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“YA KNOW FRENCHY, YOU TALK A BROKEN LANGUAGE”: AN ANALYSIS OF
SYLLABLE-CODA PHONETIC REALIZATIONS IN CREOLE AFRICAN AMERICAN
VERNACULAR ENGLISH

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of French Studies

by
Rachel Rose Mentz
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ABSTRACT

Creole African American Vernacular English or CAAVE is a variety of English spoken by African Americans of French ancestry who live primarily in the French Triangle of Louisiana. Dubois and Horvath (2003b) have previously published on glide absence in CAAVE and have suggested that CAAVE is a unique dialect of English. They attribute CAAVE's glide absence to the contact of Creole African Americans with diverse groups of English speakers and not to language interference from French.

This research further pursues these hypotheses by studying the phonological realization of word final syllable-codas for six old male speakers of CAAVE. The reduction of word final consonant clusters and the deletion of word final single consonants will allow us to compare CAAVE with other dialects of English and to find further support for the assertion that CAAVE is a distinct variety of English.

From this analysis, theories for the formation of the CAAVE dialect will be explored resulting in the general conclusion that CAAVE's unique properties of word final coda reduction are likely attributable to the presence of similar features in an older variety of English spoken by African Americans who were first brought to Louisiana as slaves after the Louisiana Purchase. The eventual merging of this group with the existing Francophone Louisiana-born black population resulted in the formation of Creole African American communities who further came into contact with other English-speaking groups of diverse origins to form CAAVE.

The claim by Dubois and Horvath (2003c) that older Creole African Americans and Cajuns from the same geographical area speak the same unique dialect of English will also be discussed through the comparison of Dubois and Horvath's preliminary evidence from Cajun Vernacular English with data collected for CAAVE. This analysis finds support for the

argument that among old male speakers, CAAVE and Cajun Vernacular English are in fact the same dialect of English, although race remains as a social distinction separating the two groups.

INTRODUCTION

“Ya know Frenchy, you talk a broken language,” was the proclamation of an Army lieutenant during World War II to his subordinate. The private was from the small town of Parks, Louisiana and his particular way of speaking drew the attention of his fellow servicemen. “A broken language” was the way the other soldiers labeled his speech. However, what he spoke was English, just English with a distinct flavor, a Creole flavor.

The soldier was one of many young men who enlisted to serve the United States of America during World War II. The regiments brought together men from all over the United States. Each man brought with him his particular way of speaking, his dialect of English, a trace of where he came from, and “Frenchy” was no exception. “Frenchy,” called so because he was bilingual and also spoke French, grew up in a rural Louisiana farming community, far away from the hustle and bustle of New Orleans, but very much a part of the rural Zydeco music scene of the 1920s and 1930s.

In Parks, one was just as likely to hear French spoken in one of the town’s two main streets as English. In fact, throughout St. Martin parish, where Parks is located, and in other parishes of the Louisiana French Triangle, French and English were used by most people in their everyday lives. As time progressed, the tiny town of Parks and nearby communities were pressured to limit the use of French to their home lives. Increasingly, speaking English at work, at school and in the community, became for the first time, a necessary attribute of prosperity. The members of these communities switched from using both languages across social contexts to speaking predominately English, but what type of English did they speak?

The lieutenant from New York thought of Frenchy’s English as a “broken language.” It certainly was not broken in the conventional sense of the word, yet there were characteristics of the way that he spoke that distinguished him from the other members of his unit. It was not the

fact that he also spoke French, which made his variety of English different. He had learned English from speaking with his grandfather when he was a child, long before he joined the army. His grandfather had grown up speaking English and had only learned French later to communicate with members of the community. What was the English of his grandfather like? How did his variety of English and the types of English spoken by other people in these once bilingual communities influence the type of English that the residents speak today?

A distinct variety of English was forged in a geographical area where English-speaking former slaves, Anglo-American migrants from the Upper South of the United States, Irish, French, and German immigrants, people from other areas of Louisiana, as well as Cajuns, Creoles of Color and French-speaking former slaves came into contact. The possible scenarios of language shift and language change are numerous. Yet, by examining the variety of English spoken by Frenchy and other older black men like him from the Louisiana French Triangle, it is possible to gain a sense of the processes that went into forming this distinct variety of English now called Creole African American Vernacular English or CAAVE.

The English of these people, who today identify themselves as African Americans but who are of known Creole ancestry, is worth close linguistic scrutiny because these people speak a variety of English, which may have unique properties not found in other varieties of the South. Until recently, this dialect of English has been ignored by linguistic researchers and not much is known of its features. By examining the dialect of English spoken by Creole African Americans, insight may be gained into the greater genesis of African American Vernacular English and its evolution into the present day.

This study will investigate CAAVE by considering the variable phonological realization of word final codas in the speech of six old male CAAVE speakers. We will treat specifically the reduction or absence of word final consonants in CAAVE where they are normally found in

Standard English. The study of word final codas has been conducted for many different varieties of English. Thus, there exists a body of research that will facilitate the straightforward comparison of the findings from CAAVE with those found for other dialects of English.

CAAVE is spoken in the same geographical area as Cajun Vernacular English. In Cajun Vernacular English, the reduction of word final codas appears to be the result of phonological processes rather than morphosyntactic ones (Dubois and Horvath 2003a). It is theorized that the same linguistic conditioning occurs in CAAVE. Hence, word final codas in CAAVE reduce at the same rate regardless of the grammatical content they might encode. Therefore, some of the preliminary findings about Cajun Vernacular English made by Dubois and Horvath will be thoroughly investigated in CAAVE in the effort to ascertain more information about the relationship of these dialects to each other over time.

From the study of word final coda reduction in CAAVE, this analysis hopes to find additional support for the assertion made by Dubois and Horvath (2003b) that CAAVE is a distinct variety of English. We will show that word final codas in CAAVE reduce regardless of the grammatical content they might encode and this shared characteristic points to the conclusion that Creole African American Vernacular English and Cajun Vernacular English share the same ancestry and are in fact the same dialect. To conclude, the presence of word final coda reduction in CAAVE indicates the dialect's origins in the early variety of English spoken by African Americans who were first brought to Louisiana as slaves. From this early dialect of English, a unique dialect of English formed because of the distinctive contact this language variety had with other language varieties and the long period of isolation these communities experienced in the decades after the Civil War.

In Chapter 1 of this analysis, a general socio-historical portrait of Louisiana is presented, which overviews the settlement and creation of various socio-ethnic groups in the state. After

the historical context is presented, Chapter 2 will provide an in-depth look at the *Creole* identity, the various ethnic groups who have identified with the label, and what *Creole* means today in Louisiana. The third chapter treats language in Louisiana and discusses in particular the evolution of language in the prairie parishes and the variety of English spoken by Creole African Americans.

Finally, the fourth chapter sets forth linguistic investigation into the variable phonological realization of word final codas in Creole African American Vernacular English. From research into this linguistic variable, new insights about Creole African American Vernacular English can be gained. The language variety will be compared with other dialects of English and the assertion that Creole African American Vernacular English is a distinctive dialect of English will be confirmed in Chapters 5 and 6 of this analysis.

CHAPTER 1: LOUISIANA'S HISTORY

1.1 The Establishment of a Colony in Louisiana

Since the inception of a French colony in the Louisiana territory at the turn of the 18th century, the colony has been made up of a hodgepodge of people of diverse origins and backgrounds. France controlled most of the Mississippi river valley and called all of this land *la Louisiane* (Corne 1999). Biloxi was founded as the first permanent settlement in 1699, in what is now the state of Mississippi, but other settlements followed along the Gulf Coast. New Orleans was founded in 1718.

The first settlements were characterized by the lack of volition on the part of its inhabitants to be there. The soldiers sent to protect the French colony, were a motley crew of men exiled from any desirable assignment to the harsh, inhospitable wetlands surrounding the Mississippi river. Most of the early colonists to the French territory were also sent against their will. Many of them had been convicted of crimes in France, but were sent to the colony in lieu of serving their sentences in French prisons (Hall 1992). Caribbean pirates, Canadian *courreurs du bois*, Laurentian *voyageurs* also from Canada, and slaves from among the indigenous population joined the French citizens in the early settlements, where food was scarce and communication with the outside world was difficult (Hall 1992, Corne 1999). Death from starvation or illness was common and those settlers who could flee the colony often did (Hall 1992).

Despite Louisiana's meager beginnings, France continued to pour money into the colony in an effort to establish a plantation economy. Early colonists had difficulties successfully growing anything. The French officials governing the colony were corrupt and protected their own interests at the expense of France. Raids by members of the indigenous population threatened European settlements and food was often hard to come by. Later colonists consisted

of more French citizens, many of whom also came against their will, and a contingent of sixty families of German immigrants (Hall 1992:18). Life in Louisiana was grim and attempts to establish profitable plantations in the colony failed to materialize. A chronic labor shortage plagued the colony in spite of the sporadic arrival of slave ships from Africa from 1719 onwards (Hall 1992:10-11).

France's efforts to build up the colony of French Louisiana diminished after 1731. Significant numbers of slaves had arrived to the colony by that time, however they went to a few large estates and many of the colonists in Louisiana continued to own few or no slaves (Hall 1992). The population was weakened by frequent illness and many people died. Other people simply abandoned the colony. War with the Chickasaw Indians led to the deaths of colonists and valuable slaves (Hall 1992). The few resources that the colony held were depleted and at the close of the French and Indian War, France ceded most of Louisiana to Spain in 1763 (Hall 1992). The colony had just over 8,000 inhabitants, 4,598 of which were slaves (Hall 1992:279). The territories west of the Mississippi river including Biloxi went to the British (Klinger 2003:9).

1.2 Spanish Control of Louisiana

Spain officially owned Louisiana from 1763 but did not functionally control the colony until 1769 when Governor Alejandro O'Reilly arrived with Spanish troops to quell earlier attempts by colonists to overthrow Spanish authority (Hall 1992:276). Spain worked to improve the economic situation of Louisiana, however, trade remained heavily subsidized throughout Spanish control of the colony (Hall 1992:277).

Immigrants were encouraged to make Louisiana their home and the Spanish government financially supported their settlement in the newly acquired territory. Overall, Spain brought few Spanish-speaking colonists to Louisiana. With the exception of a few thousand Canary Islanders who largely assimilated into the French-speaking population (Klinger 2003:18), most other

immigrants were Francophone (Hall 1992). The French-speaking majority retained their ties with France and culture in Louisiana was largely uninfluenced by the few Spanish who governed the colony (Klinger 2003).

The number of slaves also increased during Spanish control of Louisiana. The slave population increased from 5,600 in 1766 to 20,673 in 1788 (Hall 1992:278). The white population in 1788 had reached 18,737 (Hall 1992:279). Of these 20,673 slaves, most were likely born in the colony, however some were still being brought to the colony (Hall 1992).

It was during the Spanish' control of Louisiana that the first real communities of English speakers settled in the area. They settled in the territories Britain had acquired west of the Mississippi river and a small contingent remained even after the area went back to the Spanish in 1783 (Usner 1992:112-113 in Klinger 2003:20). Klinger points out that this group most likely brought the first English-speaking slaves to Louisiana (2003:20). However, before other Anglophone communities were established decades later, these people would have had to use French to communicate with anyone outside of their small settlements. Consequently, because of their small numbers it is doubtful that their presence greatly disseminated the use of English in the colony at this early date.

Due to Louisiana's strong ties with France, the onset of the French Revolution questioned much of what had been taken for granted in the lives of people living in the colonies. The idea of equal rights for all people was radical and the consequences of such a prospect were extreme in a colony, such as Louisiana, where the majority of its populace lived in bondage.

The French National Convention abolished slavery in all French colonies, freeing slaves in the French Caribbean (Hall 1992:346-348). Planters from the French colonies fled to nearby Spanish and British territories, often taking their slaves with them so that they would not be freed (Hall 1992:347). The French revolution had also disrupted trade with Louisiana. Businesses

were forced into debt when trade routes were disrupted and France stopped buying goods such as indigo from the colony (Hall 1992:317). In 1793, Spain went to war with France and the citizens of New Orleans demanded Spain give Louisiana back to the French. (Hall 1992:317).

The maintenance of Louisiana became less of a priority to Spain and the country agreed to give back Louisiana to France in 1800. The colony would not officially resort back to France until 1803, a month before France sold it to the United States (Hall 1992:378).

1.3 The Beginning of an American Louisiana: 1803-1830

When Napoleon gained control of the Louisiana territory, he was more than happy to sell it to the Americans. France needed money and Louisiana seemed to be more trouble than it was worth. The strategic importance of the Louisiana territory, its access to the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico, and its large geographical size were invaluable to the United States. President Thomas Jefferson purchased all of the Louisiana territory in 1803 as illustrated in Figure 1.

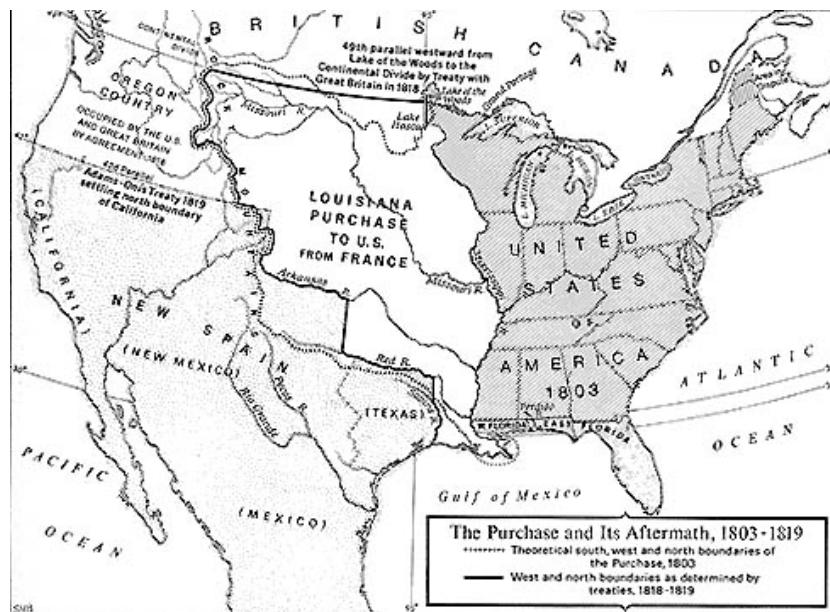


Figure 1. Map of Territories Acquired by the United States in the Louisiana Purchase
Map taken from Sprague, 1974:312

The native-born Louisiana population was not ecstatic about the United States' control of their home; however, they recognized the benefits American citizenship would bring them. The future of Louisiana as a slave-holding society was assured.

