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## Needed Research on the Englishes of Appalachia

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*Our goal in life is to make Appalachian people dance because we  
make them happy by celebrating their language.*  
-Walt Wolfram

### **1. Introduction**

In approaching the subject of research needed on the Englishes of Appalachia, there is no better place to begin than the meeting organized by Jennifer Cramer at the University of Kentucky in April 2012. The theme for the 79<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Southeastern Conference on Linguistics (SECOL) was “Conference on Appalachian Language” (COAL, for short). The meeting was the first of its kind; its convening in itself met the most immediate need by gathering most of those who had pursued research on the region’s varieties of English in recent years. They had formed a disparate grouping with little previous coherence. Spread across many states and institutions, they were housed in a variety of departments and had had sometimes widely varying orientations. In establishing and enhancing relationships and in promoting the sharing of ideas via presentations and conversations,

COAL 1 was a memorable, enthusiastic success, representing an invaluable investment in the future.

One key component of this meeting was a star-studded panel of experts on Appalachian language issues, featuring Bridget L. Anderson, who has worked extensively with Appalachians in the Diaspora of the Midwest; Bethany K. Dumas, who is known for her work linking Appalachian and Ozark Mountain speech features; Beverly Olson Flanigan, who has devoted a great deal of time exploring the Appalachian connections in Ohio; Michael Montgomery, perhaps one of the best known scholars of Smoky Mountain English in particular, and Appalachian English more generally; and Walt Wolfram, a pioneer in research in Appalachia as well as numerous other American English-speaking communities.<sup>1</sup>

The goal of this panel, organized by Michael Montgomery, was to explore the current state of affairs and identify gaps for researchers examining linguistic processes in Appalachia. Invited panelists were asked to prepare comments of about ten minutes each in which they outlined several major questions that they perceived to be important in the future of research in Appalachian Englishes. These five scholars were selected so as to represent a broad range of linguistic topics as well as the broad geographic scope of Appalachia. Following the prepared remarks, panelists and conference attendees engaged in extended discussions, with a focus on how other researchers might take the recommendations of the panelists to go forward in their own research programs. In this paper, the panelists' remarks are presented in extended written form. Thus, this paper can be conceived of as a miniature version of the type of "needed research" monographs regularly produced by the American Dialect Society (cf. Malmstrom 1964; McDavid 1984; Preston 2004). In what follows, our panelists explore how formalist, traditional dialectological, variationist, and ethnographic studies with Appalachians (and with Ozarkers) both far and wide can elucidate the realities of modern Appalachian speech, while not only documenting the status of archaisms but also the innovations in language across the region and beyond.

## 2. Needed Research in Ohio Dialects

Although dialect geography may strike some as passé, its role in delineating and identifying the various speech patterns in Ohio is still real and relevant, if only because newcomers to the state are struck almost immediately by differences as they travel from north to south and even from east to west. This is true to some degree in all states, of course, but in Ohio, the presence of a “Southern” or “Appalachian” overlay in this seemingly urban and northern state is most surprising. Basic lines of demarcation have been noted since colonial times, but researchers involved in the Linguistic Atlas project first mapped them between 1930 and 1960 (Kurath 1972; Kurath and McDavid 1961; Marckwardt 1957), *Dictionary of American Regional English* field workers confirmed them in the 1960s (DARE 1985–2013), and Labov’s *Atlas of North American English* further defined them in the 1980s and 1990s (Labov, Ash, and Boberg 2006). More recently, Flanigan and others have shifted the boundaries slightly but significantly (Flanigan 2000 and 2005c; Flanigan and Norris 2000), and most recently, research has focused on shifting internal migration and its effect on stability and change in speech within Ohio’s basically stable sub-regions. This section will outline areas of needed future research in the light of these recent findings. Specifically, it will focus such research on critical grammatical and phonological features, perceptions of differences, and transitional regions within the state.

Three recent studies in particular have updated our understanding of stability and change in the traditional Midland dialect area, which includes Ohio. In *Language Variation and Change in the American Midland*, Murray and Simon (2006) list 17 grammatical items that, in varying degrees of combination and frequency, “define and validate” a Midland variety. Subsequent chapters by Ash, Gordon, and Thomas focus on the geographic “core” while acknowledging peripheral and transitional changes. Terry Irons, writing on the low back vowel merger in Kentucky (2007), notes the spread of the merger of /ɑ/ and /ɔ/ in just one generation, despite the prevalence of the Southern back upglide in earlier generations. He suggests that this change is largely a matter of social identity, trumping what younger people perceive as a

rural or “mountain” feature, and that it has developed independent of the merger observed by Labov and others in the (North) Midland and throughout the West. Cramer’s (2013) study of Louisvillians’ construction of identity as Southern but not rural is similar in its findings, with the concept of stereotyping of one’s own and others’ speech as part of this identity. This same phenomenon has been observed in southeastern Ohio (Flanigan and Norris 2000; Flanigan 2005a and 2008), and especially among younger girls and to some extent their mothers (Thomas 1996).

