economic recession and unemployment.[10] From the socio-historical evidence, a similar situation obtained in 19th century cities. We can reasonably conclude that if HE had a significant impact on VBE, it was BEFORE the 19th century.

2.3. SUMMARY. Irish populations were more numerous in colonial America and the Caribbean than their present-day representation in both places might lead us to expect. Opportunities for social contact and linguistic diffusion between Irish and African populations in British colonies were most favorable in the 17th century, when African slaves and native Irish servants—who would have been speakers of southern HE—worked side by side on Caribbean and American plantations. Beyond the 17th century, the Irish presence was insignificant in the Caribbean, but the next two centuries brought increasing floods of Irish settlers to America. The 18th century group came primarily from Ulster (the Scotch Irish), bringing with them northern varieties of HE. The 19th century Irish immigrants to America were mainly from the southern provinces of Ireland. They were more numerous than in any previous century, but their speech is likely to have had less influence on the speech of Afro-Americans because the two groups were separated by geographical area, ethnic neighborhood, and hostile relations.

Although the preceding facts support the possibility that diffusion from HE to NWBE might have taken place, particularly in the 17th century, other considerations caution us against exaggerating it. One is the very short time period—one to two decades, in the initial settlement periods of each colony—in which white servants would have outnumbered black slaves, particularly in the Caribbean and the American south. An even more important one is that British servants and settlers were present in the colonies in numbers equal to or larger

[9] Although Foner (1975:219) reports that 18th century white craftsmen in Charleston protested against competition from skilled black mechanics and shipwrights, their contention seems to have been primarily with the white masters who hired out their skilled slaves.

[10] This conclusion is supported by evidence of sound shifts and other on-going changes, within each ethnic group, which are not being diffused to the other; however, the notion of increasing divergence seems to be partly metaphorical, since it does not involve comparison of present-day data with equivalent data from an earlier reference point in real time.

than their Irish counterparts; thus their English dialects might have had an even greater influence on the English of Africans and Afro-Americans in the New World. This is particularly so since many native Irish immigrants in the 17th century would themselves have been learning English as a second language from the English settlers in the colonies. The major linguistic implication of these facts is that, while we certainly need to consider HE (northern and southern varieties) in seeking the source of features of NWBE, other influences—English dialects, and West African or creole substrata—are likely to have been as important, if not more so. This will become even clearer as we assess proposals regarding the origins of VBE *be* and other NWBE habitual markers in §3.

3. HYPOTHESES ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF VBE HABITUAL *be*. We will here explore alternative hypotheses about the origin of the habitual markers in NWBE, particularly VBE *be*. Their respective strengths and weaknesses will be evaluated with regard to internal as well as external considerations.

The first three hypotheses to be considered all involve diffusion. Beginning with C.-J. N. Bailey's hypothesis that *be* was diffused from HE to NWBE, I will show that it suffers from two major weaknesses, which force us to reject it as it stands. A second diffusion hypothesis differentiates between northern and southern HE, suggesting that the prevalence of habitual *be* in VBE may represent the influence of the numerous Scotch Irish northern-HE speakers who emigrated to North America, while the instantiation of the habitual category by *da* and *does* (*be*) instead of *be* in the Caribbean may represent the influence of the numerous native Irish southern-HE speakers who worked and settled there. A third diffusion hypothesis adds, to the influence of the above varieties, the models of non-standard British English—in particular southern and southwestern English varieties—to which Africans and Afro-Americans may have been exposed in colonial times. Although both these expanded diffusion hypotheses overcome the weaknesses of Bailey's proposal, they have weaknesses of their own which force us to seek other alternatives.

The alternative which provides the single best hypothesis about the emergence of VBE *be* is one which considers the development of habitual markers in NWBE in the light of processes of pidginization, creolization, and decreolization accompanying the acquisition of English by African and Afro-American populations in the New World. According to this hypothesis, VBE *be* may result, by decreolization, from creole habitual markers like *does be* and (*d*)*a* which are still in active use in the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia, and in the Caribbean. Potential demerits of this proposal are outnumbered by merits—including the fact that it is capable of incorporating the strengths of both expanded diffusion hypotheses, while overcoming their weaknesses.

Finally, we will briefly consider three hypotheses about the emergence of VBE *be* which are worth mentioning, but are not viable on their own terms: decreolization from *am*, the influence of creole universals, and independent innovation.

3.1. BAILEY'S DIFFUSION PROPOSAL is that VBE habitual *be* represents diffusion from HE. One attraction of this proposal is the obvious similarity of VBE and some varieties of HE with respect to habitual *be*, reflected in sentences like the following:

(1) *Even when I be round there with friends, I be scared.*
(2) *Christmas Day, well, everybody be so choked up over gifts and everything, they don't be too hungry anyway.*

The first example is from northern HE (Harris 1982:9), and the second from a VBE speaker in Washington, DC (Fasold 1972:171); but without this information, it would be difficult to distinguish them. If we assumed that northern HE *be* diffused to New World blacks through contact on colonial plantations, this similarity between HE and VBE would be neatly explained.

Against this plus for Bailey's proposal, there are two major minuses.[11] One is the fact that *be* (by itself) is not used as a habitual marker in any of the Caribbean varieties of NWBE. The second is the fact that the proposal does not consider the role of habitual *do* in HE.

The first difficulty represents a real stumbling block to Bailey's suggestion that habitual *be* could have come into the Caribbean creoles from HE and thence into VBE—since *be* is not used as a habitual marker in the Caribbean English creoles today, and does not appear to have been so used in the past. The most basilectal or non-standard Caribbean creole varieties typically mark both habitual and continuative aspect with preverbal *(d)e* or *(d)a* (Alleyne 1980:80–83, 192–4; Bickerton 1975:60–69, 116–20; Hancock 1984; Holm 1983:16–18):

(3) *He (d)a sing* 'He usually sings; He is singing.'

Mesolectal varieties closer to standard English typically employ preverbal *does* for the non-continuative habitual, and suffixed *-ing* without *does* for the non-habitual continuative:

(4) *He does sing* 'He usually sings.'
(5) *He Ø singing* 'He is singing.'

The closest similarity which mesolectal Caribbean varieties bear to VBE and northern HE with respect to habitual *be* is the fact that—when a predicate is an adjective, a locative/prepositional phrase, or a continuative verb (VERB *+ing*)—they sometimes employ *be* as a grammatical filler between habitual *does* and the predicate:

[11] Another possible objection to Bailey's proposal is this: If HE habitual markers were sufficiently prevalent in the New World to be diffused to and retained among black speakers, why aren't they also retained among present-day descendants of the original HE speakers? (Cf. Stewart 1970:246, fn. 6.) Although it would still be good to get corroborative evidence from other North American communities, this objection is partly offset by the recent finding of Dillon (1972:131), reported by Harris 1985, that HE habitual markers survive in a white community on the southern shore of Newfoundland in which Irish immigration was concentrated. VBE *be* could also be a case of secondary acculturation (Alleyne 1980:199–200; Bickerton 1971:464, fn. 7)—in which group B, for ecological and other reasons, retains linguistic or cultural features originally borrowed from group A after many members of group A have 'lost' it.

(6) *He does be sick* 'He is usually sick.'
(7) *He does be in the house* 'He is usually in the house.'
(8) *He does be singing* 'He is usually singing.'

The synchronic differences between northern HE, VBE, and the Caribbean creoles do not mean that it is impossible to relate them diachronically (we will consider alternative means below); but they imperil Bailey's specific proposal for doing so.

The second major difficulty with Bailey's proposal is that it does not consider the role of habitual *do* in HE. From grammatical descriptions of HE like O'Donovan 1845 and Taniguchi 1956—and from the works of Irish writers like Joyce, Synge, and Yeats (all from the Dublin area, and thus speakers of southern HE)—*do* appears to be the primary HE habitual marker, co-occurring with *be* before VERB + *ing* and in other environments, much as reported above for Caribbean *does be*:

(9) *For it's a raw beastly day we do have each day.* (Synge, *The Well of the Saints,* 40)
(10) *They do be cheering when the horses take the water well.* (Yeats, *Cathleen ni Houlihan,* 38)

The synchronic distribution of *do* and *be* in HE still requires further empirical investigation;[12] but recent works (Guilfoyle, 24; Harris 1985) have helped to clarify the situation. Both indicate that habitual *be* is characteristic of HE as spoken in northern parts of Ulster, while *do be* is characteristic of HE as spoken in the geographically more extensive southern provinces (compare Bliss 1972:80). However, Guilfoyle's additional claim that northern HE lacks habitual *do* has been challenged. Harris (1982:9) indicates that *do* occurs with verbs other than *be* both in the north and the south, and examples like these bear him out:

(11) *When you put the turf pieces on to the barrow, you do have them in heaps and then you do spread them.* (northern HE speaker quoted by Harris)
(12) *He does come when he hears the noise.* (southern HE speaker quoted by Henry, 171)

Any hypothesis that seeks to relate HE and NWBE through their habitual markers must therefore take *do* (*be*) into account. The fact that Bailey's hypothesis fails to do this is especially problematic because the 17th century Irish servants whom he sees as a key link in the diffusion process would have been southern HE speakers, undoubtedly favoring *do* (*be*) over *be*. These two weaknesses of Bailey's diffusion hypothesis force us to reject it as it stands.