American control of the territory would result in significant changes at all levels of Louisiana life, culture, and society. Unlike the Spanish who had brought very few native Spanish into Louisiana, the Americans' purchase of the colony led to a widespread American settlement of the new territory. American planters arrived to Louisiana with their slaves and settled in New Orleans and other areas in increasing numbers (Hirsch and Logsdon 1992:91).¹

When newcomers of the time arrived in Louisiana, they were surprised at the reality of life in the former colony. Louisiana had few native-born doctors, lawyers, artists, bankers, priests or other professionally trained people (Tregle 1992:143). The native-born population was uneducated, largely illiterate, and completely unfamiliar with democratic government (Tregle 1992). The Americans came to Louisiana with their financial interests at the forefront. They were educated and skilled in various trades and quickly became the entrepreneurs of Louisiana (Hirsch 1992). The native-born white population fought to maintain control of their interests. They often aligned themselves with foreign-born French immigrants in an effort to maintain a Francophone dominance over politics in the state (Lachance 1992).

The foreign-born French and the native born white Louisiana population were an easily cohesive group. They shared the Catholic religion and the French language. The Americans, however, did not share in either of these attributes. The lifestyle held by people born in Louisiana was very different from the American perception of what constituted a proper cultivated society. The Louisiana custom of Sundays spent gallivanting around to balls and to

¹ Anglophone Americans were not the only group to settle in Louisiana after the American takeover, French-speaking immigrants from France and Saint-Domingue also came in large numbers (Lachance 1992). Their presence contributed to the maintenance of a Francophone majority in Louisiana throughout the first three decades of American control.

the theatre horrified the Protestant Americans (Tregle 1992). The widespread practice of *plaçage* among white affluent men also repulsed them (Tregle 1992). They found the native born white population to be ignorant, immoral, lazy, and unrefined. It did not seem that they, “...did anything in the line of work if it were possible to buy a slave to do it for them,” (Duvallon et al 1824 as quoted in Tregle 1992:144).

Slavery had become a well-established institution in Louisiana. By 1830, the enslaved population had reached 109,579, outnumbering slightly the free population.² The distribution of slaves to free people varied. In some areas, large numbers of slaves lived on large plantations controlled by a few slaveholders. In other areas, free people held few or no slaves and the number of slaves to free people was considerably less (Klinger 2003:9-24). Many slaves were born in Louisiana but others were brought to the state from other parts of the South (Lachance 1992).

In addition to the enslaved black population and the free white population, another distinct group existed in Louisiana society. An entire social class composed of free people of color was juxtaposed between free whites and enslaved blacks in the social hierarchy. Descendants of white men and enslaved black women, these people were born with the free status of whites but were denied total equality with them. There were 16,710 free people of color in Louisiana by 1830. The financial situation found among the free people of color varied. There were wealthy free people of color who owned many slaves and large estates (Brasseaux et al. 1994). Less affluent free people of color worked as farmers or trades’ people in various occupations.³

² The free population in 1830 was 105,941. The population figures come from my study of the 1830 Census figures available through the University of Virginia’s historical Census Browser.

³ Gheman’s research finds free people of color working in 54 different trades in 1850. Some of the professions held included: carpenters, masons, cigar makers, shoemakers, clerks, mechanics,

The 1830s, though, would mark the beginning of an irreversible change in Louisiana society. New Orleans had developed into a large port of entry, allowing in more immigrants to the United States than any other place except for New York City (Hirsch 1992). Large numbers of Irish and Germans immigrated to the United States tripling the population of New Orleans in just ten years (Lachance 1992).

Significant numbers of French immigrants also came to Louisiana during this period, although their numbers were unable to compete with the influx of people from Ireland and Germany. For the first time since its establishment, the Francophone populace became a minority group in Louisiana (Lachance 1992). The Americans aligned themselves with the large numbers of Irish and Germans and succeeded in overtaking the Francophone population's control of politics (Hirsch 1992). The American and non-Francophone European populations developed the economic base of New Orleans and future financial success in the city meant alliance with them (Hirsch 1992).

1.4 Louisiana History 1830-1930

In the decades following the 1830s, the pattern of high levels of immigration into New Orleans from Europe continued. Not all of these people came to live permanently in Louisiana, however large numbers did settle in the state. Americans from other parts of the South also continued to make Louisiana their home.

Life for people in Louisiana was dramatically affected by the Civil War. Poor men were conscripted to serve the Confederacy and parts of Louisiana were occupied by the Confederate Army (Brasseaux et al. 1994:85). Jayhawker groups formed to fight Confederate forces but the constant fighting and pillaging of farms in the area led to massive destruction (Brasseaux et al. 1994:85-86).

coopers, barbers, blacksmiths, cabinetmakers, hairdressers, seamstresses, street vendors, and domestic workers (2000:209).

After 1865, armed Union military legions flooded Louisiana and with them came the carpetbaggers from the North, eager to make a profit off the financial and physical destruction of the South (Tregle 1992). The social and political institutions in place prior to the war were left in a state of total obliteration (Dubois and Melancon 2000). Many people were financially ruined after the war and the future for them was uncertain.

The reality of post-war Louisiana would prove difficult both politically and economically, especially for free people of color and former slaves. After the war, the distinct status held by free people of color was lost and they were forced to join ranks with freed slaves to fight for the rights of all people of color⁴. Whites endeavored to keep voting rights and power from blacks and economic hardship was felt especially hard in rural areas. Many people who invested in real estate after the war eventually lost their land (Brasseaux et al. 1994). Large numbers of poor people of all races were forced to work as sharecroppers or tenant farmers (Dubois and Horvath 2003b).

The poorest people, usually former slaves, worked as field laborers in the gang labor system. They worked on large farms for whatever wages were offered and lived in workers' compounds, often composed of former slave cabins, or in houses owned by whites (Dubois and Horvath 2003b). Despite some blacks' movement out of agriculture and into cities, most former slaves in rural areas remained dependent on the plantation system of agriculture. This pattern of life in rural Louisiana would change little in the decades to follow (Maguire 1989:71). People continued to make their living cultivating the land almost completely without the aid of farm machinery until the 1930s. Segregation was further institutionalized and the gap between whites and blacks in Louisiana society remained.

⁴ Brasseaux et al. discuss the reluctance of the free people of color to associate themselves with the recently freed slaves, however, their statuses were merged in the eyes of whites. In order for free people of color to secure their own rights they had to fight for the rights of all people with African ancestry (1994:104).

1.5 Louisiana History 1930-Present

The 1930s marked the beginning of an end to the lifestyle held by so many people in rural areas of Louisiana for several generations. Smaller farms worked by hand were replaced by large mechanized farming conglomerates, which employed few people (Dubois and Horvath 2003b). This change in farming practices especially affected the black population, a largely unskilled labor force who depended upon the agricultural system for their sustenance.

People were desperate for work and the entire United States witnessed a mass exodus of blacks from rural areas into urban areas and many blacks left the South for opportunities elsewhere (Bailey 2001:58-66).⁵ Those blacks who remained in rural areas continued to work in what agricultural jobs were available.

World War II would bring more fundamental change, especially to areas in South Louisiana, where the present linguistic study is based. The economic boom associated with the United States' involvement with the war brought many jobs to the area. The construction trades prospered and men sometimes commuted long distances from remote rural areas to work on construction projects (Brasseaux et al. 1994). New employment opportunities associated with the oil and gas industry became available and advances in the Civil Rights Movement made it more feasible for blacks to be employed in these new jobs. Textile plants moved into rural areas to take advantage of the unskilled labor force but have since left to search out cheaper labor elsewhere (Dubois and Horvath 2003b). Some jobs were available but still many blacks continued to leave Louisiana. Today, finding well-paid employment in Louisiana remains difficult for many people. The state continues to lose people who leave Louisiana in search of better employment elsewhere.

⁵ Bailey (2001:58-66) illustrates that in 1910, 89% of blacks lived in the South and 75% of them lived in rural areas. By 1970, 47% of blacks had come to live outside of the South and 77% of all blacks lived in cities.

CHAPTER 2: CREOLE IDENTITY

The variety of English this study aims to investigate is called Creole African American Vernacular English. The “Creole” label on this variety of African American Vernacular English speaks both of the ethnic, historical, and geographical background of this language variety. In this chapter, the word *creole* will be discussed in its various contexts so that an understanding can be reached of how the word relates to the variety of English spoken in South Louisiana.

2.1 Creole Definitions

To start, *creole* is a troublesome word to define and explain. The word is extremely polysemous, used in both adjective and noun form to describe different peoples, ethnicities, cultures, identities, and languages in many different geographical areas at different times throughout history. Almost everything about the use of the word is contested. Its origins are even debated with some credit being given to the Portuguese for first coining a similar term *crioulo* in 1632 and other people putting faith in the Spanish for using the earliest form of the word, *crollo*, in the 1560s (Hall 1992, Tregle 1992,). The later Spanish word *criollo* and the French equivalent, *créole*, have been used in parts of the Americas from the turn of the 17th century (Trésor de la langue française 2002). What does this word mean?

A definition of *creole* first depends on the historical context in which the word is used. The present analysis is particularly concerned with the use of the word in Louisiana and as is true of the word in many places, the meaning of *creole* has fluctuated over time.⁶

⁶ *Creole* has other applications and meanings in Louisiana and elsewhere that will not be discussed in the scope of this chapter. Very important to linguistics is the notion of creole languages, a twentieth century employment of the word, also used in Louisiana to describe a type of contact induced French vernacular. For more information on the linguistic uses of the word *creole* in Louisiana see Corne 1999. For an in depth discussion of the use of the word *creole* in many contexts, see Dubois and Melancon 2000 and Dominguez 1986.

2.2 Creole Peoples

From its origins in Louisiana, *creole* was used to refer to all people born in the colony regardless of their race. There is little indication that the word was used with much importance during its early years as a French colony (Dominguez 1986). However, the word *criollo* appears widely in Spanish documents to distinguish Louisiana-born slaves from those slaves born in Africa (Tregle 1992). The use of *creole* to refer to other peoples did not occur much under Spanish rule of Louisiana, although the widespread use of the word would become very important after American takeover of the territory (Tregle 1992).

After the United States took control, being born in Louisiana became an important identifying characteristic, which set native-born people apart from the American settlers and European immigrants who came to the colony. The term *Creole* became widely used to indicate native-birth in Louisiana, regardless of racial background (Dominguez 1986).

This rather straightforward application of the word *Creole* to the entire native-born populace, however, would become very muddled in historical descriptions of Louisiana. Because free people of color adopted the word *Creole* to refer to themselves, the misconception was developed among visitors to Louisiana, that *Creole* necessarily indicated mixed race (Tregle 1992:139). Native-born whites, also *Creoles* by definition, persistently tried to correct the misunderstanding by asserting that they had no African ancestry but were *Creoles* because of their native birth in Louisiana. The strength of their efforts lead to the opposite erroneous belief in later times that the word was used for only native-born whites (Tregle 1992). A mythology surrounding the word *Creole* was created that is still perpetuated today, which reflects little how the word was actually used in Louisiana.⁷

⁷ Tregle has done considerable work in dispelling the *Creole* myth and has established a more substantiated account of how the word was used in Louisiana (1952, 1992)

Although *Creole* was initially used to describe all native-born persons in Louisiana, over time, the changing demographics of the state shaped the meaning of the word to indicate only those people who “spoke French and identified with French culture,” (Dominguez 1986:125). Increasing numbers of children were born in Louisiana to parents from other parts of the United States and from Europe and it would have been strange to hear these individuals referred to as *Creoles* (Dominguez 1986:125).

The shared French language and ties to French culture superficially united all Creoles, however race sharply divided them. Native-born whites, free people of color and enslaved blacks were strictly divided in society. They maintained distinct identities in spite of their ties with the French language and French culture.

The present study is concerned with the linguistic investigation of the speech of Creole African Americans. In the next section, the formation of the cultures of the black Creole population and the Creole free people of color population will be discussed to illuminate the differences between these two groups of people that eventually merged to form the Creole African American population in Louisiana.

2.3 Creole Cultures

The first of the groups whose descendents would later comprise the Creole African American population in Louisiana were enslaved Africans brought to the colony in the African slave trade. The majority of slaves who came to Louisiana arrived directly from Africa unlike other slaves who were brought to the Americas during that time.⁸ According to Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, these slaves came together to form a unified and highly Africanized slave culture in

⁸ Slaves who came to the Chesapeake and Carolina colonies were from the British West Indies and were one or two generations removed from Africa (Hall 1992:161). Slaves who came to Louisiana during the French Colonial period were predominately from the Senegambia region of Africa.

Louisiana unlike any other formed in the United States (Hall 1992). This culture was allowed to form and then survive in Louisiana for several reasons.

A principal reason for its success was the creation and maintenance of the family unit among blacks in Louisiana from the very beginning of the colony. Hall (1992) mentions that more often, rather than being split up and sold to different people, slaves in Louisiana were allowed to remain with their nuclear families. Fictitious kin relationships formed among slaves who were separated from their real families. African traditions were passed from one generation to another and new cultural practices formed within the context of slavery.

The traditions manifested and perpetuated within the family unit were further disseminated throughout the enslaved population via the various opportunities slaves had to be mobile and interact with one other. Article 5 of the slave code enacted in 1724 made it illegal for slaves to be forced to work on Sundays (Johnson 1992:42). Slave owners found this mandate advantageous to their interests because they did not have to feed slaves on days they did not work. Along with Sundays off, it became common practice to give slaves Saturday afternoons off as well (Johnson 1992). This practice allowed slaves to hire themselves out for pay or to work cultivating the small plots of land sometimes given to them.

Time off also gave slaves the opportunity to travel from area to area and to sell their crafts and agricultural produce for additional money. By the time the Spanish took control of the colony, an established slave market was held every Sunday in New Orleans (Johnson 1992:42). Slaves had many occasions to come into contact with one other. Military service and public works projects further brought slaves together and put into contact slaves who lived in various areas (Marshall 1997:337). The opportunities for contact between slaves from different estates were prevalent.

Hall asserts that the slave population in Louisiana maintained their African religious beliefs and cultural practices (1992). Slaves arrived from Africa bringing with them knowledge of herbal medicines and poisons and they made charms and amulets (Hall 1992 :162-163). Folk tales and proverbs and the knowledge of herbs and poisons were passed from one generation to the next.

As the Africanized slave culture matured and was passed onto subsequent generations, it evolved. Newly arrived slaves from Africa were likely integrated into the existing slave culture and they helped reinforce the use of African customs in Louisiana. Hall supports this hypothesis stating, “the Congo, as well as most other African slaves, were socialized into a culture and language that had long been formed by slaves who had come overwhelmingly from Senegambia,” (1992:302). In the case of the Congo, they introduced Congolese rituals into the existing slave cultures and contributed to some re-africanization of the slave culture (Hall 1992: 302).