The third recent study of note is by Thomas (2010) on the “durability” of the boundary between the traditional Northern fringe of Ohio and the general Midland area of the state. Grammatical and lexical differences are leveling or eroding, but he claims phonological distinctions remain stable for 18 variables and are even becoming more differentiated than before. A transition area exists between Cleveland and Akron, he asserts, a finding also made by Van Wey (2005) in a cross-generational study of Canton. Thus, original settlement patterns, reinforced by internal migration across the northern states and the Eastern Midland into Ohio, are still primary in boundary maintenance.

But traditional atlas maps delineate three dialect regions in Ohio: North, North Midland, and South Midland (Shuy 1967). Is the Midland still divisible, or is it, as the aforementioned studies imply, a single area? And how far north does the South extend (Frazer 1997)? Specifically, is the Ohio Valley best considered Midland, Southern, or, to add another possibility to the mix, Appalachian? Preston (2003) projects a very narrow Midland east of the Mississippi, with the South intruding into southern Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, largely on the basis of monophthongization of /ay/ and /aw/.<sup>2</sup> Labov, Ash, and Boberg (2006) retains the traditional Midland (without subdividing it) but moves the northern extent of the South up to the Ohio River and divides this area into Mountain Southern and Coastal Southern. Flanigan’s studies would extend that area to include southeastern Ohio, from midway between Cincinnati and Portsmouth up to Canton and Youngstown (Flanigan 2000; Flanigan 2005b and c).

But this extension of an Appalachian dialect area into Ohio is not an entirely novel idea. Dakin, in a groundbreaking 1966 study,

asserted the presence of a “trans-Appalachian” dialect area extending the length of the mountain chain in a diagonal fashion and spreading outward on both sides in a gradually diminishing pattern of usage. This was largely the result of more southerly Scots-Irish immigration countering New England (and to some extent German) migration across the northern and North Midland parts of the state.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Johnson (1996) found diminishing use of certain lexical items both east and west of the mountains in a statistical “density of usage” study. For Dakin, the Ohio Valley was part of this pattern of spread and represented a “transition area” between North and South – what we have traditionally called the South Midland. This Appalachian oval combined with a spread down the river and into the Ozarks might also be said to constitute a “southeastern super-region” which is neither North nor South nor General Midland but is instead a distinctive fourth dialect area deserving of its own continuing studies (cf. Dumas 1999).<sup>4</sup>

That people living in such a broader region are conscious of their distinctiveness is clear, even to the point of self-stereotyping and mocking. Southern Ohioans may not understand what the label “Appalachian English” means, but they call themselves hillbillies and hill-jacks and play hill-hop or hick-hop music. When younger people drop the back upglide or move toward the low back vowel merger, they reveal an awareness of the stigma of “mountain” speech; when they maintain and even exaggerate the upglide and monophthongs in their speech, they are asserting their distinctive identity as regional speakers, a phenomenon referred to as contrahierarchical prestige (see Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 2006). Students in an alternative high school recorded by Nesbitt (2002) maintained not only the pronunciation of rural Athens County but also older and even “archaic” grammatical features like *a*-prefixing and the personal dative.

However, the pressure to conform, consciously or unconsciously, to the prevailing patterns of a new speech area is equally real. Allen (1997) found that men commuting to work in Columbus from Portsmouth (a two-hour drive one way, not uncommon in southern Ohio) were adopting the North Midland patterns of central Ohio, while their wives who lived and worked back home retained South Midland/Southern features; Humphries

(1999) found that librarians and teachers in tiny Chauncey, Ohio adopted the North Midland/Northern unmerged low vowels common in the mixed university community of nearby Athens. Different patterns of vowel change had been observed earlier in Cincinnati (Boberg and Strassel 2000), where the Northern Cities Vowel Shift is apparently receding under the influence of Southern and Appalachian systems.

Ongoing work by researchers at Ohio State University is finding similar kinds of variation and change in Columbus, as immigrants from southern Ohio and West Virginia move to the city for work and new generations are born. The Buckeye Corpus of conversational speech from 40 native-born residents provides a baseline of pronunciation data (Pitt et al. 2007), as does the Nationwide Speech Project (Clopper and Pisoni 2006). One recent study looked at the cross-influence of working class white and African American vowel features in the city (Durian, Dodsworth, and Schumacher 2010); still another has examined the speech effects of social class consciousness in an upper middle class suburban community (Dodsworth 2008). Prosodic effects of gender and dialect have been the focus of other studies (Clopper and Smiljanic 2011). Perceptions of dialect variation and their implications for social class and ethnic group evaluation are also being studied (Clopper and Pisoni 2006; Campbell-Kibler 2008). The OhioSpeaks project consists of several undergraduate courses that teach students how to analyze their own and others' dialects and college-triggered changes in those dialects, as well as changing evaluations of their own and others' speech (Wanjema et al. 2013). Specifically, Campbell-Kibler (2012, 2013) has found strong social awareness, or "enregisterment," of Southern, rural, and African American speech as distinctive among Ohio State University students, with less such awareness of (Inland) North speech. While these studies do not focus on the Appalachian element in Ohio dialects, they do expand our awareness of the multiplicity of variation in the state. Clopper's research (2012) has in fact delineated only three dialect regions in Ohio on the basis of mutual comprehensibility: Northern, Southern, and General American.<sup>5</sup> Appalachian speech is thus subsumed within either General American or Southern speech.