[12] In addition to the issue of their geographical distribution, there is a question about their semantic relationship. Henry 1957 claims there are fine semantic differences between *I do go* (iterative), *I be going* (iterative durative), and *I do be going* (frequentative durative) in the HE of County Roscommon (Connacht); but Harris (1982:9) feels that, while these fine distinctions between *do* and *do* (*be*) may be maintained in the Roscommon dialect, 'in many other parts of Ireland, they are not.'

3.2. A REVISED DIFFUSION HYPOTHESIS, differentiating northern and southern HE, can be used to develop a more sophisticated version. Its starting point is the geographical distribution of the habitual markers in HE as reported above.

As noted in §2, Ulster had a high proportion of Scottish settlers; and the prevalence of habitual *be* there, instead of *do be,* probably represents the influence of Scottish English dialects in the 17th century. On the one hand, these dialects 'were extremely resistant to periphrasitic *do*' (Guilfoyle, 28, citing Ellegård 1953:164)—in sharp contrast to the southwestern English dialects which were more prevalent in the southern provinces of Ireland. On the other hand, the Scots dialects also retained, later than other English dialects, a distinction between *I be* (predictive, habitual) and *I am* (immediate present, eternal truths); this goes back to the Old English distinction between *beo-* and *wes-*. Traugott (1972:116), who discusses the issue in more detail, cites the following example from a 16th century Scottish English text:

(13) *Traist weill ... the feild this da beis ouris* 'Trust well ... the field this day will-be ours.'

Northern HE *be(es)* may have come directly from Scots derivatives of *beo-*, or may represent the convergent influence of these Scots derivatives and the Irish habitual *bí(dh)* (see Bliss 1972:75, fn. 75; Guilfoyle, 29).

By contrast, the southern provinces of Ireland did not have so high a proportion of Scottish settlers; the prevalence there of habitual *do* (*be*) is usually attributed to transfer from native Irish and the influence of southwestern English dialects, in which periphrastic *do* was common. Bliss 1972 and Guilfoyle disagree on the role played by morphological changes in 17th century Irish in this transfer (see Harris 1985 for a convenient summary of the issues); but the geographical distribution of *be* and *do* (*be*) in HE offers a neat explanation for the geographical distribution of *be* and *does* (*be*) in NWBE.

We concluded from our survey of Irish/African contact that the 17th and 18th centuries were most propitious for linguistic diffusion in the New World. During this period, the primary difference between Irish emigration to North America and the Caribbean was that northern HE (Scotch Irish) speakers went in large numbers to the former region, but not to the latter. Given these considerations, it is possible to frame the following hypothesis: VBE *be* might represent diffusion from the large body of northern HE speakers who emigrated to North America in the colonial period (as Traugott 1972:190–91 first suggested); and the *does* (*be*) of Caribbean English creoles might represent diffusion from the southern HE (native Irish) speakers who constituted the overwhelming majority of 'Irish' immigrants to this region. To put it another way: the current distribution of habitual markers in VBE and the Caribbean English creoles might reflect the relative distribution of northern and southern HE speakers in the colonial New World.

This hypothesis—an extension of Traugott's Scotch Irish diffusion proposal—at once eliminates the major weaknesses of Bailey's proposal, and accords with the social history summarized above. In these respects, it is an attractive hypothesis; but it does have its demerits.

One is that *do* is apparently more common with *be* than with other verbs in southern HE (Bliss 1972:77; Guilfoyle, 24); but in Gullah and the Caribbean creoles, where we would expect heavy southern HE influence, *does* is more common with other verbs than with *be*. The difference may result in part from the fact that Irish marks the habitual/non-habitual distinction only on *be* (the 'substantive' verb), and in part from the fact that creole predicates either do not require *be* at all, or do so in fewer contexts than Hibernian or British varieties of English (see §3.4 below). In either case, we are reminded to beware of assuming outright diffusion between HE and NWBE. Aspectual markers of the former must have been filtered through African and creole semantic and syntactic categories, when borrowed by NWBE speakers; and unless we consider this, we will find mismatches between HE and NWBE usage which are otherwise inexplicable.

A second demerit is that, while we can be fairly certain that northern HE *be* was not diffused to the Caribbean (since few Scotch Irish went there), we cannot be sure that southern HE *do* (*be*) was not introduced to the North American colonies. As noted above, native Irish servants were present in colonial North America in significant numbers, and we would expect them to have left a *do*(*es*) *be* legacy in VBE as well as in the Caribbean creoles. This is especially true since the native Irish were present in North America earlier than the Scotch Irish, and had closer social contact with African and Afro-American slaves.

Not only must we allow for the introduction of habitual *do* (*be*) to America, but we also need to account for its subsequent disappearance—since habitual-marking reflexes of *do* survive in the USA today only in the Sea Islands. The decreolization hypothesis to be presented in §3.4 offers a convincing means of overcoming this difficulty; but first we need to consider a further expansion.

3.3. A FURTHER EXPANSION OF THE DIFFUSION HYPOTHESIS. It has been known for some time that periphrastic *do* was common in British English between 1500 and 1700 (OED s.v. *do*, 25a), and that it continued long afterward in southwestern English dialects (Engblom 1938; Ellegård). Given the strong representation of southwestern dialects among the white colonial population of the Caribbean (see Fig. 2 above), it is plausible to suggest that these may have played some role in the development of habitual *does* and *does be* in the Caribbean English creoles—perhaps reinforcing the model of southern HE *do* (*be*) habituals used by native Irish servants. Niles (125–6) makes precisely this point, citing the following examples among others (from Elworthy 1886:xx, xlvi) to show that 'uninflected *do* marked the present habitual' in non-standard southwestern English:

(14) *I du zay zom prayers now and again.* (Devon)

(15) *He do markety* 'He usually attends market.' (Dorset)

Harris 1985 independently advances a similar thesis. Drawing on Elworthy 1879, Ihalainen 1976, and other sources, he argues that there were non-standard British dialects, particularly in the south and southwest, which probably served as a model for habitual *do* (*be*) both in southern HE and Caribbean mesolectal

creoles. In addition to southwestern English examples like those given by Niles, Harris cites habitual *do be* examples like these from Wright (1898:99):[13]

(16) *She do be strict with us gals.* (Oxfordshire)

(17) *The childer do be laffen at me.* (Cornwall)

Harris 1985 expresses the view that the revised diffusion hypothesis of §3.2, above, is strengthened by the British dialect evidence, since the existence of *do* (*be*) habituals in the Caribbean could be jointly attributed to the influence of southern HE and southwestern English dialects. However, my feeling is that, while the British dialect evidence is important for our efforts to unravel the origin of NWBE habituals,[14] it increases the difficulty noted at the end of §3.2—since southern and southwestern English speakers were plentiful in America as well as the Caribbean, and would probably have carried habitual *do* (*be*) to both regions. Thus statistics in Smith (309) indicate that, between 1654 and 1686, more white servants emigrated from Bristol to Virginia (4,874) than to Barbados (2,678). In 18th century America, British immigrants were almost as numerous as the Irish, and sometimes even more so. Between 1745 and 1775, 4,116 servants entered Annapolis from London and Bristol, compared with 5,835 from Ireland (Smith, 325); between 1746 and 1778, 8,707 convicts were transported to Maryland from London and Bristol, compared with only 83 from Ireland (Smith, 329).

In short, whether we consider possible influence from native Irish or southwestern British immigrants, we must allow for the introduction of habitual *do* (*be*) to America—and for the subsequent loss of reflexes of *do*, except in *do* support contexts. As suggested above, the decreolization hypothesis to be considered next overcomes this difficulty of both expanded diffusion hypotheses, but is compatible with their insights and evidence.