Much about the black population in Louisiana would change after the United States took control of Louisiana. The enslaved black population, in contrast with the other groups in the early years of American Louisiana, did not maintain the attributes it had held under Spanish control of the area. The foreign slave trade legally ended in 1795 (Hall 1992:287) ceasing the arrival of African slaves directly from Africa. However, the domestic slave trade continued trafficking American-born slaves from other parts of the South into Louisiana (Lachance 1992). These American slaves were very different from the slaves they encountered in Louisiana. The Louisiana slave population had remained highly Africanized, French-speaking, and had adopted the Catholic religion. American slaves had grown up in other areas of the South where the black population had not managed to preserve their African heritage to the same extent. The Protestant

church had become the backbone of the American slave culture and American blacks spoke English (Logsdon and Bell 1992).

American blacks and Creole blacks were never highly isolated from each other.⁹ The story of the free people of color in Louisiana is distinctly different. Born into freedom, free people of color were never slaves but a majority of them were denied true social equality with the white population. Among free people of color, there existed the same variable distribution of wealth found among white Creoles. Many free people of color worked as tradespeople or farmers; some Creoles of Color attained large amounts of wealth and held many slaves. Their African ancestry did little to deter them as slave owners being notoriously cruel to their slaves (Brasseaux 1994:72). They ran large plantations and ranches and married other free people of color in order to maintain their wealth (Brasseaux 1994). In some geographical areas, these Creole of Color families were on par financially and politically with the white planter families in the area (Brasseaux 1994).¹⁰ For a group of people descended from slaves in the 19th century, they held a remarkable amount of wealth and power (Brasseaux 1994).

The lives of free people of color, however, significantly changed with Reconstruction. The further limits imposed upon their social mobility through segregationist policies equating them with former slaves, initiated the eventual fusing of the Creole of Color population with the larger black population (Hirsch 1992). By the era of segregation, the dominant class in Louisiana had clearly changed and no longer included wealthy Creoles of Color. Consequently, for some free people of color, ties to French culture and language were deemphasized in favor of adopting the language and cultural practices of the successful Americans who came to control the state (Dubois and Melancon 2000).

⁹ From this point forth, I will use the term Creole to distinguish native-born Louisiana peoples from their American-born counterparts.

¹⁰ Wealthy Creole of Color families were especially prominent in the Prairie parishes where our linguistic study takes place.

By the 1930s, as Dubois and Melancon discuss of Fairclough (1995:17), “the distinction between the Black groups in the state, black Creoles, Creoles of Color and Black Americans without French ancestry – ‘became increasingly blurred through intermarriage, social mobility, the decline of the French language, and the sheer weight of white supremacy,’” (Dubois and Melancon 2000: 244).

2.4 Finding the Creole People of Today

In order to study the variety of English spoken by today’s Creole African Americans, it is first necessary to find the people descended from black Creoles and Creoles of color. Who are the Creole African Americans of today? By the 1990s, when Dubois and Melancon and others set out to study the language of the ancestors of the Louisiana Creole population, the entire word “Creole” had been so stretched and confused that the currently accepted meaning of the word was unclear. Would the ancestors of the black Creole and Creole of Color population even admit to their ancestry? What other groups of people may claim this appellation? Dubois and Melancon worked to find out the answers to some of these questions and conducted a study of diachronic and synchronic attitudes towards the Creole identity in 2000.

Dubois and Melancon surveyed 240 African Americans from two communities within the Louisiana French triangle, Opelousas and Breaux Bridge, in order to ascertain their opinions on 46 questions regarding the Creole identity.¹¹ From these surveys, it was determined that true Creole identity was determined first and foremost by having Creole ancestors. Having grandparents and parents who speak French was also deemed an important attribute of Creole identity but was deemed secondary to having Creole ancestors (Dubois and Melancon 2000:250-251). Also important to the present study is the finding that 80% of respondents said that being a

¹¹ Dubois and Melancon’s study also investigated the use of Louisiana Creole French in their 2000 work on Creole identity.

certain race was not integral to claiming Creole identity. Therefore the present-day Creole identity is tied to Creole ancestry, older relatives who speak French, and not necessarily to race.

Because having Creole ancestry is the most important aspect of the present-day Creole identity, it becomes necessary to know what constitutes having Creole ancestry. Creole ancestry, it turns out, is not bound, as one may think, to having ties to the original French settlers who settled in Louisiana during the French control of the colony. It is linked rather with having any connection with French-speaking ancestry of any type (p.c. Dubois 2004). Therefore, the descendents of slaves brought first to other parts of the United States, who were later transported to Louisiana, would classify as Creole ancestors if those ancestors adopted the French language.

Creole ancestry is clearly defined as an important aspect of the Creole identity. However, to what extent do people presently living in the prairie parishes claim the Creole identity for themselves? To judge the currency of the appellation “Creole” among the black communities of Opelousas and Breaux Bridge, Dubois and Melancon asked those respondents who claim Creole ancestry to identify themselves by choosing one of five labels. The majority of them selected the label African American over American, Creole American, Creole or other. Older respondents were less apt to identify themselves as African American, with only 33% of them doing so (Dubois and Melancon 2000:253). Dubois and Melancon credit the Civil Rights movement with establishing the African American identity among the black population of Creole ancestry in Louisiana. They were long denied rights and equality with whites after the Civil War and only after embracing the more encompassing African American identity, were blacks able to reach higher levels of equality in social, political and economic domains (Dubois and Melancon 2000:253).

From Dubois and Melancon’s initial survey into the Creole identity, a viable target population of speakers is identified who can be studied in order to investigate the plausibility that

a unique variety of English had indeed formed among the Creole of Color and black Creole populations after the Civil War. In the next chapter on language, the linguistic backgrounds of the various groups whose descendents today claim Creole ancestry will be investigated.

CHAPTER 3: LANGUAGE

As illustrated in the previous two chapters, Louisiana's history has brought together people of diverse backgrounds into a society where important determining factors of cultural identity are tied to language heritage situations. This situation is still true for the Creole African American population of today. Identification with Creole ancestry is most importantly tied to having relatives who spoke French. In this chapter, the language situation in Louisiana will be discussed in how it pertains to the development of a distinct variety of English known as Creole African American English.¹²

3.1 The Early Linguistic Climate of Louisiana

The Europeans who first settled Louisiana were for the most part Francophone except for among the German communities, which had established themselves on the Côte d'Allemagne, west of New Orleans on the Mississippi River (Hall 1992:18).¹³ The largest population to live in Louisiana during that time were members of the several indigenous Indian nations. The early linguistic climate most probably consisted of French existing as the lingua franca when contact occurred between the different groups.

In later years, other Francophone groups would settle in Louisiana further diversifying the varieties of French spoken in the colony. Distinctive varieties of French are likely to have been spoken by people with different social backgrounds in the various areas of Louisiana. (Dubois 2003).

According to Hall, when African slaves began arriving in Louisiana, they often spoke their ancestral languages and whatever pidgin variety may have developed during the voyage to

¹² The different varieties of French spoken in Louisiana are important to tracing the history of that language in Louisiana. However, this analysis is more concerned with the overall patterns of language use that led to the adoption of solely English by Creole African Americans, therefore, the history of different varieties of French in Louisiana will not be discussed here.

¹³ Klinger provides evidence that the Germans eventually adopted French as the language of their everyday lives as well (Klinger 2003:6).

facilitate communication between the ship's crew and the slaves (Hall 1992). Slaves were purchased by colonists and were assimilated into the colony. What exactly transpired linguistically after their arrival is of much debate. Because of the powerful presence of the African slave culture, some maintenance of African languages is likely to have transpired in the early years of the colony (Hall 1992).¹⁴

However, African slaves needed to communicate with their French-speaking masters and with slaves captured from the indigenous population.¹⁵ Slaves were forced to follow the orders of their masters and any communication with slave-owners or overseers would have been in French. Slaves had a substantial impetus for learning the new language because they could be punished or beaten for not following orders correctly.

As Klinger discusses, there were incentives for learning the language of the master and it is likely that the language ability of slaves varied according to the position they held. Newly arrived slaves were first put to work as field laborers and they consequently had the least contact with the variety of French spoken by whites. Slaves, in contrast, who lived on estates for longer periods of time, were eligible to be given positions of authority over other slaves (Klinger 2003). It is likely that these lucrative positions of authority would go to slaves who could communicate in French with their masters. Thus, the motivation to learn to communicate in the new language was great. In addition, for those slaves who did domestic work, knowing French was necessary. They were in constant contact with the variety of French spoken by their masters and there is no reason to doubt that they did not fully acquire the language (Klinger 2003).

¹⁴ Evidence for the use of African languages in Louisiana is found in the documentation of a widespread slave conspiracy to kill whites in 1731 among some 400 Bambara (Hall 1992:105-107).

¹⁵ According to Hall, many of the early slaves in the colony were captives from among the indigenous population. African slaves often worked alongside the slaves from the Indian nations and the early use of the word *grif* referred to children born of unions between them (Hall 1992:97).

At least a small percentage of slaves came to fluently speak a colonial variety of French. What remains unclear is what the rest of the slaves spoke. The necessity of understanding French most likely impelled slaves to make an effort to communicate using the newly encountered language. Many linguists have argued that this effort by slaves to communicate in the French used around them resulted in the formation of a contact induced French vernacular. As Klinger points out, the evolution of this language variety has been studied by Corne (1999), Klinger (2003), Neumann (1985), Marshall (1989), and Valdman (1992, 1993, 1996), (Klinger 2003:25).

What pertains to the present analysis of Creole African American Vernacular English is the fact that some variety of French was spoken among blacks in Louisiana when the United States took over the territory and that the major language spoken by people at that time in Louisiana was French.

3.2 Linguistic Change After the Louisiana Purchase

The United States' acquisition of Louisiana resulted in a sharp increase in the settlement of Louisiana by non-Francophone peoples. English-speaking white Americans and American-born black slaves came to the area in large numbers. It became fashionable in upper class society to have American-born slaves (Lachance 1992). Some were integrated into estates with French-speaking slaves who in turn may have learned to speak English from them. Other English-speaking slaves were brought to Louisiana by American slaveholders who established plantations in the new American territory. The widespread adoption of the English language among the black population around New Orleans is well documented in historical accounts (Lachance 1992). Lachance argues that because of the large numbers of Anglophone slaves and the adoption of English by Creole slaves, the black population was likely to have been the first group to cease to be mainly Francophone (Lachance 1992:117-118).

Meanwhile, being a member of the other French-speaking Creole populations began to lose clout in the increasingly wealthy and competitive city. Newspapers and other publications switched from French to English (Dubois and Horvath 2003b). Trade became increasingly anglicized and it became economically advantageous to speak English. In addition, the massive immigration of Irish and Germans to Louisiana contributed to the switch from French to English. These new immigrants settled all over the area and in most cases it would have been likely that they adopted English rather than French.

Before long, French-speaking whites and free people of color were surrounded by non-Francophone peoples. They felt constant pressure to adopt English to ensure the success of their futures. By the onset of the Civil War, the wealthy Creole elite of metropolitan Louisiana were predominantly Anglophone (Dubois and Melancon 2000:242). The French language was lost among this group and it would not return.

After the Civil War, the military officers and northerners who came to Louisiana in increasing numbers were also English-speaking. English's fate was further sealed as the target language of the Louisiana when English was established as the sole official language in legal documents and schooling was set forth in the state constitution of 1868. Children in elementary school were forbidden from speaking French and newspapers and other documents were produced exclusively in English (Tregle 1992).

The diffusion of English across the entire population of Louisiana would prove temporally and geographically not to be a uniform process. Dubois and Horvath remark, "One fascinating aspect of Louisiana sociolinguistic history is the speed of the shift from French to English within high-status groups compared to the gradual change within lower status groups, (2003b:263).

In the rural prairie parishes of Louisiana, which make up the present-day Louisiana French Triangle (see Figure 2), language change would progress in quite a different way than what was observed among the upper classes in New Orleans. Instead of rapidly abandoning the French language to adopt English as their city-dwelling, affluent counterparts had done, certain parts of the population in the prairie parishes maintained the French language past the 1830s through the Civil War and remnants of these communities still speak French today.

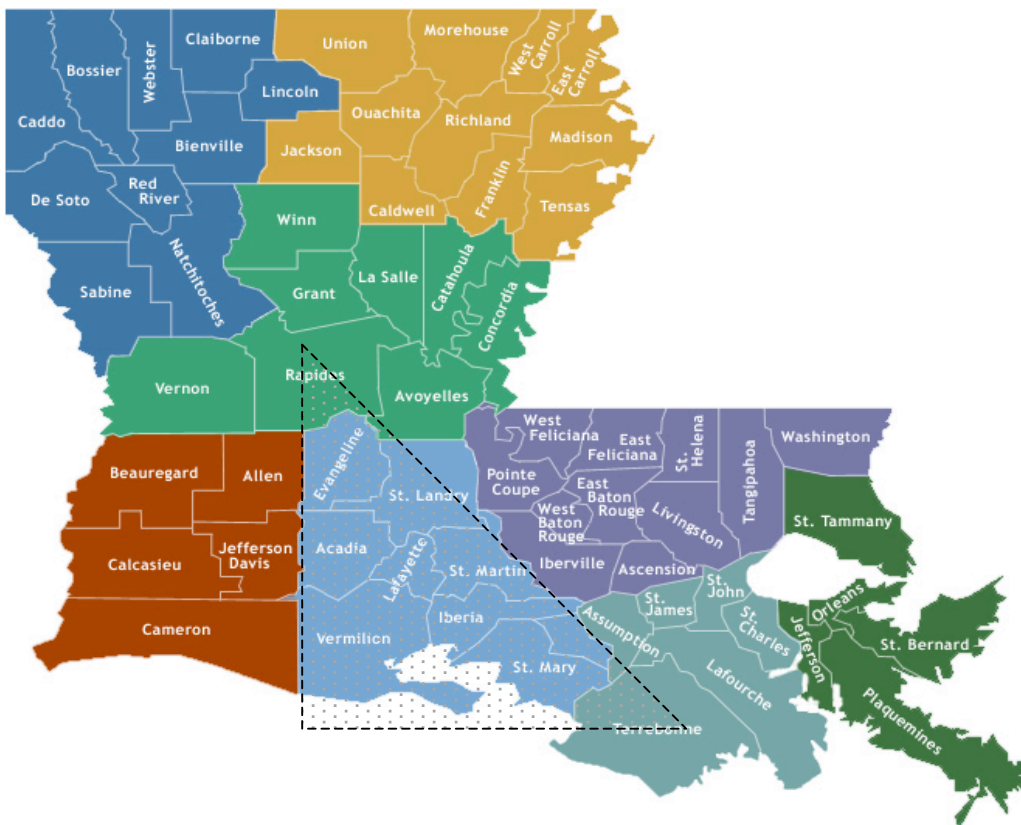


Figure 2. Map Illustrating the Location of the Louisiana French Triangle

3.3 The Linguistic Situation in the Prairie Parishes

Dubois and Horvath discuss how before the Civil War, the prairie parishes were open communities that experienced the in-migration of migrants of diverse backgrounds and where

black and white people of various social, ethnic and language groups came in contact with each other (2003b:281).¹⁶

After the Civil War, however, “a long period of economic decline characterized by out-migration isolated these communities; people were barely able to sustain a living working the fields. The towns became enclaves,” (Dubois and Horvath 2003b:281) The prairie parishes remained predominately farmlands with a few isolated villages and larger towns dotting their landscape until the present day. People organized themselves around the agricultural system and the language variety they spoke often had much to do with the geographical area they lived in. French and English-speaking former slaves and Creoles of Color intermarried and with their descendents formed African American communities often in close proximity to white communities made up of Cajuns, Anglophone Americans and to some extent European immigrants.