However, the Appalachian Diaspora itself is a complex population, as discussed in the next section, and it needs to be studied city by city and network by network to be fully understood. This is true in Ohio as elsewhere. Whether the geographic foundations of dialect regions continue to be maintained or are gradually replaced by “homogenized” urban and Northern (or even Western) speech patterns can only be determined through rigorous studies of the sort outlined above: phonological, morphosyntactic, and lexical studies done in communities of all sorts and in all generations and social classes – in other words, traditional, on-the-ground regional and social dialectology.

### **3. The Need for Ethnographic Community Language Studies in the Appalachian Diaspora**

This section highlights the need for our work on Appalachian Englishes to include the Appalachian Diaspora. It also argues that ethnographic fieldwork that focuses on individuals and their lived experiences is the best means to engage with, analyze, and describe language in its social context for these communities.

Southern Highlanders migrated to the “Rustbelt” Midwest, including Chicago, Detroit, Akron, Cincinnati, Toledo, and other cities in one of the largest internal migration periods in U.S. history (Eller 2008: 20). They came from the highlands of West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, and North Georgia. The migration began during World War I, continued through World War II, peaked in the 1950s, and lasted through the 1970s. In the late decades of the 19th century, many people in the mountains were starting to struggle as small acreage farms and subsistence farming grew increasingly unviable. Rural Appalachia did not fare well during the rise of industrial capitalism. Many people started heading up what is known as the “Hillbilly Highway” in search of jobs. Historian Chad Berry, the grandson of Southern migrants, describes the importance of kinship ties in paving the way to new jobs and new lives: “...the highways that led northward were built on kinship, a factor that often determined where a migrant went as well as where he or she lived...(and) worked” (Berry 2000: 6–7). The urban Midwest offered

dependable wage-labor jobs to migrants, but the highland South was still home to important cultural values such as those of shared language, food practices, burial practices, family, community, and religious affiliation.<sup>6</sup>

There are also Diasporic populations in the Pacific Northwest (Clevinger 1942). There were two main waves of migration to this area. The first wave, from roughly 1870–1910, was from Kentucky, West Virginia, and Virginia. The second wave, from the Great Smoky Mountains of Western North Carolina and East Tennessee, was a bit later, and it was larger (Clevinger 1942: 7). As logging declined in Southern Appalachia, skilled loggers headed West, especially under the Federal Homestead Act.

Ethnography investigates everyday life and the linguistic and cultural behaviors of everyday people (see Puckett 2000). Stewart (1996) frames ethnography as a door: “...culture isn’t something that can be gotten right. At best it is a point of entry, like talk itself” (210). Ethnographic fieldwork in linguistics, linguistic anthropology, and cultural anthropology often utilizes participant-observation. As the label suggests, participant-observers actually participate, to varying degrees, in the communities they are seeking to analyze and describe. Milroy and Gordon (2003: 70–71) note that thorough knowledge of a community often requires a long-term commitment. They also acknowledge that “...such studies are extremely demanding for the fieldworker not only in time but also in energy, tact, and emotional involvement with community members” (71). To put it another way, relationships are work – in fieldwork and in general. They are also rewarding and meaningful. Ethnographers get to know individuals, and linguist-ethnographers tend to include, and in many cases focus on, individuals in their linguistic analyses.

So, why should we do ethnography, considering the commitment of time and energy that it demands? The social life of language is most clearly visible in ethnographic detail and through a consideration of the linguistic practices of individuals. Although quantitative analyses that make use of the sociolinguistic construction of “groups” are valuable and worthwhile, it is the analysis of the linguistic behavior of individuals, best revealed by ethnographic fieldwork, that provides the front-row seat to

moments in time of Appalachian life and language in the Diaspora (and elsewhere). Ethnographic fieldwork seeks to reveal to some extent what it means to be Appalachian.

In Anderson's ethnographic fieldwork in the Detroit metropolitan area, which spanned about four years, conversations covered such topics as cultural practices and traditions, everyday life, historical events, changes in daily living, work, migration, and the nature of ties back to the homeland. The point is that sociolinguistic research needs to attend to more than just how southern mountain people talk in recorded conversations; our analyses also should focus on what they choose to discuss and what these narratives have to tell us about how southern mountain people adapt linguistically and culturally to social change and upheaval in times of transition, including migration and its aftermath.