3.4. A DECREOLIZATION HYPOTHESIS, with creole *does* (*be*) as source (first formulated in Rickford 1974), is that *be* emerged as a VBE habitual marker as part of a decreolization process involving the loss of *does*—a habitual marker with which *be* co-occurred in some environments in an earlier American plantation creole. The emergence of *be* as a replacement for *does* should, according to this theory, be seen as only one of a series of English-approximating shifts in the language of Africans in the New World: *does* itself replaces a basilectal creole habitual marker *(d)a*, *(d)e*, *(t)e*, or *blan(g)*, and the existence of the habitual category in the basilect perhaps represents substratal influence from

[13] As Harris 1985 notes, these are particularly striking because Bliss (1972:77) used the putative non-existence of *do be* forms to argue that earlier British English could not have provided the stimulus for the development of comparable HE forms.

[14] Niles (121) notes: 'The seventeenth and eighteenth century dialects of southwestern England commonly used the uninflected "be" conjugation in the present tense.' Harris 1985 also points out that *be* occurs as *be* and *bis(t)* in a number of southwestern English dialects, and appears to have been more widespread in earlier times. However, although examples of British English *be* occur in both the English Dialect Dictionary (Wright, 1898:197–201) and the *Dictionary of American regional English* (Cassidy 1985:175–80), they are rarely used with habitual meaning, and are poor candidates as sources for VBE *be*.

the native languages of the earliest West African slaves, several of which have an explicitly marked category of habitual aspect (Stewart 1970:247, Dalby 1972, Welmers 1973:393, Alleyne 1980:163–4). The marking of habituality in the basilect may also be a creole universal (see §3.6, below).[15]

Taking *(d)a* as a basilectal starting point, and allowing for minor differences according to the kind of predicate it precedes, we might represent the major decreolizing stages as follows.

(18) Habitual aspect with a prepositional phrase or locative:
Stage 1: *He (d)a de* [dɛ] *in the bed.* (basilect)[16]
Stage 2: *He does de in the bed.* (hab. *(d)a* → *does*)
Stage 3: *He does be in the bed.* (loc. cop. *de* → *be*)
Stage 4: *He Ø be in the bed.* (*does* → Ø; *be* 'habitual')

(19) Habitual aspect with a continuative or progressive verb:
Stage 1: *He (d)a de {(d)a/pon} work.* (basilect)[17]

[15] The focus in this paper is on habitual marking by means of *be* and *does be*; but NWBE varieties sometimes encode habitual aspect by other means. There is room for an accountable, quantitative investigation of the subject which starts from semantics, and charts the relationships among all potential forms. Alternants not discussed in this paper, or discussed only briefly, are:

ZERO, as in G[uyanese] C[reole]: *rait hee a di maarkit wii Ø de* 'We're usually right here at the market.' Since *de* is stative, the absence of *a* or *does* here might be treated as an instance of the rule deleting continuative and iterative markers in temporal and conditional clauses, and before statives and modals (Bickerton 1975:33). But this 'rule' has frequent exceptions (see fn. 16, below), and zero is used for the habitual throughout the Atlantic creoles in other environments (Devonish 1978:245 ff.)

WILL (BE) and WOULD (BE). The tendency in the literature on VBE is to set aside instances of habitual *be* which result from deleted *will* or *would,* but everyone acknowledges that there is semantic overlap and considerable ambiguity (Fasold 1972:153–9, G. Bailey & Naylor 1983). In mesolectal varieties of creole on the Sea Islands and in the Caribbean, *would* often alternates with *useta* for past habituals; e.g., 'We use tuh dance all the time tuh duh drums, ... We would dance roun and roun' (Georgia 1940:118).

KIN (< *can*). Well-known for its use as a habitual in Liberian English and Sierra Leone (Singler 1984); but instances of *kin* on the Sea Islands are ambiguous between habituality and modality, and the semantic domains overlap anyway: 'I kin speak tuh dead folk in song and dey kin unduhstan me' (Georgia, 7).

VERB + *ing*. Devonish (230–31) points out that mesolectal and acrolectal VERB + *ing* in GC, like basilectal *a*, sometimes 'straddles a semantic area covering both the continuative and the habitual/iterative'. Indications that the situation is similar in VBE come from W. Stewart (p.c.), from John Myhill (p.c.), and from examples in Hancock 1984; the issue is worth careful investigation.

[16] The co-occurrence of habitual *a* with the basilectal copula *de* here violates Bickerton's Main Stative Rule (1975), which prevents the co-occurrence of non-punctual aspect markers with stative predicates. However, violations of this type are attested in virtually every body of GC data, including Bickerton's; note his *evribadi a de aal abaut a rood* (Bickerton 1975:34; cf. Gibson 1982, Rickford 1985b).

[17] Attestations in GC of the durative part of the basilectal structure proposed for this stage (*de* + *a* or *de* + *pon*) are plentiful: *mi DE A luk mi kau* 'I was (there) looking for my cow' (Bickerton 1973:650), *Jan DE A riid im lesn* 'John is busy reading his lesson' (Devonish, cited in Mufwene 1982), *mi DE PON wash mi mout* 'I was in the process of washing my mouth' (Rickford 1985b). However, attestations of this durative preceded by habitual *(d)a* are rare. An example from Saramaccan with habitual *ta* occurs in Alleyne (1980:87): *ini wan te mi ta si en, a TA DE TA hondi fisi* 'Anytime I see him, he is fishing.'

Stage 2: *He does de* {*(d)a/pon*} *work.* (hab. *(d)a* → *does*)
Stage 3: *He does be working.* (*de* → *be*; also, progressive *(d)a* V or *pon* V → V + *ing*)
Stage 4: *He* Ø *be working.* (*does* → Ø; *be* 'habitual')

(20) Habitual aspect with an adjective:
Stage 1: *He (d)a quiet.* (basilect)[18]
Stage 2: *He does quiet.* (*(d)a* → *does*)
Stage 3: *He does be quiet.* (with *quiet* re-analysed as adj., not verb, necessitating introduction of cop. *be*)
Stage 4: *He* Ø *be quiet.* (*does* → Ø; *be* 'habitual')

Even though the successive lines of these derivations are described as different 'stages', two or more stages could have coexisted simultaneously, as they do in some parts of the Caribbean. Given that some slaves had more exposure to English than others from the very start of black/white contact in the New World (e.g. house slaves, or those on plantations with a high proportion of whites; Stewart 1967, Alleyne 1971), it is possible that Stages 1–3 (and perhaps pidgin stages as well) might have existed on American plantations from the 17th century. What undoubtedly would have changed over time, however, is the relative proportion of speakers controlling each level or stage; those controlling the levels closer to English would have increased, as opportunity and motivation for approximating English increased, while the basilect and lower mesolectal stages would have fallen away as the number of people who spoke them dwindled (Alleyne 1980:192, Rickford 1983).[19] In most Afro-American speech communities today, all but Stage 4 have been lost. On the Sea Islands, however, earlier stages survive, allowing us to reconstruct the general process.

One merit of this hypothesis, compared with the preceding diffusion hypotheses, is that it does not require the incredible assumption that blacks in American were empty slates on which the dialect features of whites were faithfully and flawlessly transcribed. On the contrary, it recognizes (a) that white varieties of English, as acquired by generations of West African slaves who arrived on American plantations speaking no English (Read 1939:250), would

[18] Although examples of both are given by Bickerton (1975:28, 118) and by Gibson (131–2), the occurrence of *a* with 'adjectives' is rarer and more awkward in GC than that of *does*, and is subject to more internal constraints. Both authors suggest, for instance, that the adjective should be 'dynamic' (e.g. *jealous*) rather than 'stative' (e.g. *tall*), used in reference to qualities which are relatively open to change rather than permanent. Gibson also notes, however, that *a* can occur with stative adjectives if the subject NP refers to a class of people, as in: *bos-draiva dem a taal* 'Not all bus drivers are tall, but some of them are usually tall.' The issue requires further research, both in GC and other creoles.

[19] Bickerton 1984 has suggested that, because of their relatively small numbers, the very first Africans arriving in New World colonies may have had a better chance of approximating the English of whites in the colonies than the large numbers who came later, who learned their English from the Africans before them. But instead of replacing an across-the-board 'basilect to acrolect' chronology with an across-the-board 'acrolect to basilect' chronology, we need to remember Alleyne's point that varying degrees of English language acquisition would have been exemplified among the Africans at every chronological stage; his conclusion that quantitative movement away from the basilect would have increased over time still appears valid.

often have been influenced by the structures and categories of their native languages (Alleyne 1980); (b) that they did not always have good access to or interaction with native speakers of English in this new environment, and (c) that they were a displaced multilingual population, needing to communicate with each other via this alien tongue before they had developed extensive competence in it. These are the kinds of conditions for second language acquisition in which pidgin and creole varieties develop (Andersen, 3); and if the earliest Africans learned their English from Irish servants who were themselves learning English, pidginization in the form of 'tertiary hybridization' (Whinnom, 105) would have been even more likely. Furthermore, some Africans must have arrived from the Caribbean or the Guinea Coast already speaking an English pidgin or creole (Stewart 1967, Hancock 1985). In either case, there is independent documentary and other evidence that pidgin and creole varieties were among the forerunners of modern VBE (Walser 1955, Stewart 1967, 1974, Dillard 1972, Traugott 1976, Rickford 1977, Fasold 1981, Baugh 1983, Holm 1984).