Both English and French continued to be spoken and bilingualism became commonplace (Dubois and Horvath 2003b:265). It is possible to theorize that a unique variety of English was forged primarily from the variety of English spoken by American blacks who came to the area. It was also likely affected by the diverse language varieties spoken by whites nearby.

Over time, the relative geographical and social isolation these Creole African American communities experienced reinforced the uniqueness of their dialect of English. They had little contact with people from outside of the general area and little or no schooling (Dubois and Horvath 2003b:265). With no exposure to any proscriptive norm, mass media, or to outsiders, members of these communities had no reason to question their variety of English or to modify it.

¹⁶ The origins of the people who settled in the prairie parishes were diverse. There were white Creoles and Creoles of Color, black Creoles and English-speaking Blacks from other parts of the South, Acadians, and French who came from various regions of France at different times. In addition, white Americans from various regions of the Eastern United States brought with them diverse varieties of English, and Irish, Germans, and other Europeans of unknown numbers also made the area their home (Dubois and Horvath (2003b), Brasseaux (1994).

Over the course of sixty years, families became well rooted in the agricultural system and their rural Creole African American communities. Children grew up and went to work on the farms as their parents did. They spoke the language variety of their parents and those around them.

However, the 1930s would bring changes to these Creole African American communities. Economic hardship made it impossible for some families to remain in the rural areas of the Prairie Parishes. Many blacks left the area and moved into cities. Schooling in English became mandatory for all children and the use of French in the classroom was forbidden. What employment opportunities were available often took place strictly within the English-speaking sector. For the first time, people in the prairie parishes, desperate for jobs, felt real incentives for adopting English as the main language of their everyday lives. The importance of English led people to eventually cease raising their children in French. Before long, the significance of knowing the language in these communities dwindled to the point where today, many Creole African Americans no longer are capable of speaking the variety of French, which was once an integral part of their communities.

The monolingual French speakers therefore joined their bilingual and monolingual English speaker counterparts in these African American communities in speaking the distinct variety of English that had existed in the area since the initial isolation of these communities after the Civil War.

With the entire socio-historical framework in place, it is possible now to examine the current question at hand. What concerns the present study in particular are the processes that went into the development of the variety of English spoken among blacks of Creole ancestry in the prairie parishes before the widespread economic changes that occurred after World War II. It is known that these people now universally speak English, however, they were once a largely

bilingual people. What are the particular features that distinguish this variety of English from other varieties of English spoken in the South and by other people in Louisiana?

3.4 CAAVE: A Divergent Dialect of English

In their initial study of Creole African American Vernacular English, henceforth referred to as CAAVE, Dubois and Horvath examined the speech of Creole African American men and investigated vocalic variables that seemed unusual for a Southern English dialect. They studied glide reduction in the vowels (ai, au, oi, i, u, e, o), and found that the variety of English spoken by these men manifested an unusual amount of glide absence (Dubois and Horvath 2003b:270).

Dubois and Horvath's initial work into CAAVE investigates how CAAVE compares to other varieties of English spoken in the South and elsewhere by people of various racial backgrounds. They also investigate how CAAVE relates to varieties of African American Vernacular English. Their specific work in glide absence and the possible monophthongal realization in CAAVE of the vowels [e] and [o], for the diphthongs [ei] and [ou] in Standard English, is very significant. Thomas/Bailey (1998) indicate that monophthongal /e/ and /o/ are "crucial in reconstructing the history of that variety [AAVE]," (quoted in Bailey 2001:77). CAAVE may therefore help researchers glean insight into the larger question of how AAVE formed. By looking at the origins of CAAVE, a portrait of the general history behind AAVE varieties may become clearer.

In comparison with other varieties of English in the southern United States, Dubois and Horvath argue that the English spoken by African Americans from Opelousas and Parks stands out as a distinctive dialect because of the persistence of its glide absence (2003b). The isolation of these speakers of CAAVE from the outside world allowed for the maintenance of these dialectal forms. As Dubois and Horvath explain:

People talk to people who talk like them. Persistence happens because a speaker is not confronted in his everyday life by someone who does not speak the same dialect, who misunderstands him, or who socially evaluates the way he speaks. In other words, no accommodation to another is needed and there is no social motivation for change, (Dubois and Horvath 2003b:281).

The variety of English spoken by Creole African Americans became a distinct dialect of English over time. In the following chapters, the variable reduction of word final codas in CAAVE will be investigated in order to gain a better sense of how distinct CAAVE is in comparison with other varieties of English. The linguistic conditioning, which favors word final coda reduction, will also be examined and compared with CAAVE's neighbor dialect, Cajun Vernacular English. "Because people talk to people who talk like them," the similarities between Cajun Vernacular English and CAAVE will also be explored and we will look at the role French has played in influencing word final coda reduction in CAAVE.

CHAPTER 4: CORPUS AND METHODOLOGY

The goal of our present study is to investigate the language of old male speakers of Creole African American Vernacular English.¹⁷ In this chapter, the methodology, data analysis procedures, and linguistic conclusions drawn from the study of word final coda reduction in CAAVE will be discussed. From this data, a comparison will be made of CAAVE with other varieties of English leading to some larger conclusions about the placement of CAAVE within the African American English Diaspora and its role in the speech communities of the prairie parishes of Louisiana.

The data chosen for study in this work is part of the LCAAVE database, a database of Creole African American English constructed by Dubois in 2001 with the help of a grant from the National Science Foundation. The LCAAVE database is a representative sample of bilingual or semi-bilingual English and French speakers from two target communities in the Louisiana French triangle. The database's central goal was to collect sufficient linguistic material across generations to study the phonological and morphological features found in this particular variety of English.

The two communities from which participant speakers were selected, were the tiny village of Parks in St. Martin parish, and the general area of Opelousas in St. Landry parish. Both areas were dominated by agriculture in the decades following the Civil War and had significant populations of African Americans who claimed Creole ancestry. The geographical location of these towns is found in Figure 3.

¹⁷ After consultation with Dubois, the old generation of male speakers was targeted for study in this linguistic investigation because they exhibit the greatest usage of non-standard variants (personal correspondence; Dubois 2003-2004).

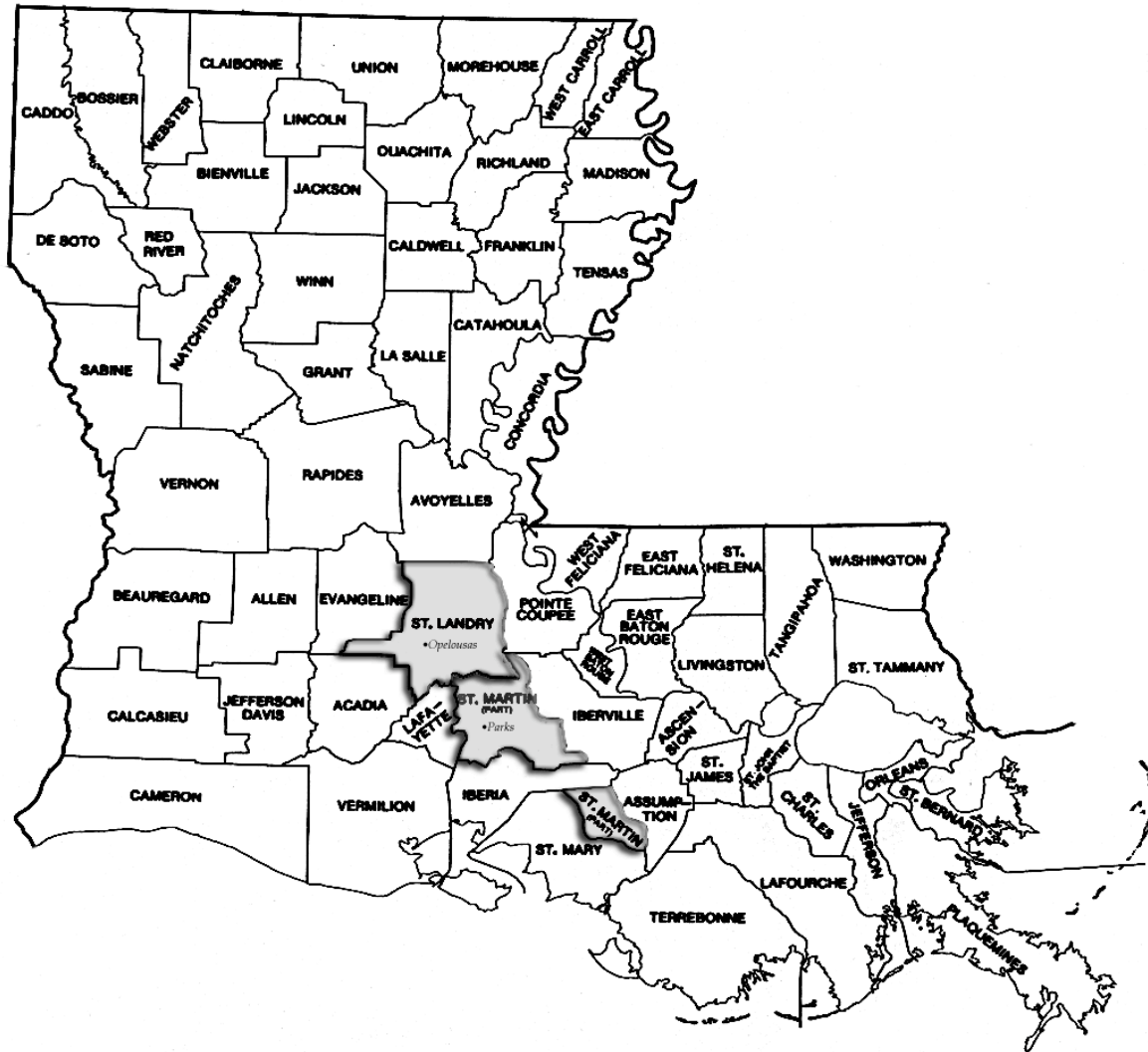


Figure 3. Geographical Location of Opelousas and Parks

4.1 Parks and Opelousas

Parks was chosen for several reasons. It had been the subject of considerable sociological study by Maguire in the early 1980s and its history was therefore well documented (see Maguire 1989). Parks had also maintained a relatively stable population since its first appearance in the U.S. Census data in 1910 with only 466 residents. In 2000, there were 533 people living in Parks. The white population, mostly Cajuns, and the black population are of almost equal size and have been so since the late 19th century (Dubois and Horvath 2003b). Because of Parks' small size, it has not experienced the stark segregation found elsewhere in

Louisiana. Historically, blacks and whites interacted with each other in the town's few establishments and during social events. Parks had served as a staging area for popular black jazz bands in the decades before World War II. Racial harmony, however, was destroyed in 1939 by a dancehall incident that killed one white man and led to the beatings of some black men in the town. Blacks were forced to the east side of the Bayou Teche and the town remained more strictly segregated for some time (Dubois and Horvath 2003b). Today, Parks remains a small farming community. People go to nearby St. Martinville to run errands. Few actual businesses remain and children are bussed to bigger towns to go to school.

The town of Opelousas had been established early in the prairie parishes' history. It had served as a trading post as early as 1720 before widespread settlement of the area by Europeans (Dubois and Horvath 2003b). Opelousas had always been known as a place where blacks and whites have lived in close contact with each other. The town boasts the largest Black Catholic Church in the United States and has long been home to a large population of Creoles of Color (Dubois and Horvath 2003b). Since World War II, blacks have outnumbered whites in Opelousas. In 2000, the town was 69% African American and 29% white (the white population is made up of many Cajuns) (Dubois and Horvath 2003b). Speakers were interviewed from the actual town of Opelousas as well as from the smaller communities of Leonville, Washington, Frilot Cove and Bois Mallet, which are situated nearby. Present day Opelousas and the surrounding areas are home to many businesses, fast-food restaurants, two hospitals, cable television and local radio stations and a daily newspaper. The once vibrant downtown area appears completely abandoned with businesses located in strip malls on either side of the decaying remnants of what used to be the main shopping district. Opelousas is home to a Zydeco music festival each year, however, its sad and neglected appearance has not helped efforts to establish a tourism industry for the city.

4.2 The LCAAVE Database

From these two geographical areas, 42 people were selected to be interviewed for the LCAAVE database. Participants were only asked to participate if they were born and raised and still live in St. Landry or St. Martin parish. All chosen speakers are bilingual in English and French or have parents or grandparents who were bilingual in English and French. In designing the database, age and gender were the two main factors considered in the selection of participants. Twenty-four men comprising four age groups were interviewed. The age groups for the men were old, born between 1915-1929; senior, born between 1932-1940; middle-aged, born between 1945-1955; and young, born between 1969-1981. Eighteen women were selected from three age groups, old, born between 1912-1931; middle-aged, born between 1941-1951; and young, born between 1969-1981. Three speakers from each parish were chosen for each age group.

Participants were interviewed for approximately one hour in English by two African American interviewers from South Louisiana. The content of the interviews varied, but interviewers were instructed to ask about the participant's life, family, work, and education and participants were questioned about the social and cultural practices of the community and the use of English within the speaker's family and the community as a whole. Finally, speakers were asked about their attitudes towards the varieties of English spoken by local whites and blacks and by people from outside of the local geographical area. The conversations were tape recorded with the participants' consent.¹⁸

The tape-recorded interviews were later transcribed by research assistants of Dr. Dubois. Audiocassettes of the interviews along with typed transcripts of the interview content are housed in the Sociolinguistic Laboratory at Louisiana State University.

¹⁸From the LCAAVE database, Dubois and Horvath have previously conducted the research into glide absence in CAAVE discussed in Chapter 3 (Dubois and Horvath 2003b).

4.3 Investigating Word Final Coda Reduction: Study Design

The goal of this research is to investigate the phonemic realization of word final codas in the speech of the oldest group of male speakers in the LCAAVE database. The oldest male group was specifically chosen for study for two reasons. The old male speakers, more than any other group in the LCAAVE database, exhibit a high use of non-standard forms for the linguistic variables that have been studied thus far (p.c. Dubois 2003). Also very important, their early acquisition of English, often well before 1930, allows for the study of features in their speech, which may be indicative of earlier CAAVE.