Work in the Appalachian Diaspora must address the persistence of ties to the Appalachian Homeland. How are those ties changing over time? And why are they changing? Sociolinguistic research should also pay better attention to individual speakers and individual experience. Though the statistical significance of group patterns continues to offer us much understanding of language variation and change (especially as regards quantitative distribution of features), studies in which the data is gathered via the most expedient means possible – and analyzed largely outside its discursive and social contexts – run the risk of missing the significance of the everyday lived experiences that emerge from deeper engagement in communities and with individuals.

#### **4. Southern Mountain English?**

There are conflicting opinions about the relationship between what are often called Appalachian English and Ozark English. One opinion is that while the two varieties “share features that set these dialects apart from other varieties of American English” and are thus “closely related,”

this does not indicate that there is one Mountain dialect, with Ozark English a simple extension of Appalachian English. A

more realistic view is that they are two relatively conservative descendants of a single dialect that was developing in the southern Appalachians during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and was carried by migrating settlers westward into the Ozarks, where it has developed independently since the nineteenth century. (Ellis 2006:1008)

The other opinion, based primarily on data from independent surveys in various regions of Appalachia and the Ozarks, is that it makes sense to speak of Southern Mountain English as

the variety of English spoken by many inhabitants of the Southern Appalachian Mountains and also the mountain areas further west into which residents of Southern Appalachia filtered in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They originally settled principally in the Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina, the Cumberlands of Tennessee and Kentucky, and the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia and West Virginia. Present-day residents of Southern Appalachia live in West Virginia (the only state which lies in its entirety within Southern Appalachia) and parts of Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. The settlers who moved or continued further west settled in terrain similar to what they left behind them, and their descendants reside in the Ouachita and Ozark Mountains of Arkansas and Missouri and the easternmost parts of Oklahoma and Texas, as well as a small part of southern Illinois. (Dumas 2014)

Thus, this second view suggests that

[s]o similar are some of the cultural patterns, including the linguistic ones, of many of these people today that it makes sense to speak of a Greater (Southern) Appalachia, an area that extends as far west as eastern Oklahoma and upper east Texas and which takes in the entire area settled by highlanders moving further west from Appalachia proper. Most identifying characteristics of Southern Mountain English have been documented as far west as Newton County, Arkansas, in the heart of the Arkansas Ozarks, and many of them have been documented as far west as west Texas. (Dumas 2013)

Researchers occasionally suggest a need for research that will clarify the exact nature of the relationship between the Appalachian and Ozark varieties, particularly in rural areas. Such studies might also clarify the frequency of occurrence, conversational acceptability, and pragmatic function of some syntactic constructions. Research on the frequency of occurrence and function of multiple/double modal constructions (*may can, might could, might should oughta*), for example, illustrates the kinds of relationships that are sometimes revealed in detailed analyses of relatively rare syntactic constructions. Studies of Appalachian English and Ozark English have reached conflicting conclusions about both the frequency of occurrence and also the conversational acceptability of such constructions. Some research has implied, partly on the basis of acceptability judgments and other forms of questionnaires (usually administered to university students), that there is sufficient frequency of occurrence that it is possible to identify patterns of occurrence of multiple modals (e.g. Hasty 2012). Other research has concluded, generally on the basis of infrequency in tape-recorded sociolinguistic interviews, that the pattern is rare (e.g. Dumas 1971; Wolfram and Christian 1976).

On the other hand, Dumas (1987) has suggested, based on data collected for her 1971 dissertation, that (1) multiple modal constructions are alive and well in both Ozark English and Appalachian English, (2) there is variability in the frequency of occurrence of multiple modals in Ozark English and Appalachian English, (3) that the occurrence of double modals is syntactically governed, (4) that one important function of multiple modals is to serve as politeness markers, and that (5) the rarity of multiple modal constructions in tape-recorded interviews is an artifact of the nature and structure of such interviews, not the frequency of occurrence of the constructions (Dumas 1987).

More recently, quantitative study of the social constraints on acceptance of double modal sentences in the US South reported by Hasty et al. (2012: 46) has suggested that “double modals are favored by doctors, especially women and those with many decades of professional experience.” The findings have been interpreted to suggest that such use of the double modal is “to negotiate the imbalanced power dynamic of a doctor-patient

consultation” and that “the greater use of double modals by doctors shows that the construction is an active part of a doctor’s repertoire for mitigating directives” (Hasty et al. 2012: 46).

Clearly, additional research such as this, carried out in both Appalachia and the Ozarks, would complement previous studies in Appalachia and the Ozarks and would also expand our understanding of linguistic variation, long thought to be reflected only in pronunciation, vocabulary, and basic syntax.