A second merit of this hypothesis is that its decreolizing route—involving increasing formal approximations to English, while creole semantic/syntactic categories are essentially retained—fits in with theoretical formulations of decreolization in linguistics (Stewart 1962, Bickerton 1980:113) and of cultural assimilation in anthropology.[20] It is in accord with Herskovits' concept of cultural reinterpretation, for instance, summarized by Stewart (1974:36, fn. 2) as follows:

> 'In the Herskovitsian sense, "reinterpretation" is an acculturative mechanism involving the association of newly borrowed forms with older functions and meanings. In this way, non-prestigious old World cultural traits can be retained under disguise as prestigious New World ones.'

A third merit of this hypothesis is that it can account not only for the development of invariant *be* VERB + *ing* as the VBE habitual marker for verbal continuatives (as in 19 above), but also for the emergence of VERB as a habitual marker for verbal non-continuatives (see Bickerton 1975:117 for GC parallels). The derivation is as follows.[21]

(21) Habitual aspect with a verbal non-continuative predicate:
Stage 1: *He (d)a work.* (basilect)

[20] Note that, since basilectal creole *(d)a* in 18–21 covers both progressive and habitual aspect, while mesolectal *does* is restricted to habitual, the mesolectal replacement retains only part of the meaning of the basilectal form. Incidentally, the combined durative and habitual functions of basilectal creole *a* would help to explain the occasionally durative uses of VBE *be* referred to in fn. 3—at least if the former is seen as the ancestral relation of the latter, as proposed here.

[21] In the final line of derivation 21, *does* is deleted completely, and the verb stem (*work*) is left to signal habituality by itself. However, VBE often uses VERB + *s* for the habitual instead of VERB alone; and Scott 1973 has proposed that the VBE *-s* suffix might represent systematic expression of the habitual, rather than irregular realization of the English present. It is possible to capture this intuition by deriving VERB + *s* from *does* VERB, via affix hopping and cliticization of the final sibilant; but, as noted by Rickford 1980, it is virtually impossible to distinguish between an *-s* suffix which is habitual and one which marks the English present, since the latter signals generic or habitual aspect most of the time.

Stage 2: *He does work.* (*(d)a* → *does*)
Stage 3: *He does work.* (nothing new; no need to introduce *be* as main verb, since S already has one)
Stage 4a: *He Ø work.* (*does* → Ø)

Note that the habitual marker at Stage 1, as well as the transitions between Stages 1–2 and Stages 3–4, are exactly the same as in 18–20; what leads to a different result in 21 is the fact that the predicate here is a non-continuative main verb, and continues to be analysed as such throughout the derivation; this obviates the need for the introduction of *be* at Stage 3.[22]

A fourth merit of this hypothesis is that the decreolizing stages or levels set out in 18–20 (and the processes which link them) are attested in creoles which are regional neighbors if not relatives of VBE, enhancing the plausibility of the diachronic derivation proposed for VBE *be*. Since these stages are so central to this proposal, we will examine the evidence in some detail.

The basilectal or Stage 1 form *(d)a* (and related variants, like *ta* in Saramaccan, *de* in Sierra Leone, *di* in Cameroon Pidgin, *e* in Sranan and Djuka), is attested in pidgins and creoles on both sides of the Atlantic: from Suriname, Guyana, Barbados, and South Carolina to Liberia, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Sierra Leone Creole (Alleyne 1980:80–85; Hancock 1984). Gullah or Sea Island Creole, as spoken in South Carolina and Georgia, is sometimes reported as lacking *da* in habitual function (Alleyne, ibid.); but Brasch (1981:62) cites a 19th century discussion of its use on St. Helena Island, and Turner (264) includes a text from Diana Brown of Edisto Island in which several examples occur, including this one:

(22) [an dɛm ca əm ɟi dɪ ɲɒŋ pipl wɒt də wʌk dɛ ɒn dɛm ples] 'and them carry it give the young people what work there on them place.'

The *(d)a* of Stage 1 probably represents convergence between Eng. habitual *do* and similar West African forms: Yoruba *(a)máá*, Ewe *-na*, Twi *re*, *da*, Ibo *de*, Wolof *di* (see Alleyne 1980:90, 163–4; Turner, 214; Stewart 1970:247; Cassidy & Le Page, 141). Such convergence is frequent with pidgin/creole forms (Cassidy 1966, Hall 1966:61, Rickford 1974, Mühlhäusler 1982).[23]

The Stage 2 form—unstressed habitual *does*—is modeled on Eng. *does* rather than *do*, but is morphologically invariant.[24] It is not found in the Suriname

[22] The distinction of basilectal *(d)a work* vs. *(d)a de (d)a work* and of mesolectal *(does) work* vs. *(does) be working* recalls Henry's distinction between the iterative *do go* and frequentative durative *do be going* in the HE of County Roscommon (see fn. 12, above). However, this distinction is probably not consistently made in everyday creole and VBE usage, just as it apparently is not in most varieties of HE (Harris 1982:9). Stewart (p.c.) has suggested that the motivation for the development of this distinction in the history of VBE is elusive, 'since the proto-system seems at some point to have done quite well with the simpler Habituative/Progressive differentiation (and perhaps even with a single Habituative/Progressive category, e.g. as in Sranan).'

[23] Mufwene has suggested English etyma for creole continuative *a* (< *at*) and locative/durative *de* (< *there*); and he supports Cassidy & Le Page's suggestion that Jamaican durative/continuative *da* may represent coalescence of *de* + *a* (see fn. 17 above.)

[24] The adoption of BOTH forms would be ruled out by the categorical invariance rule for creole verb stems—which applies even when marked past forms serve as the model, as in GC *lef* 'leave'

creoles, or in other areas where decreolization has been minimal; but it occurs as a mesolectal variant of basilectal *(d)a* in communities like Guyana and in the Sea Islands. It also occurs instead of *(d)a* in places like the Bahamas and St. Kitts, where decreolization is more advanced. A Sea Islands example in a non-continuative verbal environment is:

(23) *But I does go to see people when they sick.*

(This and other Sea Islands examples below, not otherwise referenced, were recorded by me in 1970, from elderly speakers who are now deceased.) Like *(d)a*, *does* is neutral at first between past and non-past; but as decreolization proceeds, it becomes increasingly restricted to non-past (Rickford 1974:99, Bickerton 1975:116).

Stage 3, involving the introduction of non-finite *be* after *does*—either as a replacement for the creole copula *de*, or as a replacement for Ø (in the case of the re-analysed adjectives)—is crucial in this proposal. It is attested in the Caribbean mesolects (Alleyne 1980:213) and in the Sea Islands:

(24) *I'll miss C, cause she does be here and write letter for me sometimes.*

(25) *He does be up and cut wood sometimes.*

While inflected forms of the copula like *is* and *were* carry person/number and tense information, the invariant *be* which is introduced at this stage is semantically 'empty', required merely as a syntactic link between *does* (or a modal auxiliary) and an adjective or similar predicate—a past participle, prepositional phrase, VERB + *ing*, or NP.[25]

The Stage 4 demise of *does* in the creole predecessors of VBE may have resulted from realization of its non-standard character; but it was undoubtedly facilitated by phonological reduction processes, as synchronic style shifts and decreolization changes often are in creole continua (Rickford 1985b; Singler). The central rule in this process is the one providing for the loss of the initial voiced stop in a tense/aspect auxiliary—a rule which is relatively rare in white colloquial varieties of English,[26] but common enough in VBE and the West Atlantic creoles. As evidence for it, note VBE [õ no] for 'don't know', [ãmə] for 'I'm gonna' and *ain't* for 'didn't'. Compare variation in the Sea Islands and in many Caribbean creoles between progressive/habitual *da* and *a*, *de*, *te* and *e*; habitual *does* and *oes*; anterior *bin* and *in*; irrealis *go* and *o* etc. Once the

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or *brok* 'break'. The non-adoption of periphrastic *did* as a past habitual in VBE can be accounted for by reference to GC synchronic evidence—in which *does* is used among lower mesolectal speakers just as *(d)a* is, for both present and past; *yuuzta* 'used to' serves as the explicit past habitual at all levels of the continuum; and *did* serves as a first replacement form for anterior *bin* (Bickerton 1975:70). The prior existence of *used to* in HE is also adopted by Guilfoyle as an explanation for the fact that English periphrastic *did* was not adopted as a past habitual in HE.