Word final codas refer to word endings that in Standard English end in a consonant or consonant cluster. Examples of word final codas are [k] in *sick* or [pt] in *kept*. *Sick* and *kept* are examples of monosyllabic words. Other words composed of more than one syllable, like *breakfast* and *parade* were also examined. Only word final codas were coded. No codas from any other syllable were coded. Very few words of more than two syllables were included in this study

Word final codas are comprised of either a single final consonant, as [k] in *sick*, or a consonant cluster, as [pt] in *kept*. In Standard English, these consonants are normally pronounced at the end of the word. However, in certain linguistic contexts, the consonants making up word final codas are not realized and the word final coda reduces or is deleted entirely. To follow through with our examples, *sick* could be realized as /sɪ/ and *kept* as /kɛp/ or /kɛ/.

Word final coda reduction can occur in many different kinds of words. Some words encode only derivational information whereas other words additionally encode grammatical information such as tense marking and number. Such words are said to be bimorphemic because they include both an inflectional morpheme and a derivational one. Examples of codas in

bimorphemic words are “-lped” in “helped,” and “-rs” in “sisters.” Other words do not encode any such inflectional information and only include a unitary derivational morpheme in their word final codas. These words are referred to as monomorphemic words. The words “wind,” “help” and “sister” are examples of monomorphemic words.

All varieties of English appear to reduce word final codas in some linguistic contexts, although certain dialects do so at a higher frequency than others (Wolfram et al. 2000). In varieties of AAVE, the reduction of word final codas has been particularly noted and the manifestation of consonant cluster reduction has been studied in depth (see Rickford 1999, Wolfram 1969, 2003, Wolfram et al. 2000, Fasold and Wolfram 1970.) The large number of studies that treat specifically consonant cluster reduction facilitates the straightforward comparison of CAAVE with AAVE and several other varieties of English.

The absence of word final single consonants is also a known property of some varieties of AAVE (Rickford 1999:4), however, in contrast with consonant cluster reduction, Bailey has classified it as a property that is “apparently unique to AAVE,” (2001:76). Recent research into Cajun Vernacular English by Dubois and Horvath (2003a), however, reveals that single final consonants are also sometimes deleted in this variety of English spoken primarily by bilingual whites in the Prairie parishes of Louisiana.

Considering these known features of AAVE and the final consonant deletion found in the nearby Cajun Vernacular English, this study intends to investigate the phonetic realization of word final codas in CAAVE by looking at both the deletion of single final consonants and the reduction of consonant clusters.

4.4 Data Collection

The sub-sample taken from the LCAAVE database is composed of six male speakers from the old generation of speakers. Three men are from the area around Opelousas, and three

men are from the town of Parks. Four of the men, two from each area, acquired French as their first language. The other two speakers, one from Opelousas and one from Parks, acquired English as their first language. The men were all born between 1915-1929. The interviews vary in length but are all at least forty minutes long.

Before any information was collected, I listened to each interview for content while following along with the tape script that accompanies each interview in the LCAAVE database. The tape scripts for each interview range in length from 1555-5600 words. The middle section of each transcript was selected for coding in order to allow sufficient time to pass for speakers to become accustomed to the interview process and to increase the probability that speakers would use language more informally towards the end of the interview.

Overall 764 tokens were selected for coding. At least 120 tokens were identified for each speaker. The highest number of tokens surveyed for any one speaker was 135 tokens. A minimum of 50 words ending in a consonant cluster and 50 words ending in a single final consonant were selected for each speaker. In the initial identification of tokens, any word ending in a consonant was eligible to be selected for study. No words were explicitly excluded from coding and multiple appearances of the same word were also coded. There was no effort made to include a certain number of words ending in grammatical morphemes or to include a specific number of tokens in particular contexts.

Because speakers occasionally said something different from what was noted in the transcript and due to the occurrence of unintelligible utterances in some interviews, the substitution of some tokens with new ones was necessary during the data collection process.

For the linguistic variable studied in this research, i.e., the absence or presence of consonants in word final codas, a basic dichotomy of Y/N was selected to represent the phonological realization of a particular token. Each token was identified as either Y, indicating

that the consonant(s) normally pronounced in Standard English, were reduced or completely absent in the pronunciation of the token; or N, indicating that the consonant(s) making up the word final coda were fully pronounced. The data sheet used to code information about each token is found in Appendix A. During the data collection process, some changes were made to the original data collection sheet and the first version is also found in Appendix A.

Several linguistic factors were coded for each token. The linguistic factor of “Ending” was established to gather information about the type of word final coda. Word final codas composed of a single final consonant in Standard English were labeled S. For word final codas ending in consonant clusters in Standard English, the coding process for CAAVE is somewhat more complex. Because consonant clusters are necessarily made up of more than one consonant, their phonological realization can vary from a full pronunciation in CAAVE of all consonants typically realized in Standard English to a complete absence of any type of consonant in word final position. Consequently, consonant clusters were labeled K, however, in cases of reduction, partially reduced consonant clusters were distinguished from fully reduced consonant clusters. In all cases of word final coda reduction or absence, a broad phonemic transcription of the pronunciation of the token was noted in the “Qualitative Notes” section of the data collection chart. A summary of the phonemic realizations observed in cases of word final coda reduction is found in Chart B1 of Appendix B.

A second linguistic factor coded for each token was the “Context” in which the token occurred. If the token occurred directly before a word beginning with a vowel, it was marked V. Tokens occurring directly before a word beginning with a consonant were marked C and words occurring before words starting with a liquid or glide were marked L. Finally, if a token occurred before a pause it was coded as P.

The next linguistic factor coded for each token was the length of the token itself. If the token was composed of only one syllable, it was marked M. If the token was composed of two or more syllables, it was marked B.

The fourth linguistic factor coded during data collection was the “Grammatical” factor. Monomorphemic word final codas were labeled X. Bimorphemic word final codas were labeled G.

Two additional sociolinguistic factors, “Speaker” and “Parish,” were considered in the data analysis. For each token, a letter representing the speaker who uttered the token was assigned. Thus, each of the six speakers was represented by a specific letter, either c,j,v,g,z, or h and each word spoken by that particular individual was coded with his distinctive letter.

The final linguistic factor of “Parish,” encoded where the speaker who said the token was from. The letters O and P were used in this category to indicate respectively the area around Opelousas and the town of Parks.

4.5 Data Analysis

A computerized database was created using the StatView statistical program for Macintosh from the collected data. The data was examined at numerous times to ensure that all tokens were coded properly. Some tokens were eliminated from the corpus for various reasons¹⁹.

Wolfram (1993) provides a thorough overview of research methodology for consonant cluster reduction. Further steps were taken to adjust the CAAVE corpus to better fit with the

¹⁹ Short words, many of them prepositions such as “of,” “on,” and “in” were included in the original data collection. They present a problem because they are composed entirely of a vowel plus a consonant or VC and may function differently than words beginning with a consonant when they reduce. Because of the potential difference between VC and CVC words, all VC tokens were eliminated from the corpus. In addition, all words ending in the orthographic sequence “-ng” were also excluded from study because in CAAVE as observed in other varieties of AAVE, “ng” does not reduce but rather the [ŋ] phoneme found in Standard English is sometimes realized as [n] (Rickford 1999: 13, Labov et al. 1968:123-57).

precedent set forth in other work. All occurrences of “and” and “just” were excluded from the corpus to fit with the methodology employed by other researchers investigating consonant cluster reduction (Wolfram 1993:213). No more than three tokens of the same word in the same context were included for any one speaker. After these adjustments were made, 594 tokens remain.

Another point related to the selection of data for study is brought up by Wolfram (1993). He excludes certain types of consonant clusters from study because his earlier research has shown that variation is restricted to only consonant clusters whose constituent consonants share voicing and end in a stop (1993 p 211)²⁰. Wolfram’s methodology is employed by researchers wanting to compare their findings with the extensive work Wolfram has conducted into consonant cluster reduction in varieties of English. However, simply accepting the conclusion that consonant cluster reduction is limited to only clusters with shared voicing ending in stops is troublesome for the systematic study of any variety of English. It is necessary to first ascertain whether or not CAAVE does restrict consonant cluster reduction to certain types of clusters before any conclusion can be made about limiting the study of consonant clusters to only those studied by Wolfram.

Preliminary observation of CAAVE suggests that this variety of English does manifest word final coda reduction in all types of codas regardless of voicing or final consonant type. Therefore, the 594 tokens selected for study following the methodology outlined above, were considered without any further modification.

²⁰ To illustrate this point, consonant clusters like [kt] and [nd] end in stops and are either entirely voiced [nd] or entirely unvoiced [kt], therefore, according to Wolfram, they are eligible for study. In contrast, consonant clusters like [mp] or [ts] are not studied because they do not share voicing or end in a fricative or affricate.

CHAPTER 5: LINGUISTIC STUDY OF WORD FINAL CODA REDUCTION IN CAAVE

Following the methodology outlined in Chapter 4, data was collected and a cross-tabulation of the amount of reduced word final codas by each linguistic factor was computed in StatView. A GoldVarb²¹ analysis was done of the corpus to search for linguistic factors favoring the reduction of word final codas in CAAVE. This data is found in Table 1.

Considering together word final codas ending in a single final consonant with those ending in a consonant cluster, word final codas in CAAVE were reduced 31.5% of the time (187/594).

The GoldVarb analysis revealed that the four linguistic factor groups of “Ending,” “Context,” “Syllable,” and “Parish” significantly favor word final coda reduction. The “Ending” group exhibited the greatest range in GoldVarb weights found among linguistic factors, (.418), followed by “Context” (.311), and “Syllable” (.16). “Parish” also surfaced as a significant linguistic factor group with a range of .147, however, given the low number of speakers per parish included in the study, this result is inconclusive. The linguistic factor groups of “Grammatical” and “Speaker” were not deemed significant by GoldVarb. Each of these linguistic factor groups will be discussed separately in the following sections.

To begin discussion of the linguistic implications of these findings, it is important to begin first by asserting that these results confirm our hypothesis that both word final codas ending in a single final consonant and word final codas ending in a consonant cluster do reduce in CAAVE. Consonant clusters (.802) are more apt to reduce than single final consonants (.384) and the percentages observed for each type of ending support this result with 61.3% (92/150) of consonant clusters reduced in comparison with 21.4% (95/444) of single final consonants.

²¹ GoldVarb is a probabilistic-based, multivariate regression procedure that looks at how different factors contribute to the overall variability of fluctuating forms (Cedergren and Sankoff 1974, quoted from Wolfram 2003 p 289).

Table 1

Word Final Coda Reduction by Linguistic Factor Group in Creole African American
Vernacular English of Old Male Speakers

LINGUISTIC FACTOR GROUP	GoldVarb WEIGHT	WORD FINAL CODA REDUCTION	
		Percentage Reduced	Number of Tokens
OVERALL			
Word Final Codas		31.5%	187/594
ENDING			
Word final coda composed of:			
Single Final Consonant	.384	21.4%	95/444
Consonant Cluster	.802	61.3%	92/150
Range .418			
CONTEXT			
Word final coda occurs before:			
Vowel	.365	18.9%	21/111
Liquid or Glide	.490	24.0%	12/50
Consonant	.476	31.0%	95/306
Pause	.676	46.5%	59/127
Range .311			
SYLLABLE			
Word final coda occurs in:			
Monosyllabic Word	.468	28.5%	136/478
Polysyllabic Word	.628	44.0%	51/116
Range .16			
PARISH			
Parks	.429	27.0%	83/307
Opelousas	.576	36.2%	104/287
Range .147			
GRAMMATICAL			
	Not significant		
Word final coda occurs in:			
Monomorpheme		28.6%	116/406
Bimorpheme		37.8%	71/188
SPEAKER^a			
	Not significant		
J (L1 French)		21.0%	22/105
G (L1 French)		30.8%	32/104
V (L1 French)		31.6%	36/114
C (L1 English)		28.4%	25/88
Z (L1 English)		32.2%	28/87
H (L1 French)		45.8%	44/96

^a The first language of each speaker is given.

Among the 61.3% of reduced consonant clusters, 8% (12/150) were fully deleted while the rest of the consonant clusters were partially reduced, (53%, 80/150). A list of the 12 fully deleted tokens is found in Chart B2 of Appendix B.

Because of the great difference in the amount of reduction observed between consonant clusters and word final single consonants, we will consider them separately in the next two sections to see if they are indeed linguistically conditioned in the same way. A greater body of research exists on consonant clusters hence they will be discussed before word final single consonants.

5.1 Consonant Clusters

From this first analysis, it is impossible to know what types of clusters are actually reduced and to ascertain whether or not variation within consonant clusters in CAAVE is restricted to certain types of clusters as it is in other varieties of English. In order to investigate which types of clusters are reduced, four additional linguistic factors were considered for the consonant cluster portion of the CAAVE database.

To determine if the constraints on consonant cluster reduction observed by Wolfram occur in CAAVE, the voicing and final consonant type of each cluster was addressed. In the new “Voicing” linguistic factor group, consonant clusters made up of consonants with shared voicing were distinguished from consonant clusters made up of consonants with different voicing. In the new “Final Consonant” linguistic factor group, those clusters ending in final stops were differentiated from clusters ending in fricatives. There were ten tokens ending in affricates and they were classified with clusters ending in fricatives.²²

Two other linguistic factor groups were considered to establish whether nasal or liquid consonants favor the reduction of consonant clusters. If a consonant cluster included a liquid or

²² A summary of the details of the 10 affricate tokens in the database is found in Table B3 of Appendix B.

nasal consonant as part of the cluster, it was distinguished from consonant clusters without liquids or nasals.

These four new linguistic factor groups were included in a GoldVarb analysis of only the consonant cluster portion of the database. This GoldVarb analysis searched for significant factors influencing the reduction of consonant clusters. The results of this analysis are located in Table 2. They are paired with the percentage of reduced forms found for each linguistic factor.