### **5. Innovation, Diversity and Expansion**

Much of the work in Appalachia has focused on the preservation of archaic structures like strong verbs and *a*-prefixing. Where are the studies of linguistic innovation in Appalachia? Linguists spend a lot of effort dismissing the Elizabethan myth (cf. Montgomery 1999; Cramer this volume), but our research should encompass a dynamic perspective that includes innovation as well as preservation. There are obviously some phonological and morphosyntactic traits in Appalachian speech that represent innovation, but we, as researchers, need to be more empirical about studying innovation. Studies like that of Hazen (see Hazen, Butcher, and King 2010; Hazen 2011; Hazen, Flesher, and Simmons 2013 on the West Virginia Dialect Project) are designed to explore linguistic variation in progress, and these types of studies should serve as the model for continued research in Appalachian English.

In addition to exploring innovation in speech, thus further debunking the myth that Appalachian speech is frozen in time, we need to look beyond the stereotypical notion of a single, ethnically homogeneous speech community in Appalachia and examine notions of racial and ethnic diversity within varying communities in the region. Some work, like Mallinson and Wolfram (2003) in Beech Bottom, North Carolina, and Childs and Mallinson (2003) in Texana, North Carolina, has shown that linguistic variation in terms of race and ethnicity exists in Appalachia. But this work has had to move beyond the binary interpretations of race that permeate sociolinguistic studies of variation. For example, when the researchers examined the demographics of Beech Bottom,

despite the fact that the community has a long history of African Americans living in the region, the statistics showed that there were no African Americans living there. The only category utilized by people of African descent was “mixed,” a phenomenon found in other areas studied by Wolfram (cf. Wolfram, Thomas, and Green 2000 and Wolfram and Thomas 2002 on Hyde County and Wolfram and Shilling-Estes 2003 on the Outer Banks and Smith Island). We need a more nuanced understanding of race and ethnicity in the communities that we explore, which would lend itself to an understanding of linguistic variation and how race and ethnicity are being locally constructed. Within sociolinguistics, our notions of race and ethnicity severely lag behind those in fields like anthropology and sociology. In Appalachia, and elsewhere, more nuanced approaches to race and ethnicity will not only better account for the categories used by our informants but will also provide greater insight into the identity processes that underlie such variation.

Finally, it is important for research in linguistic variation in Appalachia to be expanded and applied. In terms of expansion, much of the research on the speech of Appalachia has been sociolinguistic and variationist in nature; we need more formal descriptions, ones that explore the theoretical concepts discussed in syntactic and morphological research with respect to Appalachian varieties of English. Work like Zanuttini and Bernstein (forthcoming) and Tortora (2006) help bring Appalachian English into the mainstream of linguistics. The other side of the coin is to bring Appalachian English to the people who speak it. It is important that we not only explore Appalachian speech from our theoretical perspectives but also take what we learn and promote those findings with non-linguists. Hutcheson and Wolfram’s *Mountain Talk*, a documentary produced in 2003 within the North Carolina Language and Life Project, has garnered a good deal of positive response, from linguists and non-linguists alike, while Wolfram and Reaser’s (2014) *Talkin’ Tar Heel* is also receiving rave reviews both inside and outside of Appalachia. Like Wolfram, we need to be active in disseminating our knowledge about Appalachian English to the public. There are numerous possibilities for doing so; for example, one could staff a booth at

the state fair, like the North Carolina Language and Life Project does in North Carolina, where documentaries, interactive quizzes about speech features, and dialect buttons are distributed. We need to engage the public to explore the language of their heritage; host public discussions about linguistic variation in Appalachia with university and civic groups; create and display exhibits about Appalachian speech in local libraries and museums; and make more documentaries. In so doing, our work allows people to celebrate their cultural and linguistic heritage, bringing together linguists and the people whose language provides the rich data for our studies.

## 6. New Ways of Analyzing Variation in Appalachia

A few years ago, through the University of South Carolina's College of Arts and Sciences, Michael Montgomery set up a website called simply "Appalachian English" that focused largely on the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina, one that either created or brought together linguistic resources on the Smokies and the larger region. A visitor to the site's *Annotated Bibliography: Southern and Central Appalachian English*<sup>7</sup> finds a compilation of more than 400 publications on the speech of the region (construed there as West Virginia southward) since the 1870s. The bibliography captures a broad range of items from both academic and popular outlets, but their subject matter is heavily skewed toward the local and the old-fashioned. That is to say, cumulatively they provide poor understandings, if one at all, of sub-regional or generational differences. No one larger survey has ever encompassed Southern Appalachia, meaning that at present, comparison of speech varieties within the region relies on data from other dissimilar projects, except for three large linguistic atlas surveys completed at different times.<sup>8</sup> As for generational differences, everyone *knows* that the speech habits of many children and young adults differ radically from their grandparents, but little research has investigated this presumably self-evident issue for grammar or pronunciation except Wolfram and Christian (1976) to a limited degree for two counties in West Virginia.