[25] Gibson (62) suggests that I have treated *does be* as a 'syntactic unit'; but my discussion here and elsewhere should indicate that I regard them as separate items which happen to co-occur in some environments because of syntactic requirements. It is precisely because they are separable that *be* can remain to assume the habitual function of *does*, once the latter is lost.

[26] J. Sledd (p.c.) reports that, in his native southern white colloquial speech, 'a long nasalized [õ:] can represent either *don't* or *going to*'. This is contrary to the claim of Labov et al. (1968:251 ff.)

initial stop of *does* is assimilated by this rule, the remaining [əz] is subject to further contraction and deletion, as in the following Sea Island sentence—which I had filed as an example of habitual *be*, before I listened to the recording again and detected the lone sibilant which was the remnant of *does*:

(26) *Sometimes you* [z] *be in the bed ...*

The plausibility of the central claim in this proposal—that VBE habitual *be* emerged through the loss of *does* at Stage 4—is substantially enhanced by the fact that the process can still be observed. On the Sea Islands, *does* (*be*) is used as a marker of habitual aspect (as in 24–26) among adults over sixty; but zero (before non-continuative verbs) and *be* (before nominals, locatives, adjectives and VERB + *ing*) are used instead by the youngest generation:

(27) *But I* Ø *go to see people when they sick.*

(28) *He* Ø *be up and cut wood sometimes.*

What seems clearly to have happened—the stages are set out in detail in Rickford 1980—is that, partly because of the constant morphophonemic condensation and deletion of *does* by the older speakers, as in 26—the form has not been transmitted to younger Sea Islanders. In the absence of *does*, they have reinterpreted zero as the habitual marker in the case of verb-stem environments like 27, and *be* as the habitual marker in other environments like 28.[27]

The fifth merit of this hypothesis is that it can incorporate the strengths of the revised diffusion hypotheses presented in §§3.2–3.3 above, while overcoming their weaknesses. Since the lexicon of pidgins and creoles usually derives primarily from the superstrate, the possibility that available HE or British dialects might have served as models for the lexical instantiation of the habitual in earlier pidgin or creole varieties of NWBE is no problem for this hypothesis. At the same time, the fact that the habitual category was incorporated into the Atlantic creoles, while other semantic/syntactic features of the English models were not (see §4 below and Harris 1985), can be explained by reference to substratal influence—several West African languages have a habitual, continuative, or non-punctual category—and creole universals: creoles frequently have a non-punctual aspectual category which simultaneously mediates between habituals and continuatives. These factors also help to explain why the basilectal *(d)a* of Atlantic creoles is used for both continuative and habitual

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that the assimilation of the stop of *going* to the nasal of *I'm* is unusual, and restricted within America to VBE. We clearly need field records and additional evidence on this point; but as both Stewart and Dillard have often emphasized, the occurrence of VBE features in southern white English does not preclude the possibility that the direction of influence may have been from the former to the latter. A reader has also pointed out that English support *do* is occasionally reduced: *What's your father do for a living?*

[27] In view of the fact that some of these younger Sea Islanders do have contact with mainland VBE speakers, for whom *be* is the normal habitual, direct diffusion cannot be ruled out. But since they encounter instances of habitual *be* resulting from the erosion of *does* in their own communities (i.e. in their grandparents' usage), the effects of decreolization cannot be ruled out either; and it can be argued that mainland VBE *be* could not root well in Sea Island grammars unless the latter already had an inherited semantic/syntactic space available for it.

functions (i.e. is a true non-punctual), while the *do* of HE and British dialects marks habitual alone; why *(d)a* does not retain the inflectional morphology of HE and British *do* (creoles typically have no inflectional morphology); and why it assumes phonological shapes which the English equivalent does not (forms like *de* and *di* represent convergence between English and West African inputs, while *a* and *e* result from applications of the pan-creole rule which deletes initial voiced stops in tense/aspect auxiliaries).

At the mesolectal level, either Hibernian or British varieties of English must have served as models for the choice of *does* as replacement for *(d)a* in decreolizing varieties of NWBE. But the fact that the mesolectal creole form shows no person/number inflection can be attributed to the general invariance of creole verb stems.[28] The fact that it is realized in phonologically reduced forms ([əz, z)] and eventually disappears can be accounted for by reference to decreolization and the creole phonological reduction rules which this process exploits.

But what of cases in which the superstrate input to NWBE varieties was not habitual *do*, but *be*? Recall from §§3.2–3.3 that this is most likely to have come from northern HE (southern HE and British varieties use *do be* in equivalent environments); it would have affected only locative/prepositional, adjectival, and continuative predicates (British and Hibernian varieties of English all use habitual *do* with non-continuative main verbs). Since northern HE speakers went in significant numbers to North America but not to the Caribbean, their influence might be partly responsible for the fact that decreolization has resulted in the emergence of invariant *be* as the habitual marker in VBE, but not in the Caribbean creoles.

Though it is valuable to bear this possible HE influence in mind, there are at least two other independent explanations. The first—which helps to account for one weakness of the revised diffusion hypothesis discussed in §3.2 above—is that the Caribbean mesolects often do NOT employ *be* after tense/aspect and modal auxiliaries where British and Hibernian varieties require it. Note the following recorded examples:

(29) *Well Sunday you say you does Ø busy.* (Guyana)
(30) *Holiday gon Ø too far from now.* (Guyana)
(31) *ai waan Ø nors* 'I want to be a nurse.' (Jamaica, reported in Craig 1980:113)

Clearly, if no *be* is present in pre-adjectival and other environments, it cannot emerge as the habitual marker if and when the habitual *does* disappears. Note too that the tenacity of the creole locative verb *de* in the Caribbean, as in *She does de in the room* instead of *She does be in the room* (see Bickerton 1973:651–2), also militates against the emergence of *be* as habitual. The second explanation is that, in the Caribbean, creole speakers represent a vast majority of

[28] Tables 2–3 in Bickerton (1973:651–2) indicate that locative/existential *de* is the very last basilectal copula or quasi-copula to be replaced by Ø or *be* in decreolization.

the local population;[29] full forms of *does* are heard too often for it to lose its foothold as the regular habitual marker. Occasional instances of *does*-deletion leaving an invariant *be* do occur:

(32) *These days the sun be down fast.* (overheard in a hire-car, just outside Georgetown, Guyana, 1974)

But such instances are immediately relatable to stable synchronic variation involving *does*, and the possibility of reinterpreting *be* as the real habitual marker is slight.[30] By contrast, even in the early 1970's, the proportion of regular *does* users in the Sea Island community where I worked was small; the reduction and deletion rules affecting it frequently applied; and the conditions for the diachronic loss of *does* and reinterpretation of *be* were ideal. At present, virtually all the *does* users whom I recorded a decade ago have died, and *be* has emerged as the primary habitual marker. If the intermediate developments, involving the reduction and deletion of *does*, had not been recorded a decade ago, the emergence of *be* as a habitual marker on the Sea Islands might have been as much of a mystery as its emergence in VBE is usually assumed to be, and the former development would not have been able to shed any light on the latter.

One possible demerit of this hypothesis is that it will not work (unless we assume diffusion among Afro-Americans) for areas in which pidgin and creole varieties did not develop. This is most likely to have happened in the American north. In places like Pennsylvania, where a low ratio of blacks to whites and other conditions favored relatively successful and rapid acculturation,[31] it is

[29] By contrast, the speakers of mainland VBE varieties constitute a minority surrounded by, and subject to acculturating pressures from, a white majority among whom more standard varieties of English are spoken. This is not true in the Caribbean (interestingly enough, the cases that come closest—e.g. Barbados and the Bahamas—also appear to have decreolized the most). We would therefore expect decreolization to have gone further, and even to have produced different results, in America.

[30] Bickerton (1975:119–20), expanding on my original hypothesis about the relation of *does be* and *be*, discusses the reasons for the non-emergence of *be* in GC in related but somewhat different terms.