Table 2
Consonant Cluster Reduction by Linguistic Factor Group in Creole African American Vernacular English of Old Male Speakers

LINGUISTIC FACTOR GROUP	GoldVarb WEIGHT	CONSONANT CLUSTER REDUCTION Percentage Reduced	Number of Tokens
CONTEXT			
Consonant cluster occurs before:			
Vowel	.234	40.0%	8/20
Liquid or Glide	.742	77.8%	7/9
Consonant	.462	58.6%	51/87
Pause	.690	76.5%	26/34
Range .508			
SYLLABLE			
Consonant cluster occurs in:			
Monosyllabic Word	.464	56.5%	70/124
Polysyllabic Word	.664	84.6%	22/26
Range .200			
SPEAKER			
J (L1 French)	.337	43.5%	10/23
G (L1 French)	.576	65.0%	13/20
V (L1 French)	.252	43.8%	14/32
C (L1 English)	.760	83.3%	20/24
Z (L1 English)	.454	58.3%	14/24
H (L1 French)	.686	77.8%	21/27
Range .508			
GRAMMATICAL			
Consonant cluster occurs in:			
Monomorpheme		56.8%	42/74
Bimorpheme		65.8%	50/76
	Not significant		

Table 2 continued

LINGUISTIC FACTOR GROUP	GoldVarb WEIGHT	CONSONANT CLUSTER REDUCTION	
		Percentage Reduced	Number of Tokens
PARISH	Not significant		
Parks		55.7%	44/79
Opelousas		67.6%	48/71
VOICING	Not significant		
Shared Voicing		64.1%	59/92
Different Voicing		56.9%	33/58
CONSONANT TYPE	Not significant		
Consonant cluster ends in:			
Stop		60.6%	57/94
Fricative		62.5%	35/56
NASAL	Not significant		
Consonant cluster includes:			
Nasal Consonant		56.9%	41/72
No Nasal Consonant		65.4%	51/78
LIQUID	Not significant		
Consonant cluster includes:			
Liquid		67.4%	31/46
No liquid		58.7%	61/104

If the variable reduction of consonant clusters in CAAVE is restricted to certain types of consonant clusters, it would be expected that some of the four new linguistic factor groups would surface as significantly favoring the reduction of consonant clusters. However, among consonant clusters in CAAVE, GoldVarb analysis identifies “Context,” “Syllable” and “Speaker” as the only linguistic factor groups that significantly favor consonant cluster reduction. Except for the inclusion of the “Speaker” group as significant in the consonant cluster GoldVarb analysis and the finding that the “Parish” factor group is not significant in influencing consonant cluster reduction, these results mirror those found for word final codas overall. These findings will be discussed later in section 4.7.

The variable reduction of consonant clusters in CAAVE, consequently, does not appear to be restricted only to clusters ending in a stop and clusters whose constituent consonants share

voicing. Neither linguistic factor exhibits a drastically different rate of reduction when compared to consonant clusters that do not share these traits. Consonant clusters made up of consonants with shared voicing reduce at a rate of 64.1% (59/92) while consonant clusters composed of consonants with different voicing reduce at a rate of 56.9% (33/58). Considering the “Consonant Type,” words ending in a fricative actually reduce at a slightly higher rate (62.5%, 35/56) than words ending in a stop (60.6%, 57/94).²³

The inclusion of a nasal consonant or liquid within a word final consonant cluster also does not seem to greatly affect the cluster’s rate of reduction. Consonant clusters composed of a nasal consonant are reduced in 56.9% (41/72) of cases in comparison with a 65.4% (51/78) level of reduction in clusters without nasal consonants. The inclusion of a liquid within a consonant cluster yields a different result. Reduction in consonant clusters containing liquids occurs at a rate of 67.4% (31/46) while consonant clusters without liquids reduce 58.7% (61/104) of the time.

This additional work into investigating consonant cluster reduction in CAAVE yields interesting conclusions about the language variety. Unlike other studied varieties of English, consonant cluster reduction in CAAVE is not restricted to any particular type of consonant cluster. Regardless of voicing, the type of cluster final consonant, the inclusion of nasals or liquids, or the type of morpheme comprising a consonant cluster, CAAVE reduces consonant clusters over half of the time.

The uniqueness of CAAVE is further illustrated by its comparison with other varieties of English. The consonant cluster portion of the CAAVE database was further manipulated to

²³ To ensure that these figures are not solely dependent upon the grammaticality of the consonant cluster morpheme, the figures for stops and fricatives were cross-tabulated with the “Grammatical” linguistic factor group. Monomorphemes make up 59.6% (34/57) of reduced consonant clusters ending in stops and 22.9% (8/35) of reduced consonant clusters ending in fricatives indicating that grammaticality is not the sole driving force of reduction.

follow Wolfram's 1993 methodology. Therefore, only consonant clusters composed of consonants with shared voicing ending in stops were included. The rate of reduction for this data was computed and cross-tabulated with the "Context" and "Grammatical" linguistic factors to arrive at a data set, which can be compared with existing data in consonant cluster reduction. Table 3 provides the figures for CAAVE with data from seventeen varieties of English.

In the comparison of CAAVE with other varieties of English, the distinctiveness of CAAVE's pattern of consonant cluster reduction is again apparent. Of the seventeen varieties of English, fifteen exhibit a significant range (greater than 38%) in the values found for the highest and lowest level of reduction found among preconsonantal and prevocalic monomorphemes and bimorphemes. Only Native American Puebloan English (range 17%) and Sandy Point Afro-Bahamian English (range 25%) compare with CAAVE (range 17%) in lacking a substantial progression in the reduction of monomorphemic and bimorphemic clusters by context.

These three varieties seem to reduce consonant clusters of both grammatical types at a comparable rate in both preconsonantal and prevocalic contexts. What differentiates CAAVE from Native American Puebloan English and Sandy Point Afro-Bahamian English is its lower overall rate of reduction. Rather than exhibiting a near categorical reduction of consonant clusters as found in these two varieties, CAAVE does not reduce consonant clusters at a rate of greater than 67% in any context. No other variety of English in the table manifests such a low range in the percentage of reduction across linguistic contexts as well as an overall rate of consonant cluster reduction near 61% (92/150).

If one were to find CAAVE's closest counterpart for each linguistic factor considered in Table 3, CAAVE would act the most like Southern Anglo-American Working Class English in its level of preconsonantal monomorphemic reduction (60%:56%), Pre-WWII Lumbee Vernacular English or Appalachian Working Class English in its amount of preconsonantal bimorphemic

Table 3

Comparison of Consonant Cluster Reduction in CAAVE with Selected English Varieties^a

		<u>CONSONANT CLUSTER REDUCTION^b</u>				
		Percentage of Reduced Variants				
CONTEXT		PRECONSONANTAL		PREVOCALIC		
MORPHEME		MONO-	BI-	MONO-	BI-	
LANGUAGE VARIETY	Example: “arrest the” “refused to”	“post in”	“raised on”	Range		
Standard English		66%	36%	23%	3%	63%
Northern Anglo-American Working Class		67%	23%	19%	3%	64%
Southern Anglo-American Working Class		56%	16%	25%	10%	46%
Italian-American Working Class		67%	39%	14%	10%	57%
Pre-WWII Lumbee Vernacular English ^c		65%	63%	22%	9%	56%
Cherokee Sound Anglo-Bahamian English ^d		67%	55%	23%	8%	59%
Appalachian Working Class		74%	67%	17%	5%	69%
Older African American Beech Bottom, NC ^e		79%	72%	37%	14%	65%
Elderly African American Hyde County		82%	86%	52%	29%	57%
Chicano/a Working Class		91%	61%	66%	22%	69%
Puerto Rican Working Class (NYC)		93%	78%	63%	23%	70%
Northern African-American Working Class		97%	76%	72%	34%	63%
Southern African-American Working Class		88%	50%	72%	36%	52%
Creole African American English^f		60%	65%	67%	50%	17%
Vietnamese English		98%	93%	75%	60%	38%
Native American Puebloan English		98%	92%	88%	81%	17%
Sandy Point Afro-Bahamian English		97%	100%	88%	75%	25%

^a The data for the different language varieties comes from Wolfram and Shilling-Estes 1998, Wolfram 2003 and Wolfram, Childs, and Torbert 2000.

^b Only the preconsonantal and prevocalic figures are given. Data for reduction found in other linguistic contexts is not available for many varieties.

^c The percentages for Beech Bottom are computed from the raw figures given in Wolfram 2003.

^d Lumbee Vernacular English is spoken by Lumbee Native American Indians in Robeson County, NC.

^e Cherokee Sound and Sandy Point are isolated areas in the Bahamas. This analysis has extended the term “Bahamian” to the varieties of English spoken there. Wolfram, Childs, and Torbert call the varieties “Cherokee Sound Anglo English” and “Sandy Point Afro English.”

^f The number of tokens reduced in Creole African American English for the above data: 60%(15/25), 65%(17/26), 67%(2/3), 50%(4/8).

reduction (65%:63%, 67%), Chicano/a Working Class English in its level of prevocalic monomorphemic reduction (67%:66%), and Vietnamese English in its percentage of prevocalic bimorphemic reduction (50%:60%).

From these findings, the classification of CAAVE as similar to another English variety's level of consonant cluster reduction is currently not possible. Unlike other varieties of AAVE, CAAVE does not have a high range in the level of reduction observed across contexts paired with a high level (greater than 79%) of monomorphemic preconsonantal consonant cluster reduction. Similarly, CAAVE cannot be simply lumped together with English varieties like Vietnamese English, Puebloan Native American English, Chicano/a Working Class English, and Puerto Rican Working Class English that Wolfram, Childs, and Torbert reason are influenced by language contact situations with heritage languages (2000: 21), because across all contexts by morpheme type, CAAVE's rate of reduction simply does not pattern as found in any of these varieties.

Of course, the low number of tokens, (only 62 when following Wolfram's methodology), limits somewhat the conclusions that can be made from this data. It is possible that the percentages found for CAAVE would change to some degree if a greater number of words following Wolfram's precedent were studied. For now, our findings will have to be content with the primary conclusion that CAAVE appears to show a distinct pattern of consonant cluster reduction. The implications of this finding will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

5.2 Single Final Consonants

The deletion of single final consonants in word final codas is a well-known attribute of some varieties of AAVE, (Rickford 1999, Stockman 1996, Wolfram 1994, Bailey 2001). However, all available information about single final consonant deletion is limited to qualitative observation about the presence of this feature in particular varieties of AAVE. No systematic

quantitative study of the variability of single final consonant deletion in AAVE has ever been analyzed in GoldVarb and been reported on in the literature. Until recently, it was believed that the deletion of single final consonants was unique to varieties of AAVE (Bailey 2001: 76), but recent work by Dubois and Horvath has shown that single final consonants are also deleted in Cajun Vernacular English (2003a:17).

Dubois and Horvath's initial (2003a) study was an analysis of –ed and –s absence, copula is/are variation and the use of “was” and “were” in Cajun Vernacular English or CVE. While conducting this research, they found the deletion of several word final single consonants including the liquids /l/ and /r/. While their findings are not the result of an overt pronunciation analysis of word final codas, their preliminary findings about word final single consonant deletion in Cajun Vernacular English (CVE) are especially pertinent to CAAVE because of the existence of the two varieties in the same geographical area.

In our study of CAAVE thus far, we have found the deletion of single final consonants in 21.4% (95/444) of utterances. In order to ascertain the effects of the type of consonant on the variability of deletion, the dataset for only tokens ending in single final consonants was isolated for further research. An additional linguistic factor group of “Consonant Type” was created to classify the type of consonant in each word final coda. Consonants were labeled as ending in either a stop, fricative, liquid²⁴, or nasal. A GoldVarb analysis was performed to search for significant linguistic factors influencing the deletion of word final single consonants in CAAVE. The results of this analysis are found in Table 4 with the figures for deletion found for each linguistic factor.

²⁴ At this point it is necessary to point out that no words ending in syllabic liquids, e.g, “paddle” were part of the CAAVE corpus. Liquid final syllables were of the type CVL or VL.

Table 4

Word Final Single Consonant Deletion by Linguistic Factor Group in Creole African
American Vernacular English of Old Male Speakers

LINGUISTIC FACTOR GROUP	GoldVarb WEIGHT	Word Final Single Consonant Deletion Percentage Deleted	Number of Tokens
CONTEXT			
Word final coda occurs before:			
Vowel	.382	14.3%	13/91
Liquid or Glide	.386	12.2%	5/41
Consonant	.497	20.1%	44/219
Pause	.669	35.5%	33/93
Range .287			
SYLLABLE			
Consonant cluster occurs in:			
Monosyllabic Word	.467	18.6%	66/355
Polysyllabic Word	.629	32.6%	29/89
Range .162			
SPEAKER			
J (L1 French)	.419	14.5%	12/83
G (L1 French)	.536	22.6%	19/84
V (L1 French)	.595	26.8%	22/82
C (L1 English)	.232	7.8%	5/64
Z (L1 English)	.532	22.6%	14/62
H (L1 French)	.680	33.3%	23/69
Range .448			
GRAMMATICAL			
Not significant			
Word final coda occurs in:			
Monomorpheme		22.4%	74/331
Bimorpheme		18.6%	21/113
PARISH			
Not significant			
Parks		17.0%	39/229
Opelousas		26.0%	56/215
CONSONANT TYPE			
Not significant:			
Fricative		18.8%	19/101
Stop		18.8%	32/170
Nasal		21.1%	19/90
Liquid		30.1%	25/83

According to GoldVarb, “Context,” “Syllable,” and “Speaker” play a significant role in the deletion of word final single consonants. This same distribution of linguistic factor groups

was found significant in the GoldVarb analysis done on only consonant clusters and similar results were found in the analysis of the entire database. Also consistent with the previous GoldVarb analysis of consonant cluster reduction in CAAVE, the linguistic factors of “Grammatical” and “Parish” were not found to significantly favor word final single consonant deletion. The implications of these findings will be discussed in sections 5.3-5.5.

The GoldVarb analysis also indicates that the type of word final single consonant does not significantly affect whether the consonant is deleted. Fricatives, stops, nasals, and liquids were all deleted word finally in CAAVE. Fricatives and stops were both deleted in 18.8% of cases (19/101, 32/170), while nasals were deleted 21.1% (19/90). The fact that nasals were deleted at a higher rate than fricatives and stops supports the observation made by Wolfram that nasal consonants are reduced at a greater level than non-nasal consonants in varieties of AAVE (1994:234). What is interesting about word final single consonant deletion in CAAVE is the fact that liquids were deleted the most frequently (30.1%, 25/83) of all four types. The reduction of liquids in AAVE is mentioned by Stockman (1996), however no statement is made about the frequency of liquid reduction observed in various varieties of AAVE.

In Dubois and Horvath’s work on Cajun Vernacular English, only qualitative data on word final single consonant deletion is available making it impossible to directly compare its figures for reduction with CAAVE. However, it is possible to compare the word final single consonants deleted in these two varieties. In Table 5 the data for CVE is compared with CAAVE.

Both CAAVE and CVE delete a wide range of word final single consonants. The two varieties both delete the liquids /l/ and /r/ and some voiced and unvoiced fricatives and stops and the nasal consonant /n/. It is interesting to find that both CVE and CAAVE delete voiced and unvoiced consonants. Wolfram makes the observation that voiced consonants are reduced more

than unvoiced consonants in varieties of AAVE (1994:234). Unfortunately, the low number of deleted tokens overall, makes any further systematic study of the phonological conditioning of deletion impossible in the present study.

Table 5

A Comparison of the Word Final Single Consonants Deleted in Cajun Vernacular English^a and Creole African American Vernacular English

CONSONANT	WORDS
DELETION FOUND IN BOTH CAAVE AND CVE ^b	
/r/	<i>brother, father, four, hair, more, never, poker, sister, sugar, sure, teacher, there, together, your, together</i> ^b
/l/	<i>awhile, Creole, Mobile, school</i>
/n/	<i>African, cane, children, down, London, Macon, often, one, nine</i>
/t/	<i>bit, but, fight, Lafayette, lot, pat, right, that, late</i>
/k/	<i>back, speak, talk, week, New York</i>
/d/	<i>bad, grade, had, operated, said, food, wide</i>
/z/	<i>because, those, was, Larose</i>
/ʃ/	<i>parish, fish</i>
/m/	<i>game, him, same, seem, them, then, time</i>
/p/	<i>trip</i>
/g/	<i>big</i>
/v/	<i>five, have</i>

^a The CVE data comes from Dubois and Horvath (2003a:17) and from personal correspondence with Dubois 2004. Only the word final single consonant portion of the data is included here.