Surely the dimensions of change should be at the top of any list of research needed on the English of Appalachia.

This section concentrates at more length on three other research needs that are particularly timely: the construction of corpora, sociophonetic analyses, and the study of intonation. These prospects were on no one's radar a decade ago, yet they are now key areas where work has begun and should be concentrated in years immediately ahead.

Attendees at the 2012 SECOL conference were given the opportunity to participate in a three-hour workshop organized by Christina Tortora and Frances Blanchette of the City University of New York titled "A hands-on introduction to the Audio-Aligned and Parsed Corpus of Appalachian English." The workshop provided the formal announcement of AAPCAppE, a "database that will further research in the various sub-disciplines and afford novel approaches to the analysis of English dialect data" and ultimately be "an online, freely accessible, ~1,000,000-word corpus" (Tortora et al. 2012: 1). Conferees were introduced to a nearly finished 53,000-word sample, recordings made by Joseph Sargent Hall around the Smoky Mountains in 1939, and they were shown the corpus's distinctive onscreen format featuring the acoustic speech signal aligned with a searchable orthographic transcript, with accompanying audio.<sup>9</sup> AAPCAppE is based in part on another project, the Archive of Traditional Appalachian Speech and Culture, being created by Michael Montgomery. It comprises 1.5 million words of closely transcribed oral history interviews from eleven areas of Appalachia (West Virginia to Georgia). This corpus was originally and primarily motivated to generate lexicographic material for the *Dictionary of Southern Appalachian English* (Montgomery, Hall, and Heinmiller forthcoming), a successor to the *Dictionary of Smoky Mountain English* (Montgomery and Hall 2004). Montgomery is working to make searchable transcriptions available with audio counterparts at his "Appalachian English" website. A third corpus that includes material from Southern Appalachia is the Corpus of American Civil War Letters that Michael Ellis and Michael Montgomery are assembling.<sup>10</sup> A fourth corpus of notable mention is the West Virginia Corpus of English in Appalachia of approximately

567,000 words compiled by Kirk Hazen of West Virginia University. This corpus has been used in studies such as Hazen, Butcher, and King 2010. According to Hazen (personal communication), this corpus is at the present time restricted to consultation only in his office at WVU.

Corpora are invaluable for several reasons. They enable us to find contexts in which forms appear, thus greatly assisting the study of contextual conditioning, word ordering, lexical variety, and much more, for individuals as well as for groups of speakers (or writers). The quantification of forms in linguistic context is the key to analyzing linguistic patterning by age and other social factors and then comparing this patterning across groups, geographical areas, time periods, and so on. From the broader point of view, corpora keep researchers honest by revealing both the typical and the atypical and in establishing secure baselines for further comparison. Corpora not only help researchers address endless new and often larger questions, but they prompt further questions not previously addressed.

A second area where research is needed on the Englishes of Appalachia involves sociophonetics. Those who study the Englishes of Southern Appalachia are blessed to have two excellent resources in narrow phonetic detail: Joseph Sargent Hall's *The Phonetics of Great Smoky Mountain Speech* (Hall 1942) and the *Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States* (Pederson et al. 1981), the latter covering North Georgia and East Tennessee. While impressionistic phonetics as transcribed by highly-trained ears will always remain useful, ever-improving methods using acoustics make details of the speech stream easier to chart and to measure reliably. Its methods represent a true revolution. Both parts of the term "sociophonetics" deserve careful attention. The first suggests something known implicitly by all residents of Appalachia, no matter how small their community – the heterogeneity of speakers. Appalachia is a place as well as places, people as well as peoples. The more closely one examines the region, the more complex it becomes. But does our research reflect this complexity? Restraining generalizations is a concern when it comes to the speech of Appalachia, just as it is in media coverage and in many other quarters. We can exercise that restraint by first, among other

things, deepening and diversifying our practices – collecting more meta-data on the speakers we document<sup>11</sup>, studying their speech behavior in varied situations and while engaged in different practices, and comparing speech behavior between unmonitored observation and elicited, direct inquiry. The last practice is standard Labovian methodology and more, because careful direct inquiry about usages can elicit a good deal of information about language attitudes.

The acoustic signal can keep us and our ears honest in being a document that can be independently evaluated, thereby enhancing the validity and the reliability of our work. One can see this, for example, in the study of *a*-prefixing, which has yet to be studied on an acoustic basis. No researcher has claimed to be exact or consistent in discriminating when the prefix is articulated. There are always marginal cases to be judged, and other noises can mimic the prefix, most notably the filler *uh*. Can acoustic measurement enable us to identify the phonetic parameters of the prefix? Perhaps not, because it has been eroding for many centuries, and for some speakers, ontogeny doubtless recapitulates phylogeny, i.e. their articulation of the prefix varies and is often weak. The continuum of forms from very weak to fully-articulated suggests that dichotomous treatments of the variable – especially in the phonological contexts of a following vowel or unstressed syllable—need to be rethought. Contrary to belief in some quarters, the prefix remains current in some parts of Appalachia, though it is no doubt diminishing (McQuaid 2012).