[31] Data in Foner (1975:226–32) on the proportions and relations of blacks and whites in Pennsylvania support the kind of linguistic acculturation proposed here. Pennsylvania as a whole had only 400–500 slaves in 1700; and the number of slaves in Philadelphia in 1767 was only 1400, or 9% of the city's population. Slaveholders in Pennsylvania typically had only had one or two slaves each; the largest slaveholder in Philadelphia in the 1750's had only 13 slaves. Most of these slaves were household servants, with young ones preferred 'so that they could be trained at an early age and devote the largest portions of their lives to serving the master and his family'. Many of those who were not household servants were skilled artisans, working alongside white indentured servants in the iron industry:

> 'In a report on Pennsylvania's iron manufactories in 1750, Pastor Israel Acrelius of Sweden observed that the "laborers are generally composed partly of Negroes [slaves], partly of servants from Germany or Ireland brought for a term of years." '

Other slaves enjoyed contact with the larger society in their roles as bakers, masons, carpenters, butchers, painters, sailmakers, and sailors. When we consider these facts in the light of comple-

possible that markedly pidginized and creolized varieties of English might not have developed among Africans and Afro-Americans. Their acquisition of white varieties of English, including those spoken by the Scotch Irish (who were the dominant white immigrants and indentured servants in the 18th century) might have been more like 'ordinary' second language acquisition (Andersen, 1–56), with some substratal transfer and a series of interlingual stages, but less opportunity for tertiary hybridization and creolization. The emergence of habitual *be* in the speech of blacks from this region could be attributed in a rather straightforward fashion to the influence of northern HE models. However, even if we concede the possibility that pidginization and creolization might not have occurred in the American north—and there are theoretical and empirical reasons for not doing so too readily (see Stewart 1974:19 ff.)—we cannot claim that northern VBE has no creole roots, for 'black speech in the north is a consequence of migration from the South' (G. Bailey & Naylor). The possibility that pidgin or creole speech was widespread among blacks in the south is very strong, given black/white ratios comparable to those of the Caribbean;[32] and as late as 1880, more than 75% of the American black population was in the south (Franklin, 290).

A second possible demerit is that the English-speaking Caribbean, the Sea Islands, and the mainland USA may differ sufficiently in the sources of their African populations to make us hesitant about assuming the similar creole starting points which this proposal requires. Hancock 1980 and Nichols (1983:209) have pointed out that the Sea Islands imported more slaves from Senegambia and Angola than did the American mainland and/or the Caribbean; and statistics in Curtin 1969 and Le Page 1960 reveal other demographic differences in the sources of Africans sent to different parts of the New World. Jamaica and Virginia imported higher proportions of slaves from the Bight of Biafra and the Niger Delta than either South Carolina or Guyana, while Guyana and Jamaica imported higher proportions from the Gold Coast and the Bight of Benin than either Virginia or South Carolina.

Although there ARE linguistic differences between the North American mainland, the Sea Islands, and individual territories within the Caribbean (Hancock 1980:28), and some of these MAY go back to differences in the sources of their African populations,[33] the similarities between the most archaic varieties of

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mentary evidence that Scotch Irish immigrants constituted a significant proportion of the white population in 18th century Pennsylvania (Smith, 314, 318; Leyburn 1962:170–71), it is easy to see why northern HE *be* and other white features might have been directly acquired by Afro-Americans. The data summarized here might also help to explain why the black Philadelphia dialect of the 1820's which was exported to Samaná in the Dominican Republic shows so few surviving creole forms (Poplack & Sankoff 1983). At the time the Samaná emigration took place, Philadelphia had not yet been affected by the flood of Afro-American migrants who were to come up from the south in the 1880's and 1940's (Franklin, 291–2, 350–51).

[32] According to Foner (1975:203), there were 10,500 blacks in South Carolina in 1715 (compared with 6,250 whites)—more than 60% of the colony's total population. By 1776, there were 90,000 blacks and 40,000 whites; blacks then constituted nearly 70% of the total population.

[33] Some result from the period in which slaves from one region or another arrived, rather than

NWBE attested for these areas are striking enough to suggest that they derive ultimately from similar, if not identical, pidgin/creole roots.[34] This point has recently been made for the lexicon by Cassidy 1980, comparing Sranan, Jamaican, and Gullah; and for phonology and morphosyntax by Alleyne 1980 and by Brasch—the former concentrating on evidence from the Caribbean creoles, the latter on documentary evidence from the USA. Of particular relevance to our present concerns is the fact that the NWBE varieties of these areas share a rule for the deletion of initial voiced stops in tense/aspect auxiliaries (Rickford 1980), facilitating the reduction and loss of habitual *(d)a* and *does*.

Furthermore, since this hypothesis assumes that the choice of *does* (*be*) as the mesolectal FORM of the habitual derives, at least in part, from British or Hibernian varieties of English, inter-territorial differences in the African origins of New World black populations are less significant than they might otherwise be (if we were looking at straight 'Africanisms', for instance). The fact that Jamaican lacks habitual *does* may, as suggested in fn. 7, have more to do with the relative size and origins of its WHITE population in the formative period.

A third potential demerit of this hypothesis is that, while good synchronic evidence exists for its derivational stages from the Atlantic creoles, we do not have quite as much diachronic evidence for them from the North American mainland. Brasch (36, 62) provides several 19th century attestations of habitual *da, do,* or *does* (reduced to *'s*) from the Sea Island area, but only one example (p. 120) from 'southern plantation speech' more generally. Oomen 1985 has found examples of iterative *does* in the narratives of 17 ex-slaves from South Carolina, but its occurrence there is reported to be 'generally infrequent'. One example of *does be* in these narratives (p. 56) is:

(33) *You know some people does be right fast in catchin chillun*
(i.e. getting pregnant).

In considering this limited documentary evidence, however, we should bear in mind several mitigating considerations. First, documentation on the language and culture of New World slave populations, particularly from the 17th cen-

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from their relative numbers. Some result from other factors, including differences in the relative proportions of black and white speakers, the contributions made by other ethnic groups, and the degree of urbanization and socio-economic mobility.

[34] Features claimed in recent conference papers to demonstrate DIFFERENCES between Atlantic creoles—and so probably relatable to the sources of their African populations—turn out to be shared by the creoles in question and thus to serve as demonstration of their basic SIMILARITY. One such feature is counterfactual conditional markers, said to be absent from all anglophone creoles except modern Krio and Sranan. But such counterfactuals do occur in GC, marked by *bin* in combination with either *sa* or *go* at the basilectal level (Bickerton 1981:83). It has also been suggested that GC differs from Gullah in not having a [fa] pronunciation for its infinitival complementizer, and that the Sea Island folklore motif about a hag who sheds her skin to do mischief is not found in Guyana. But this is again contrary to fact. Not only does Guyanese folklore share the old hag (*ool haig*) myth found in the Sea Islands and the Bahamas, but the hag utters virtually the same refrain when she discovers that people have sprinkled salt and pepper on her skin:

skin, da mii!! yu no noo mii? 'Skin, it's me!! Don't you know me?' ('Mother', 80-year old Guyanese; see Rickford 1985b for complete text.)

tury,[35] is extremely limited. As Ascher (1974:11) has noted, there is less direct documentation on American slaves than on any other American group. Second, such documentation as exists has not yet been carefully and systematically examined for the existence of *da* and *does* (*be*) in VBE.[36] Third, existing grammatical descriptions and texts from Caribbean and Sea Island communities typically show *da* and *does* as occurring less often than they do in casual everyday speech. This may reflect upward code-switching by the creole speakers on whose usage the texts and descriptions are based (Turner, 12; Bickerton 1981:305); or mishearings by field workers unfamiliar with the usage (Turner, 14); or failure to notice the forms because their non-standardness is masked or camouflaged (Rickford & Rickford 1976, Spears 1982); or the fact that the semantic conditions which occasion the use of these forms are rare in recorded texts. Sentences in which habitual or generic conditions are expressed occur very infrequently in the texts cited by Brasch, and even habitual *be* is attested only a few times (p. 27).[37] These mitigating considerations should not discourage us from searching for documentary evidence, but they make the immediate absence of such evidence less damaging than might otherwise be the case.

The strength of the merits associated with this decreolization hypothesis, and the weakness of its potential demerits, establish it as the single best explanation for the origin of VBE *be*. Before summarizing the discussion in this section and going on to my conclusion, however, we must briefly consider three minor alternative hypotheses.

3.5. DECREOLIZATION FROM CREOLE *AM*. The only other alternative advanced in the literature to date is Brewer's suggestion (1974) that *be* was a replacement for durative (continuative/iterative) *am* in early VBE. Drawing on WPA slave narratives recorded in the 1930's (see Yetman 1967), she concludes that *am* was used in early VBE very much like invariant *be*, and suggests (p. 80) the process of change shown in Table 2.