^b The words taken from the CVE data are in boldface type.

The importance of this comparison between CAAVE and CVE lies in the shared deletion of so many consonants. Word final single consonant deletion is not a common process found in many varieties of English. Until the discovery of single final consonant deletion in CVE, many researchers thought the trait was found in only AAVE varieties. The presence of this variation in both CVE and CAAVE reinforces the relationship held between these two language varieties. They exist in close geographical proximity to each other and it is likely that this trait is indicative of their shared past.

Now that the details of consonant cluster reduction and word final single consonant deletion have been discussed separately, this analysis can return to the overall discussion of the factors favoring reduction in all types of word final codas in CAAVE. The effects of various linguistic factors upon word final coda reduction will be treated below.

5.3 Context

As illustrated in all three of the GoldVarb analyses, the linguistic factor group of “Context” stands out as a significant linguistic factor favoring the reduction of word final codas. Among consonant clusters, occurring before a liquid or glide most greatly favors reduction (.742). For word final single consonants, occurring before a pause is the most heavily weighted linguistic factor (.669) contributing to reduction. In both types of word final codas, prevocalic context is the least significant factor (cluster .382, single .234).

Research in word final coda reduction usually limits its findings to preconsonantal and prevocalic contexts. Some research exists for the prepausal reduction of consonant clusters ending in stops with shared voicing, however, no recent research exists for other types of word final codas in prepausal, preliquid or preglide contexts. It would be interesting to know how other varieties of English compare with CAAVE in the reduction of all types of word final codas in prepausal, preliquid and preglide contexts²⁵.

Stockman makes the observation that in AAVE, word final single consonants and consonant clusters reduce more often when preceding consonants than when preceding vowels (1996:123). As we have seen in the data organized following Wolfram’s 1993 methodology and in the GoldVarb results, this generalization cannot be uniformly made for CAAVE.

²⁵ Early variationist research in consonant cluster reduction by Wolfram (1969), Labov et al. (1968), and Fasold (1972) disputed constraints on the types of consonant clusters, which can be reduced in various contexts. The implications of their findings are too lengthy to be discussed here. This research, therefore, must be content with treating only the general effect of context on the reduction of word final codas in AAVE.

Word final codas are most heavily favored to reduce in prepausal and preliquid/preglide contexts. GoldVarb results indicate that the difference found between preconsonantal and prevocalic contexts is not very substantial in comparison with the findings for the other two linguistic contexts. The range in weights found between preconsonantal and prevocalic contexts for overall word final coda reduction was only .111 (18.9%: 31.0%) while the range found between prevocalic and prepausal contexts was .311 (18.9%: 46.5%).

As illustrated in Table 3 in the case of consonant clusters whose constituent consonants share voicing and end in a stop, prevocalic monomorphemic consonant clusters actually reduce at a slightly higher rate (67%) than both monomorphemic (60%) and bimorphemic (65%) consonant clusters occurring before a consonant. To make the overall generalization, therefore, that word final codas reduce more before vowels than before consonants in CAAVE is inaccurate.

5.4 Syllable

As found for the linguistic factor group of “Context,” “Syllable” also influences the reduction of word final codas. Overall, polysyllabic words are more likely to be reduced than monosyllabic words. This decision to consider the number of syllables as a factor in the study of CAAVE was made based upon the general observation by Ladofeged (2001:99) that the length of the word affects its likelihood of reduction. Fasold, studied in detail the effect of the number of syllables on consonant cluster reduction in his work “Tense Marking in Black English,” (1972). His results link the importance of the number of syllables in a word to its stress pattern (1972:74). Monosyllabic words are necessarily stressed. Polysyllabic words, on the other hand, can have tonic stress on the word final syllable, but they can have stress on other syllables as well. Fasold found that consonant cluster reduction occurred in 70% of unstressed syllables and only 41.6% of stressed syllables (1972:74). By not overtly considering stress in the design of the

CAAVE corpus, the “Syllable” linguistic factor group includes both stressed and unstressed syllables. A higher rate of polysyllabic tokens are reduced because many are likely to part of unstressed syllables that are more apt to reduce.

To determine the level of unstressed syllables that make up the Polysyllabic linguistic factor, the individual polysyllabic tokens were reevaluated and classified according to whether their word final codas were made up of stressed syllables or unstressed syllables. The results overwhelmingly show that the polysyllabic linguistic factor is made up of primarily word final codas that are unstressed. Unstressed syllables make up 88.8% (103/116) of polysyllabic word final codas. In effect, the “Syllable” linguistic factor group truly illustrates the difference between word final coda reduction in stressed versus unstressed syllables. Unstressed syllables are more apt to reduce. This result for CAAVE coincides with the findings of Fasold in his study of Black English. When the reduction rate of stressed versus non-stressed syllables is compared across the entire database, 28.5% (140/491) of stressed syllables reduce and 92.2% (47/103) of unstressed syllables reduce in CAAVE. The “Syllable” linguistic factor group is directly linked to stress.

5.5 Grammatical

In studies of consonant cluster reduction in varieties of AAVE, the type of word in which a word final consonant cluster occurs is normally found to influence its likelihood of reduction. Wolfram illustrates the variable constraint on consonant cluster reduction by stating that monomorphemic clusters reduce more than bimorphemic clusters, e.g. “mist” > “missed” in AAVE (Wolfram 1994: 234). No specific variable constraint is recognized for the deletion of word final single consonants.

Because of the well-known variable constraint on the reduction of consonant clusters by type of morpheme in other varieties of AAVE, it was expected that a similar pattern would be

found among consonant clusters in CAAVE. When the three GoldVarb analyses were performed on the CAAVE data, however, the linguistic factor group of “Grammatical” failed to surface as a significant factor influencing reduction in any of the three runs.

To determine the possible associations of the type of morpheme with the type of word final coda, the overall word final coda data was recoded for another GoldVarb analysis. A new linguistic factor group was created to test the combined linguistic factors of “Ending” type and “Grammatical” morpheme type. Four linguistic factors were formed: monomorphemic clusters, bimorphemic clusters, monomorphemic word final single consonants and bimorphemic word final single consonants. A GoldVarb analysis of this data was performed to search for linguistic factors favoring the reduction of word final codas. These results are paired with the percentage of reduction found for each linguistic factor in Table 6.

Table 6

Word Final Coda Reduction by Linguistic Factor Group in Creole African American Vernacular English of Old Male Speakers

LINGUISTIC FACTOR GROUP	GoldVarb WEIGHT	WORD FINAL CODA REDUCTION	
		Percentage Reduced	Number of Tokens
GRAMMATICAL AND ENDING TYPE COMBINED			
Bimorphemic Cluster	.847	65.8%	50/76
Monomorphemic Cluster	.752	56.8%	42/72
Bimorphemic Word Final Single	.394	18.6%	21/113
Monomorphemic Word Final Single	.380	22.4%	74/331
Range	.467		

From this fourth GoldVarb analysis, we find again that ending continues to play the most prominent role in influencing the reduction of word final codas. Bimorphemic clusters are favored to reduce only .095 more than monomorphemic clusters (.847:.752) and bimorphemic word final single consonants are favored to reduce only .014 more than bimorphemic word final single consonants (.394:.380). From such a small difference in the weights found for each type

of morpheme, GoldVarb does not show a significant distinction between monomorphemes and bimorphemes in CAAVE.

5.6 Parish and Speaker

Finally, this analysis reaches the discussion of individual speakers and the discussion of the differences between Opelousas and Parks. These two linguistic factor groups are treated together because the various GoldVarb analyses found them to vary in their significance in influencing word final coda reduction. In the consideration of both word final codas and consonant clusters together, parish surfaces as a significant factor influencing word final coda reduction. Speakers from Opelousas are more apt to reduce word final codas (.581, 36.2%) than speakers from Parks (.424, 27.0%). When consonant clusters and word final codas are considered separately, individual speakers are identified as more likely to reduce specific types of word final codas. No parish distinction is found to be significant.

Because the corpus consists of only six speakers, idiolectal differences between speakers can have a significant effect on the representation of the overall data. The finding overall that Opelousas reduces word final codas more than Parks is just as much a reflection on the three individual speakers from Opelousas as it is a statement about the speech of that particular parish. Since parish does not consistently surface as a significant factor favoring reduction in all GoldVarb analyses, it could be that the parish result is an artificial one based on the patterns of linguistic usage by individual speakers and reach the conclusion that the parish results are inconclusive.²⁶

The first theory behind the individual speaker differences lies in the first language acquired by the speakers. Do all the L1 French speakers speak differently than the L1 English

²⁶ Surveying additional speakers from each locale would be desirable for pursuing further the effect of locality on the word final coda reduction.

speakers? The answer seems to be “no”. For the ease of comparison the figures from Table 2 and Table 4 for individual speakers are repeated below in Table 7.

Table 7
Consonant Cluster Reduction and Word Final Single Consonant Deletion by Speaker

SPEAKER	Single Final Consonant Deletion			Consonant Cluster Reduction		
	WEIGHT	% Deleted	Number	WEIGHT	% Reduced	Number
Parks						
J (L1 French)	.419	14.5%	12/83	.337	43.5%	10/23
V (L1 French)	.595	26.8%	22/82	.252	43.8%	14/32
C (L1 English)	.232	7.8%	5/64	.760	83.3%	20/24
Opelousas						
G (L1 French)	.536	22.6%	19/84	.576	65.0%	13/20
H (L1 French)	.680	33.3%	23/69	.686	77.8%	21/27
Z (L1 English)	.532	22.6%	14/62	.454	58.3%	14/24

Individual speakers do stand out as having unique variation patterns, however they fail to fall into any category that can easily explain their unique levels of variation. Speaker C stands out from everyone else manifesting the highest rate of consonant cluster reduction (83.3%, 20/24) and the lowest rate of word final single consonant deletion (7.8%, 5/64), yet as an L1 English speaker, his figures are very different from the other L1 English speaker Z. Speaker Z does not stand out at all in his levels of variable word final coda reduction. His figures fall right in the middle of the rates of reduction found for the other speakers.

Among the L1 French speakers, speaker H stands out as having a high level of both consonant cluster reduction (77.8%, 21/27) and word final single consonant deletion (33.3%, 23/69), yet his results do not closely approximate those found for any of the other L1 French speakers or for other speakers from Parks. From this data, the parish and first language of the speaker do not seem to form any particular pattern of reduction, which would identify these linguistic factors as significantly influencing word final coda reduction.

When the individual speakers' backgrounds are considered, the lack of any consistent first language conditioning towards a particular pattern of reduction also suggests that first language interference is not the source of this feature in CAAVE. All of the speakers spent the vast majority of their lives speaking in both English and French. The circumstances surrounding their acquisition of a second language vary, but all members of the corpus had full command of both languages by the time they were teenagers.

This fact is not surprising considering both French and English were widely used among members of the Creole African American community well before the speakers in this study were born. Families were composed of both French-speaking and English-speaking members and control of both languages was the norm rather than the exception. Four out of the six speakers in the corpus grew up speaking predominantly one language with their siblings while parents or grandparents regularly spoke another language at home.²⁷ The omnipresence of both languages supports the lack of any real difference in the linguistic usage of L1 French speakers in comparison with L1 English speakers. The L1 French speakers acquired the same variety of English as their peers.

²⁷ For more information on the linguistic backgrounds of these men, a short biographical sketch is provided for each speaker in Appendix C.

CHAPTER 6: INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

After considering the linguistic factors influencing word final coda reduction in CAAVE, this analysis arrives at some interesting results about the linguistic properties of CAAVE. Properties of CAAVE's variable reduction of word final codas lend support to the hypothesis that among dialects of English spoken by African Americans, CAAVE is a distinct variety of English. What consequences do these findings have on efforts to provide an explanation for the genesis of CAAVE? In addition, the similarities found between single final consonant deletion in CVE and CAAVE also question the relationship of these two dialects over time.

The initial attribute of CAAVE, which sets the dialect apart from other varieties of English, is its widespread reduction of consonant clusters. Unlike other AAVE varieties, no constraints on voicing or the type of consonants that may constitute a consonant cluster are found to limit their reduction in CAAVE. Where in other varieties of AAVE there are strict limits on the types of consonant clusters that may reduce, in CAAVE there are practically none with voicing, the presence of nasal consonants, liquids and fricatives failing to significantly influence the variety's rate of consonant cluster reduction. Similarly, CAAVE fails to make a significant distinction in its rates of reduction among monomorphemes and bimorphemes.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that in addition to its unique type of consonant cluster reduction and the lack of substantial grammatical constraints on consonant cluster reduction, CAAVE shows a very unique pattern of consonant cluster reduction across linguistic contexts in comparison with other varieties of English.

The finding that CAAVE acts in some situations like varieties of English spoken by whites, in other cases like dialects of English likely to be influenced by heritage language contact situations, and yet in other contexts like varieties of English spoken by people of African

descent, points to the conclusion that CAAVE cannot be easily explained by the descriptions used to characterize other varieties of English.

The most popular theory likely to be cast upon the genesis of CAAVE attributes the unique properties of the English variety to heritage language contact. Because speakers of CAAVE are also speakers of French and have been so for a long period of time, CAAVE's unusual pattern of consonant cluster reduction is hypothesized to be the result of influence upon the variety from French. While certainly there would be some degree of language contact influence upon CAAVE from French, however, contact from French would not be a sufficient explanation for all of the word final coda reduction in CAAVE.

Creole African American communities were not founded by monolingual French speakers struggling to survive in a predominately English-speaking society. Instead, these communities were founded by a population of both French speakers and English speakers who lived among each other, married each other and had children who in turn became both French speakers and English speakers. Prior to the Great Depression, neither their French nor their English apparently stood out as a prestige variety, that is, neither the language spoken in the workplace, nor the sole language used within the family unit had a prestige value whatsoever. Whether French or English was used in these communities depended upon the circumstances surrounding a particular conversation; there does not appear to be any evidence for the unilateral use of one language in any specific social situation. There were families who spoke mainly English at home living not far from families who spoke mainly French at home. In addition, there were many families who spoke both languages within the family environment.

A great number of Creole African Americans therefore acquired English as their first language and this pattern has been the case throughout the existence of these communities in South Louisiana. The distinctiveness of CAAVE is forged, consequently, from the contact of

native English speakers with each other and with the surrounding community. CAAVE does not have the attributes of a second language variety. It is not primarily the result, therefore, of second language learners piecing together English on top of the phonological and grammatical system of their first language. CAAVE is not a second language variety of English, however, it long been acquired by some people as a second language.