A major locus where acoustic analysis will prove to be crucial for all speakers is in verb phrases, both at the juncture with the subject and within the verb phrase. For auxiliary *would*, speakers of American English normally use a continuum of forms, from the full *would* to *'d*, the latter being articulated sometimes as a sliver of a consonant (if not assimilated into the following consonant when the latter is a voiced obstruent). It is easy to recognize the reality of a syllabic intermediate form without the initial glide, and some portrayers of speech have resorted to the spelling *'ud* to represent an intermediate form (e.g. “I knowed that fox *'ud* take him to Katter Knob.” [Dargan 1925: 76]). Any close observer (and especially any transcriber) becomes highly aware of this

continuum for *would*, and it is equally so for *were* following pronouns, when *were* may be absorbed entirely into the subject (i.e. *they're boys* is homophonous with *their boys*). These continua suggest the possibility of others. In Appalachia, one commonly finds that *was* behaves similarly, often being reduced to 's. The prolific northeastern Kentucky novelist Jesse Stuart frequently employed 's, and local color writers since the 1880s have used 'uz, most likely to represent a syllabic intermediate variant [əz] but perhaps to suggest retention of the consonant alone. Only one published study (Montgomery and Chapman 1992) has examined the variable reduction of *was*, and due to the limitations of impressionistic transcription, that study of two decades ago was forced to collapse [əz] and [z] for the sake of reliability. The researchers could consistently judge only when the initial glide was absent, but not whether the vowel was; today, acoustic measurement should be able to help us move beyond a dichotomous view of the contraction of *was*, *would*, and *were*, compare them to the contraction of *is*, *will*, and *are*, and perhaps enable us to rethink processes of contraction more generally.

Another intriguing area of contraction concerns *have*, which impressionistically appears to reduce to zero in a variety of present- and past-tense contexts: before *been* ("I Ø been"), before *got* ("they Ø got"), between a modal and a past participle ("Well, they was one on one side of the hill you might Ø seen the other day" [Montgomery and Hall 2004, s.v. *have* B2]), and after the infinitive marker *to*, especially with semi-modals ("You ought to Ø seen us all a-jumping and running" [Ibid.]). In each case it would be interesting to ascertain to what extent acoustic remnants of *have* can be identified. In the first two cases, the tendency to assimilate to the following voiced obstruent would be strong. Even if no acoustic evidence of the auxiliary were found, in the first case, the form would likely be recovered in tag questions (though *ain't* may be more prevalent there for many speakers). However, *got* appears to have been on a trajectory from a phonetic to a grammatical form in Appalachia ("Why do I got any business putting you in?" [Montgomery, Hall, and Heinmiller forthcoming]). The third and fourth contexts overlap, in that *have* is apparently absent after *supposed to* as well as *ought to* ("Some woman was supposed to

killed her husband there.” [Montgomery, Hall, and Heinmiller forthcoming]). The title of a James Still story, *He Liked to 'a' Killed Me*, and a little reflection remind us that the linguistic form *liketa*, functioning as a counterfactual adverbial (Feagin 1979), is derived from *had liked to have* or, much less often, *was like to have*. These two phrases before a past participle have been grammaticalizing into a pre-verbal adverbial for several centuries (Kytö and Romaine 2005), meaning that *liketa* is the result of contraction and assimilation at both the initial and final edges of the originating phrase. From experience in transcribing interviews from Appalachia, it appears that, for *liketa*, ontogeny once again recapitulates phylogeny, as the full range of forms can be found within a community and a reduced range for individual speakers. Acoustic examination is needed to detail the continuum of forms and to clarify the end product(s) in current speech. Other auxiliary phrases, such as *have/had ought to have* and *is/was supposed to have* + a past participle have undergone the same evolution phonologically to *oughta* and *sposeta*.<sup>12</sup> Apparently this phonological evolution of *supposed to* and *ought to* has not taken place semantically or grammatically, as sentences with *liketa* take forms of *do* in tag questions, while ones with *sposeta* take forms of *be*.<sup>13</sup>

A third area in which research is needed is intonation. This research should rely on good acoustic phonetics, of course, but this area is singled out because its lack of attention has been so disproportionate to date. Other than snippets that are little more than suggestive, as shown by Reed (forthcoming), only one study to date has examined intonation in the region on a principled linguistic basis (Greene 2006). Cratis Williams (1961) was undoubtedly correct to identify “rhythm and melody” as a crucial component of mountain speech. The use of juncture, pitch, duration, stress, and associated phenomena are wide open for research. They may well be keys to understanding the perceived distinctiveness of English in Appalachia in general as well as sub-regional and local variation in the region. No doubt the monophthongization of /ay/ before voiceless consonants can frequently suggest that a person is “from the hills.” Vowels, vowel off-glides, and intonation interplay in complex ways in

Appalachian speech, and arguably intonation plays the most pivotal role in distinguishing it.