Time 1		*am*	plantation creole
Time 2		*am/be*	early BE
Time 3		*be*	early BE
Time 4	*I*	*am/be*	present-day BE

TABLE 2.

[35] The only contemporary records for this period cited in Brasch (p. 3) are the court transcripts of the Salem witch trials of 1692, recorded by Magistrate John Hawthorne, and not published until 1866. Stewart (1974:35) suggests that the use of markedly creole linguistic structures would have diminished considerably outside of the Deep South by 1776, because of decreolization; and he has pointed out (p.c.) that the lateness of the WPA narratives used as data by Schneider 1983 weakens his arguments against a creole ancestry for VBE.

[36] Several sources—e.g. the 19th century slave correspondence and recordings under investigation by Joseph F. Towns, III, of Cambridge University (see *The Carrier Pidgin* newsletter, September 1983, p. 6)—are not easily accessible.

[37] Even for GC, the texts of Rickford 1985b give no attestations for *does* from earlier centuries; the earliest occurrence is in Quow 1881, but it undoubtedly existed prior to this.

Am is introduced at Time 1, according to this proposal, as an invariant 'first-replacement form for an earlier base creole form such as *de* or *da*'. After varying with *be*, and then being replaced by *be* (Times 2 and 3), it is reintroduced at Time 4 as a 'form marked to occur with *I*'.

This proposal shares with the preceding decreolization proposal the merit of providing for the dynamic evolution of VBE over time, via a process (constant meaning, changing form) in harmony with existing theories of cultural reinterpretation and decreolization. It also has the merit of being built on accessible documentary evidence. However, its plausibility rests to a considerable extent on the similarity between *am* and *be* in early VBE. Brewer shows that the forms were similar in that they were used with a variety of person/number subjects,[38] and with a variety of predicates. She also argues that *am* shared with *be* the function of indicating habitual, iterative, or extended states of affairs; but the evidence for this central claim is less convincing. Some of the *am* sentences which she cites do have clear habitual or iterative meanings of the type usually associated with *be*:

(34) *But lots of times when us sposed to mind de calves, us am out eating watermillions in de bresh.* (Texas; Brewer, ex. 34)

(35) *De women am off Friday afternoon to wash clothes.* (Texas: ex. 36)

But many others do not, including examples like the following—which are regarded by Brewer herself (78) as counter-examples, because they refer to single occurrences at one point in time:[39]

(36) *I's 21 year old den, but it am de first time I's gone any place, 'cept to de neighbors.* (Texas; ex. 71)

(37) *... de next morning dat Delbridge am shunt off de place, cause Massa Haley seed he niggers was all gaunt.* (Texas; ex. 70)

Another demerit of this proposal, when compared with the preceding decreolization proposal, is that the transition from *da* to *be* via *am* is not attested in other creole communities; it does not build on existing phonological similarities and processes within the continuum, as decreolization typically does. Finally, although this decreolization hypothesis might account for VBE habitual *be*, it does not account for the emergence and persistence of habitual *does* in the Sea Islands and the Caribbean.

In sum, while Brewer has drawn attention to a potential habitual marker (*am*) which was more frequent and significant in the grammar of early VBE than previously recognized, her hypothesis about the origin of VBE *be* is not as

[38] The forms were used with 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person subjects, both singular and plural—although this was truer of the narrators from Texas than of those from Tennessee, Mississippi, or South Carolina.

[39] In addition to these examples, others are given to show that *am* expresses an 'extended period or state', but they strike me as possible counter-examples with [+punctual] reference:

(a) *Massa Haley seed he niggers was all gaunt and lots am run off and de fields am not plowed right.* (Texas; Brewer, ex. 65)

(b) *De New Orleans folks say it am de accidentment, but de rest say de rope am cut.* (Texas; ex. 67)

attractive as the decreolization and revised diffusion proposals considered above.

3.6. UNIVERSALS OF CREOLIZATION. A plausible argument for influence from creole universals can be made with respect to the semantics of *be*. As noted above, a non-punctual category, covering both habitual and continuative aspect, is a universal feature of creole tense/aspect systems—perhaps a part of an innate linguistic bio-program (Bickerton 1981:27–30). But it is clear that the nature of the superstrate targets shapes the selection of intermediate forms; and such targets are the result of historical accidents rather than universal principles. The presence of Scots English speakers in Ulster apparently influenced the emergence of invariant *be* as habitual in northern HE, and the presence of northern HE speakers in America might have helped to ensure a similar development in VBE. Arguments from universals, then, take us only part of the way in accounting for the emergence of VBE habitual *be*; they help to explain its semantics, but not its form. Moreover, the positive features of a universals hypothesis have already been incorporated in the decreolization hypothesis explored in §3.4 above.

3.7. INDEPENDENT DEVELOPMENT. A final alternative is to consider *be* as an independent development of VBE, virtually unrelated to features of HE or British English or the Caribbean creoles. Spears (867) has raised this possibility with respect to semi-auxiliary *come*;[40] and the development of stressed *bin* as a remote-phase marker also represents a VBE innovation (Rickford 1977:207), even though its interaction with the stative/non-stative distinction and its parallels to *done* and *bin* in the Caribbean reveal creole connections.

But it is difficult to see why habitual *be* should have emerged in VBE, or where it might have come from, WITHOUT reference to any of the central elements in the competing hypotheses: substratal transfer, superstratal influence, diffusion or decreolization. The evidence and arguments in favor of decreolization from *does* (*be*) clearly make it a superior hypothesis.

3.8. SUMMARY. C.-J. N. Bailey's proposal that (undifferentiated) HE might have been the source of NWBE habitual *be* founders on the facts that *does* (*be*), rather than *be*, is the primary habitual marker in mesolectal Caribbean creoles—and that *do* (*be*), rather than *be*, is the primary habitual marker in southern HE. Six alternatives have been discussed in turn; but only three are sufficiently congruent with relevant internal (formal, semantic) and external (geographical, historical) considerations to be entertained seriously.

One is a revised diffusion proposal, according to which northern HE is seen as a source of VBE *be* and southern HE as a source of Caribbean *does* (*be*). This accounts neatly for the absence of habitual *be* in the Caribbean, since few northern HE speakers went there. However, since many southern HE speakers

[40] Spears (867) cites me as saying that I had not noticed the *come* of indignation in Guyanese speech. I did, however, say that it seemed intuitively familiar; subsequently I located several examples in my GC corpus, and passed them on to him. Such examples of course challenge the status of *come* as an independent American innovation.

emigrated to North America, and may have had close contact with Africans and Afro-Americans in the 17th–18th centuries, it does not account for the absence of habitual *do* or *does* in VBE.

This problem also plagues the expanded diffusion hypothesis, according to which southern and southwestern British dialects are seen as other possible sources for habitual *does* (and *(d)a*) in the Caribbean. These dialects were also well represented in the USA, and might be expected to have left habitual *does* in VBE as well.

A decreolization proposal which relates VBE *be* to an earlier creole *does be* emerges as the strongest single hypothesis. Its assumption that the acquisition of English by Africans in the New World was often accompanied by substratal transfer, pidginization, creolization, and decreolization is more credible than the opposing assumption that it was not. Its decreolizing stages accord with independently formulated theories of cultural assimilation and contact-induced linguistic change, and are attested in Atlantic creoles which are neighbors if not relatives of VBE. Like the diffusion proposals, it assumes that HE and British dialects served as models for mesolectal creole *does* (*be*) both in the Caribbean and North America. But unlike these proposals, it has no difficulty in accounting for the loss of *does* and the emergence of habitual *be* in VBE. This is attributed to decreolization and associated phonological processes which are well-attested from the Sea Islands. Potential demerits of this hypothesis—e.g. the fact that prior creolization is less likely to have occurred in the American north than the south—are relatively few; they are attenuated by mitigating factors (in this case the fact that the Afro-American roots of modern VBE are primarily southern), and are offset by the hypothesis' several strengths.

4. CONCLUSION. The diffusion of linguistic features between HE and NWBE was identified at the beginning of this paper as a potentially fruitful site for research on social contact and linguistic diffusion—a topic of considerable current interest within linguistics. We may now ask (a) whether further exploration of this issue seems profitable, and (b) what directions it might take.