The hypothesis is, therefore, that consonant cluster reduction and single final consonant deletion were properties of the English varieties first brought to the prairie parishes. The fact that French is a predominately CV language (Battye et al. 1992: 56-57) may have just reinforced the reduction of word final codas among second language learners acquiring the dialect. What were, therefore, the varieties of English spoken by the founders of Creole African American communities like?

Because of the rarity of word final single consonant deletion among dialects of English spoken by whites in the United States, this feature's presence in the prairie parishes of Louisiana points to the existence of this feature in the English spoken by African Americans who first came to the area as slaves from other parts of the Southern United States. The Anglophone American-born slaves, who were brought to the prairie parishes, spoke dialects of English that were also likely precursors to varieties of AAVE spoken elsewhere in the United States. This older variety of American English was then likely shaped in different ways in different geographical areas by factors specific to the various speech communities.²⁸

In CAAVE, as Dubois and Horvath argue, this older variety of American English spoken by African Americans was likely influenced by English-speaking migrant settlers from other

²⁸ It is not that one uniform variety of older American English was spoken by all African Americans in earlier times, but rather that varieties of English sharing common characteristics were spoken.

parts of the South and Irish and Scottish immigrants (Dubois and Horvath 2003b). Over time, the isolation of these Creole African American communities preserved their dialectal features.

As discussed before, the variable deletion of word final single consonants has also been found in CVE. The fact that word final single consonant deletion is a well-known attribute of varieties of AAVE, illustrates the possibility that the presence of this trait in CAAVE influenced its presence in CVE. In Dubois and Horvath's work on the comparison of CVE and CAAVE, they make the statement that, "there is no difference, Cajun and Creole old men spoke the same vernacular," the only difference between the two dialects consists of a social distinction based upon race (Dubois and Horvath 2003c:13).

It is also likely that the English learned by Cajuns in the prairie parishes is very similar to the variety spoken by their Creole African American neighbors. The Creole African American communities have been a large population of English speakers living in the same rural area as Cajuns. They constituted a large bilingual English and French-speaking contingent of the population while the Cajun community remained a predominately French-speaking group. When Cajuns later learned English, what type of English did they to learn? In these isolated rural areas, before the advent of compulsory schooling or the dissemination of mass media, they would have likely picked up the variety of English spoken by their bilingual black neighbors.

The unearthing of word final coda reduction in CVE lends support within Dubois and Horvath's analysis for the possibility that CVE is qualitatively different from other Southern English dialects. Its single final consonant deletion is evidence of an early phonological rule that allowed for the deletion of word final consonants regardless of their morphosyntactic contexts (2003a:16-17). In CAAVE, similar results have been found. All word final codas are reduced regardless of the makeup of their constituent parts, in a variety of contexts. It would be

interesting to see quantitative data of how closely CVE compares to CAAVE for this linguistic variable.

Thus, from the limited finding that in CVE word final single consonant deletion operates under phonological and not morphosyntactic rules and the parallel finding that CAAVE also reduces word final codas without significant morphosyntactic conditioning, there is evidence to support the hypothesis that within the larger linguistic community of the prairie parishes of Louisiana, phonological conditioning has taken the predominant role in dictating the realization of word final codas in these language varieties. Grammatical constraints on word final coda reduction found in many other varieties of English do not seem to apply to CAAVE and CVE.

Over time, it is likely that these grammatical constraints on the phonological reduction of inflectional word final morphemes waned. What remained were certain phonological constraints that limited the reduction of word final codas without giving preference to the type of morphological information they encoded. The complexity of a word final coda in CAAVE factors little in its probability of reduction. Instead, the absence of a following phonological segment most greatly influences reduction. When a word occurs before a pause in CAAVE, it is most favored to reduce. Therefore, the importance of pronouncing word final phonemes to convey morphological information does not seem to be a priority in CAAVE.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

Creole African American Vernacular English is a distinct variety of American English. It developed within communities of former black slaves and free people of color who came together after the Civil War in the prairie parishes of Louisiana. These groups were composed of both native French speakers and native English speakers and over time they eventually united to form bilingual Creole African American communities.

It is of course impossible to travel back in time to study the speech of the founding population of English speakers from these communities, however, we can theorize that it included features such as consonant cluster reduction and word final single consonant deletion that are found in the variety today. The first English speakers of the prairie parishes were made up of former slaves born in other parts of the American South and their descendents. These people shared in speaking some of the varieties of English that evolved to form dialects of AAVE spoken elsewhere in the United States. The presence of these same features of consonant cluster reduction and word final single consonant deletion in varieties of AAVE illustrates the shared ancestry CAAVE shares with its fellow African American varieties of English. From these early American English varieties spoken by African Americans, many distinct dialects of English were formed. The present-day differences found in these dialects may be due in part to their unique histories to the present.

In the case of CAAVE, this early variety of American English brought to Louisiana by black slaves was likely influenced by a vast array of other English dialects. The presence of Irish and Scottish settlers in the prairie parishes has been cited as a possible source for some other dialectal features found in CAAVE and it is certainly possible that they had a hand in making CAAVE what it is today. In addition, the fact that Creole African Americans remained a bilingual French and English-speaking group of people and that the dialect was picked up by

many second language learners of English may have also had a role in reinforcing some of the more dialectal features already present in the English dialect.

In the case of word final coda reduction, CAAVE allows for consonant cluster reduction in types of clusters not normally reduced in other varieties of English. CAAVE does not distinguish between monomorphemes and bimorphemes in its rate of reduction for consonant clusters. These findings have led this analysis to conclude that CAAVE has reduced the grammatical constraints on word final coda reduction, normally found in other varieties of English, in favor of a general phonological constraint on word final coda reduction that restricts most heavily word final coda reduction in contexts directly preceding a vowel.

A possible explanation for these unique features in CAAVE is found in long period of isolation that these communities experienced after the Civil War. During this time, Creole African Americans came in little or no contact with English speakers from outside of the general geographical area. They had no reason to question the uniqueness of their speech. As a result, dialectal features in their variety of English were allowed to remain. At the same time, the use of some dialectal features may have actually expanded. CAAVE may have experienced a lack of stimuli from other English varieties; however, CAAVE was in constant contact with the French language. The common bilingualism and widespread use of both languages by many people may have attributed over time to the intensification of existing dialectal features.

The consonant cluster reduction and word final single consonant deletion found in CAAVE is distinctively different from the type of reduction found in varieties of AAVE spoken elsewhere in the United States. CAAVE has extended the reduction of word final codas into linguistic contexts where it is not found in other varieties. In addition, CAAVE linguistically conditions word final coda reduction in an apparently different way than other varieties of English. The exception to this statement is found in Cajun Vernacular English's similar

phonological conditioning of word final coda reduction. From the shared presence of word final single consonant deletion and the apparent lack of grammatical constraints on word final coda reduction, we conclude that CAAVE and Cajun Vernacular English are really the same dialect of English. The only distinction between the varieties in the past has been motivated by differences in the socio-ethnic composition of the two groups.

Future research into CAAVE is necessary. CAAVE provides linguistic researchers with a unique opportunity to study an early variety of African American Vernacular English, which has also been the product of extended contact with another language. The dialect's unique history could lead to better linguistic theories about the creation of AAVE dialects and the effect of bilingualism on language varieties over time.

The Creole African American Vernacular English spoken by Frenchy during World War II is not the product of a second language-learning environment. Frenchy spoke the way that he did because of his dialects' unique journey through time, its extensive contact with the French language and its origins in the same dialect of early American English used to form so many other varieties of AAVE.

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Chart A2

Revised Data Collection Chart for Coding Word Final Coda Reduction in CAAVE

Name:		Parish:			Researcher: <i>Rachel Mentz</i>		
Token	Word	Variable Y/N	Ending S/K/H	Context V/C/P/L	Syllable M/B	Grammatical G/X	Qualitative Notes
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
13							
14							
15							
16							
17							
18							
19							
20							
21							
22							
23							
24							
25							

Legend:
Variable: Y= Yes for deletion, N= No deletion
Ending: S= Single Final Consonant, K= Consonant Cluster, H= Part of Consonant Cluster deleted
Context: V= word followed by a vowel, C= word followed by a consonant,
P=word followed by pause, L= word followed by liquid or glide
Syllable: M=Monosyllabic, B= Bisyllabic
Grammatical: G= Grammaticalized morpheme, X=Morpheme part of root or stem of word

APPENDIX B: PHONOLOGICAL INFORMATION

Table B1

Summary of the Phonemic Realizations Observed in Cases of Word Final Coda Reduction in CAAVE^a

WORD	PHONEMIC REALIZATION OF WORD FINAL CODA
airborne	/bɔ̃/
ain't	/eɪn/
African	/æfrɪk/
arrest	/rɛs/
awhile	/wɑɪ/
back	/bæk/
bald	/bɑl/
big	/bɪ/
bit	/bɪ/
bleed	/bli/
brother	/ðə/
boiled	/bɔɪl/
but	/bʌ/
cards	/kɑrz/
cane	/keɪ/
children	/rə/
civilians	/lɪjɛ/
couldn't	/kʊdn/
cousins	/zɪn/
Creole	/kriɔ/
didn't	/dɪdn/
don't	/dɔ̃/
down	/dɔ̃/
fact	/fæk/
father	/ðə/
fields	/fɪl/
fifth	/fɪf/
fight	/faɪ/
first	/fɪrs/
five	/faɪ/
fixed	/fɪks/
friends	/frɛnd/
front	/frʌn/
four	/fɔ/

^a Vowel length is not represented in these transcriptions because vocal quality was not the focus of our data collection. Please note that in many cases, vowels were elongated.

Table B1 continued

WORD	PHONEMIC REALIZATION OF WORD FINAL CODA
game	/geɪ/
grade	/greɪ/
hand	/hænd/
have	/hæv/
him	/hɪ/
Lafayette	/jɛ/
land	/lænd/
last	/læst/
language	/læŋ/
learned	/lɜrn/
lost	/lɒst/
London	/dɒ/
Macon	/kə/
more	/mɔ ^ə /
never	/və/
next	/nekst/
north	/nɔ:θ/
offered	/fə/
often	/tɪ/
ones	/wʌn/
parades	/reɪd/
parents	/rɛ/
parish	/rɪ/
part	/pɑ:θ/
pat	/pæt/
post	/pəʊst/
refused	/fju:zd/
ride	/raɪd/
right	/raɪt/
round	/raʊnd/
saint	/seɪnt/
same	/seɪm/
seems	/si:m/
schools	/sku:l/
speak	/spi:k/
sugar	/gə/
superintendent	/də/
talk	/tɔ:k/
teacher	/tʃi:tʃə/
that's	/ðæt/
those	/ðəʊ/
there	/ðɛ/

Table B1 continued

WORD	PHONEMIC REALIZATION OF WORD FINAL CODA
third	/θɪr/
think	/θɛ̃/
time	/tɑ̃/
times	/tɑ̃m/
tickets	/kɪt/
trip	/trɪ/
them	/ðɛ/
together	/ðə/
told	/tɔl/
tonsils	/sɪ/
understand	/stæ̃/
was	/wʌ/
wasn't	/wʌzn/
world	/wɜl/
wouldn't	/wʊdn/
week	/wi/
went	/wɛn/

Table B2

List of Words Ending in Consonant Clusters that Fully Delete^a

cousins
don't
language
parents
saint
superintendent
that's
think
tonsils
understand

^aWords fully reduced to a final syllable structure of CV. In word final consonant clusters composed of nasal consonants, some nasalization of the word final coda vowel was observed.

Table B3

Phonemic Realization of Reduced Consonant Clusters Ending in Affricates in CAAVE

WORD	PHONEMIC REALIZATION	NUMBER REDUCED
“French”	/frɛntʃ/	0/5
“scratch”	/skraet/	2/2
“catch”	/kaet/	1/1
“language”	/lɑŋwi:/, /lɑŋwɪdʒ/	1/2

APPENDIX C: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FOR EACH SPEAKER

Speaker C

Speaker C was born in 1916. He has lived most of his life in Parks, Louisiana but spent five to six years in the military, living in various places in the United States. He comes from a family of seven children and his parents spoke English with the children at home. A grandfather of speaker C was believed to have been from Virginia; his other grandparents were from the area. Speaker C married a local-born woman. Her parents did not speak but a few words of English, however, his wife speaks English fluently. They raised their children in English, yet both speaker C and his wife regularly spoke French with his wife's side of the family and they still speak Creole French with people in town.

Speaker G

Speaker G was born in 1929 and is from Opelousas, Louisiana. He was born into a French-speaking family descended from Creoles of Color. He remarks that it was difficult for him in school because he arrived on the first day not speaking a word of English and most of the other children knew the language already. He learned English and by the time he had children, he and his wife spoke both English and Creole French at home. They had eight children and raised their older children using both languages however their younger children grew up speaking predominately English.

Speaker H

Speaker H was born in 1916 and has lived his entire life in the area around Opelousas, Louisiana. His mother spoke only English and was from Lafayette. His father was from Scott, Louisiana and spoke only French. Because his parents only ever spoke their native languages at home, speaker H always remembers being able to speak both English and French; although, he thinks that he probably spoke French first because his grandmother spoke only French and took

care of him when he was a small child. Speaker H married a monolingual English-speaker and they raised their daughter in English. He has worked his entire life in agriculture.

Speaker J

Speaker J was born in 1915 in Parks, Louisiana. He spent some time in the military overseas during World War II, but returned after the war to Parks and has worked his entire life as a carpenter. Speaker J grew up speaking French but learned English while very young from his grandfather on his father's side. His father's side of the family spoke both English and French, however, on his mother's side, his relatives spoke only French. His maternal great-grandfather was from France.

Speaker V

Speaker V was born in 1926 and has lived most of his life in the area around Parks. Speaker V's parents spoke Creole French and he grew up speaking the language. Many people in the community spoke English and he learned it from being around people who were speaking it. In school, speaker V notes that both French and English were spoken by the schoolchildren. It was during recess that French was often spoken while English was spoken in the classroom with the teacher. Speaker V married a woman who spoke both French and English and they did not have any children. He worked his entire life in the construction trade.

Speaker Z

Speaker Z was born in 1925 in the area around Opelousas, Louisiana. He has lived there for most of his life but spent a few years living in Texas. Speaker Z's father grew up speaking English and only learned French after he married speaker Z's mother. The family spoke predominately English at home, but speaker Z's parents occasionally used French. When speaker Z was still in elementary school, the family moved to the Mallet area and speaker Z learned to speak Creole French fluently in order to get along with the other children in the area.

Speaker Z married a woman from a predominately French-speaking town. However, they raised their children in English.

VITA

Rachel Mentz is a native of Romeo, Michigan, and has spent the last two years living in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, while pursuing her Master of Arts degree in French studies from Louisiana State University. Rachel graduated from Wayne State University in 2002 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in French. She hopes to pursue doctoral studies in linguistics.