To present a personal, rather speculative case study of the use of intonation involving pitch contrasts, Montgomery can cite the pronunciation of his name, which in the speech of his native East Tennessee is usually five syllables long. The first syllable of *Michael* and second of *Montgomery* are given high pitch, while other syllables are sharply reduced in pitch, stress, and vowel quality.<sup>14</sup> Not only is the second syllable of *Michael* reduced to a syllabic liquid, but the liquid also tends to be vocalized, with minimal lateralization present. In the first syllable of *Montgomery*, the /t/ is lost (sometimes assimilated to [k]), the /n/ is absorbed by nasalizing the vowel or is lost, and perhaps most importantly the vowel is neutralized to [ə]. Having grown up with his surname, seeing it every day, and with it being the name of a nearby state's capital city, he has for years been mystified by its misspelling. When giving his name its typical pronunciation for someone to write down, it has sometimes been interpreted as a form he has otherwise never seen, *McGomery*. Only very recently has he begun to puzzle out this phenomenon. The misspelling of the first syllable must testify to the innumerable surnames in the area beginning with *Mc-* or *Mac-*, but the phonological explanation must be that the low pitch and short duration given to that syllable and the pitch contrast with the following one cause the vowel either to be neutralized or to be perceived to be neutral. Identifying pitch contrasts between syllables should help us understand the “rhythm and melody” of Appalachian speech. They and other features of intonation may be as important as well-studied features of syllabic phonology in marking the regional identity of speakers, including those not only in Appalachia. These nuances of intonation may very well be what speakers in rural Appalachia have in mind when, as they often claim, they “can recognize somebody from five miles down the road” by their accent. Elusive as they are, features of intonation are now edging within our grasp to document and measure, and we should diligently pursue them in identifying what may be distinctive about Appalachian voices.

## 7. Conclusions

The panel session and the conference in general were well attended, which says a great deal about interest within the linguistic community about the speech of Appalachia. This was only the first meeting of COAL (a second was held in conjunction with the Appalachian Studies Association in 2013; a third meeting is being planned for 2015), but high attendance and interest in the Appalachian-themed papers indicated the need to create this network of scholars.

The panel revealed that scholars are interested in getting engaged with Appalachian communities, both in the region and in the Diaspora. Exploring linguistic variation in both rural and urban areas, with a focus on how language is changing, can be worthwhile for our understanding of dialectal variation in the United States and for further debunking the myths that continually cloud discussions of Appalachian Englishes in larger American discourse. It is hoped that this paper, as well as the original presentation of the ideas at the SECOL meeting, will challenge researchers to examine these topics (and others) about the speech of Appalachians, in order to further our knowledge of the linguistic practices of this region.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A video of the panel discussion, posted by the University of Kentucky, can be found at: <http://vimeo.com/43897711>.

<sup>2</sup> Kelley (1997), in a small study of Ironton, at the southern tip of Ohio, found the same phenomenon.

<sup>3</sup> See also Dakin (1971) and Montgomery (1989).

<sup>4</sup> This new area would represent a boomerang-shaped elongation of Labov, Ash, and Boberg's (2006) Mountain Southern area westward into the Ozarks.

<sup>5</sup> The label "General American" assumes a basic similarity between New England, Midland, and Western dialects in both production and perception; in addition to Northern, Southern, New England, Midland, and Western, the sixth dialect they distinguish is Mid-Atlantic.

<sup>6</sup> For more on Appalachian migration, see Obermiller 2004.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://artsandsciences.sc.edu/engl/dictionary/bibliography.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Three regional parts of the Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada have surveyed parts of Southern Appalachia. The Linguistic Atlas of the Middle

and South Atlantic States surveyed West Virginia, Virginia, and North Carolina in the mid-1930s and South Carolina and Georgia in the 1950s and 1960s. The Linguistic Atlas of the North Central States surveyed Kentucky in the 1950s (Dakin 1966). The Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States surveyed Tennessee and Georgia from 1968 to 1980.

<sup>9</sup> At this writing, the sample has yet to be released at the project's website. For more information about the project, see <http://csivc.csi.cuny.edu/aapcappe/>.

<sup>10</sup> Montgomery utilized this corpus in making his plenary presentation at SECOL 79/COAL 1. For further information, see Ellis and Montgomery 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Perhaps the model research in this regard in Appalachia is that of Joseph S. Hall, who identified the name, age, level of occupation, community, and occupation(s) of the speakers he studied.

<sup>12</sup> Feagin devises the orthographic form *otta*.

<sup>13</sup> In tag questions after a clause with *ought to*, the suppletive form *shouldn't* is customarily used.

<sup>14</sup> In conventional notation that distinguishes four levels of pitch, Montgomery would analyze the pitch sequence as 14 314.

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