The answer to (a) is a clear yes, because of the specific issues which remain to be settled about HE/NWBE diffusion, as well as their relevance to larger theoretical concerns. HE and NWBE both represent instances of convergence or admixture (Hymes, 74 ff.) between superstratal varieties of English, on the one hand, and one or more substratal languages, on the other (Irish and Scottish Gaelic in the former case; Twi, Yoruba, and other West African languages in the latter). Both HE and NWBE were in active formation and flux when contact between their respective speakers was most intense; here we can raise the general question of whether languages are especially subject to external influences at times like these (birth, death, rapid social/political change). Untangling the sources of HE/NWBE resemblances is a particularly challenging and rewarding enterprise for the historical linguist or sociolinguist, as this detailed survey of habitual *does* (*be*) and *be* has shown. Do such resemblances reflect the influence of a common superstrate? This conclusion has been favored re-

cently by researchers working on distinctive features of HE (Guilfoyle; Harris 1982) and NWBE (G. Bailey & Naylor; Mufwene); and it is supported, in the case of the habitual markers, by the possibility that southern British dialects might have provided a common model for southern HE and Caribbean *do(es) be*, while northern British dialects (especially Scots) were the model for northern HE and VBE *be*. At the same time, the contributions of the substrate languages are inescapable, especially insofar as the retention of a habitual or non-punctual category in the new hybrid languages is concerned. Creolization and decreolization were very likely in many varieties of NWBE; and since these processes could have independently produced some of the resemblances between HE and NWBE, these must be actively considered, and reconciled with alternative explanations.

The way in which preverbal markers like *do(es)* and *be* meet their demise in New World English-speaking communities may be as fruitful to study as the way they arise. For the Old World, we have research by Ihalainen and by Weltens 1983 (summarized in Trudgill 1984b, Harris 1985), indicating that the habitual/punctual distinction in southwestern English—traditionally signalled by *do* + V vs. V (*do go* vs. *go*) and *did* + V vs. V-*ed* (*did go* vs. *went*)—is being weakened and lost among middle-aged and younger speakers. For the Sea Islands, there is the evidence on the erosion and loss of *does* reported above. But for other parts of the New World, we need to know when and how similar habitual forms—as used by southwestern British, Irish, and African speakers—ceased to be adopted by their younger generations, and what motivations and linguistic mechanisms facilitated this development. Are the forms themselves replaced or eroded, as in decreolizaton? Or do they remain, but undergo semantic shift, as appears to be the result of dialect contact in southwest England? Understanding the process of individual feature loss may contribute to an understanding of the larger and more complex process of language death (cf. Dorian), and both will contribute to the understanding of language change in general.

Apart from linguistic details about habitual markers, questions remain about the sociolinguistic characteristics of Irish/African relations in the New World. Were features like *do(es)* and *be* merely the linguistic correlates of sparks of discontent and rebellion which crossed between colonial slaves and bond servants as they worked together in the fields? In the terminology of Le Page's social-psychological model (1978), did a relatively 'focused' Irish/African speech community emerge in British colonies in the 17th–18th centuries, with class solidarity overriding ethnic distinctiveness? Was it accompanied by linguistic convergence from both sides? When and how did the social concord give way to conflict or disinterest? If linguistic divergence followed, was this an undoing of earlier convergence, or simply a failure to share innovations? These are fascinating questions, with potential theoretical insights for sociolinguistics and historical linguistics. And since we have by no means exhausted the relevant data or theory, the promise that insightful answers can be reached is strong.

Insofar as further research is concerned, one major need is for historical work which utilizes primary rather than secondary sources. The latter are invaluable for indicating that Irish and African populations were in the same place at the same time, with more or less the same status; but to go beyond general inferences from these facts, we need more specifics about the origins of the Irish and Africans who settled there, and what their working arrangements and inter-ethnic relations were like. We also need more contemporary references to and samples of their speech. Newspaper advertisements (Read 1937), the records of shipping companies and plantations, the letters and commentaries of contemporary observers and participants, the literary works of earlier periods, and the oral histories of aged survivors will yield more information along these lines (cf. Brasch); but locating and sifting through them will require the historian's methods, patience, and dedication—a rarity among linguists (Le Page 1960 and Baker 1982 are exceptions). For maximum depth, this documentary research should be limited to one colony or city at a time. In the course of this paper, Barbados, Jamaica, Virginia, the Sea Islands, and Philadelphia have each emerged as significant in some way; linguistically oriented documentary research on any one of them would be valuable.

Unknown to many scholars, and an obvious locus for further research, are other synchronic resemblances between HE and NWBE. With respect to phonology, some HE and Caribbean English dialects are similar in their pronunciations of standard /ʌ/ as [ɔ] or something similar (Bailey, 237–8; Cassidy & Le Page, lii; Hancock 1969:36 ff.; Le Page 1972:103, 111, 167, 185; Wells 1982a:422, 1982b:576; Winford 1979:5–28) and in their palatalization of velar consonants before *a* (Bailey, 238–9; Cassidy & Le Page, lvii; Edwards 1976; Wells 1982b:569). VBE resembles English as spoken in some parts of western Ireland in the neutralization of /ɪ/ and /ɛ/ before nasals (Fasold & Wolfram 1970, Wells 1982a:423). In syntax, southern HE and Caribbean BE both have a focusing rule involving clefting and the use of the copula, instead of (or in addition to) constituent fronting. Compare the HE ex. 38 (from Henry, cited by Sullivan 1973) with its basilectal GC equivalent (ex. 39):

(38) *'Twas a bullock we had.*
(39) *a wan bul kau awi bin gat.*

In terms of the ethnography of speaking, the description of Irish *blarney* as the use of verbal eloquence to outsmart a more powerful opponent (cf. Wakin) recalls NWBE parallels in Caribbean folktales about Brer Rabbit and Anansi, and in the VBE speech event known as *coppin a plea* (Kochman 1970, Abrahams 1978).

These and other similarities will not be worth pursuing, however, if we forget to balance them against differences in other areas of phonology or syntax,[41] to question the closeness of the similarities, and to consider sources of resem-

[41] For instance, the immediate perfect construction involving *after* in conjunction with a progressive verb (Harris 1982) appears to be restricted to HE; and the rule for deleting initial voiced obstruents in tense/aspect markers (Rickford 1980) appears to be restricted to NWBE.

blance other than diffusion. For instance, on the evidence of Cassidy & Le Page (lviii), the HE and Caribbean English resemblances with respect to palatalization of velars appear to derive from the common superstratal influence of 17th–18th century native English dialects, with possible West African substrate reinforcement in the Caribbean varieties. Similarly, focusing in HE turns out to differ from its Caribbean counterpart under closer inspection: the latter requires, in focused verbs and adjectives, that the focused constituent be COPIED, not simply moved, from the extraction site. Contrast the GC ex. 40 with its southern HE equivalent (ex. 41):

(40) *iz vizit yu kom fu vizit?*
(41) *Is it visiting you came Ø?* (Molloy 1946:35, cited by Sullivan)

Compare also Kwa languages like Twi which front WITH copying, reminding us of the possible effects of substratal influence:[42]

(42) *hwe na Kwasi hwe ase* 'Kwasi actually fell', lit. 'Fall is Kwasi fell down.' (Alleyne 1980:172)

Finally, it is unlikely that resemblances between Irish *blarney* and Afro-American *coppin a plea* (whether in Caribbean folktales or the streets of New York) result from diffusion. The Anansi stories have West African roots (Tanna 1984:77); but verbal beguilement is probably a universal which surfaces more frequently and artfully among the powerless than the powerful. (Children, for instance, are typically better at it than adults.) Wakin (9) suggests that *blarney* and double-talk may represent strategies which the Irish used to compensate for weakness vis-à-vis the English: 'On one side, the powerful invader; on the other, the witty evader.' And given that *coppin a plea* was often an Afro-American strategy for *puttin on ole massa* (Osofsky 1969), we may be dealing here with independent but parallel linguistic developments, resulting from parallel socio-political conditions.[43]

The ultimate goal of the research exemplified and advocated in this paper is not simply to solve historical riddles about the relation between HE and NWBE, but to enrich our understanding of how linguistic diffusion and change proceed—bearing in mind Weinreich's still relevant dictum (p. 3) that this requires attention to both linguistic and 'extralinguistic' factors.

[42] As Alleyne (1980:171–72) notes, however, one difference between Twi (and more generally Akan) topicalization and that of creole is that the copula FOLLOWS the topicalized constituent instead of PRECEDING it. Alleyne attributes the creole order to the influence of English.

[43] In reading Fallows, I came across the following characterization of Irish Catholics:

> '... well-versed in the survival techniques of the oppressed. They were able to maintain a sense of dignity only by perfecting their skills as masters of deception and dodgers of the law whose verbal skills confused and exasperated their overlords while amusing the knowing Irish.' (13–14)

I immediately recalled stories which Richmond Wiley of the Sea Islands had told me about slaves who deceived their masters, and delighted their fellow slaves, with verbal trickery of various kinds. For examples, see Rickford & Rickford.

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