Dialect Identity in a Tri-Ethnic Context: The Case of Lumbee American Indian English

Walt Wolfram
North Carolina State University

and

Clare Dannenberg
Virginia Polytechnical University and State University

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Contact:
Walt Wolfram
Box 8105 Department of English
North Carolina State University
Raleigh, North Carolina 27695-8105
USA

wolfram@social.chass.ncsu.edu

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Abstract*

This study examines the development of a Native-American Indian variety of English in the context of a rural community in the American South where European Americans, African Americans, and Native-American Indians have lived together for a couple of centuries now. The Lumbee Native-American Indians, the largest Native-American group east of the Mississippi River and the largest group in the United States without reservation land, lost their ancestral language relatively early in their contact with outside groups, but they have carved out a unique English dialect niche which now distinguishes them from cohort European-American and African-American vernaculars. Processes of selective accommodation, differential language change, and language innovation have operated to develop this distinct ethnic variety, while their cultural isolation and sense of "otherness" in a bi-polar racial setting have served to maintain its ethnic marking.

1. Introduction

Although social dialectology seems preoccupied with ethnic varieties of English, descriptive attention typically is restricted to bi-ethnic situations in which one ethnic group is compared with an external norm or single cohort variety. Thus, the description of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), by far the most researched ethnic variety in the world (Schneider 1996), is typically reduced to a comparison with Standard American English (Labov 1972; Fasold and Wolfram 1970) or a unitary contact vernacular variety such as Southern European-American Vernacular English (e.g. Wolfram 1974; Fasold 1981; Wolfram, Thomas, and Green forthcoming; Bailey forthcoming). Meanwhile, there exist numerous sociolinguistic situations that involve more than two primary ethnic groups.

One of the most intriguing but largely neglected multiethnic contact situations in the United States concerns Native-American Indians. Since the European invasion of America, many Native Americans have been exposed to a range of European language groups speaking a variety of languages, as well as different dialects of these languages (Leap 1993; Silverstein 1996).[1] For example, in the Southwest United States, Native Americans have been involved in protracted contact situations involving both Spanish-speaking and English-speaking contact groups, leading to selective influence from these respective language sources in the formative English varieties (Wolfram 1980; Leap 1977, 1993). With the exception of Gilbert (1986), however, the development of Native-American English has not been examined in terms of a tri-ethnic contact situation involving European Americans and African Americans.

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[1] There were, of course, also many situations involving contact among different Native-American language groups apart from, or intersecting with, contact with European groups (Silverstein 1996), but we will not consider this intra-Native American contact situation since our focus here is on the formative English dialect used by the Lumbees.

The sociolinguistic situation described here considers the unique case of a longstanding, relatively insular tri-ethnic contact situation involving the Lumbee Native-American Indians in Robeson County, North Carolina. In a number of sociohistorical and sociolinguistic respects, the Lumbee situation is unusual, but it is also indicative of the kinds of principles that guide the configuration of ethnolinguistic identity in a tri-ethnic context. There are a number of fundamental questions about the construction of dialect identity that can be addressed in a study of this type. How does a group struggling to maintain its cultural distinctiveness create and maintain symbolic linguistic identity when it has lost its ancestral language roots? Can a dialect of the replacement language develop to fill the emblematic void of a lost ancestral language? If so, how is this variety shaped so that it is distinct from the competing contact varieties of English? We propose to address these questions by examining the unusual yet symptomatic case of the Lumbee Indians of North Carolina.[2]

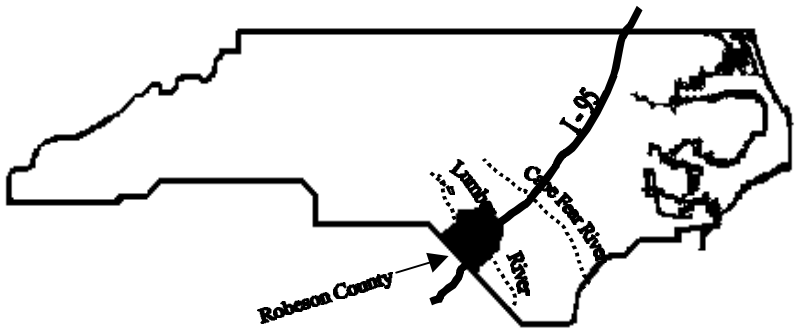
2. The Lumbee Indians

Who are the Lumbee Indians, where did they come from, and how have they developed over the centuries? These are questions that have baffled both lay people and Amerindian scholars alike. Few people outside of the Carolinas have even heard of the Lumbee Indians, and they have been virtually ignored in the historical and contemporary documentation of Native-American tribes. For example, the comprehensive *Handbook of North American Indians* (Goddard 1996) makes no mention of them at all, and the Federal Government of the United States has not granted them full, formal tribal status. Instead, they have been recognized by the federal government as a Native American group "without entitlements". This peculiar recognition status underscores their indeterminate position as a Native-American group, but it also has severe economic consequences. In effect, this status means that they do not qualify for the federal benefits that are allocated to other Native-American groups, such as financial subsidies of various types and the allocation of reservation land. It also has sociopolitical consequences (Side 1974), since it often places them in the position of "having to prove" themselves as an authentic Indian tribe, both to external non-Native American groups and other Native-American groups (Blu 1977, 1979). Nonetheless, the Lumbees constitute the largest group of Native Americans east of the Mississippi River and the largest non-reservation group of Native- American Indians in the United States (Dial 1993).

Robeson County, North Carolina, is home to over 40,000 Lumbees, with smaller numbers living in urban areas of the Eastern United States such as Greensboro and Raleigh in North Carolina, as well as in Baltimore, Maryland. The location of Robeson County in Southeastern North Carolina is given in figure 1. The map also shows Route 95, the largest major north-south interstate highway on the East Coast, which runs through the county. The centers of the Lumbee population, the towns of Pembroke (1990 census 2,241) and Prospect, are located approximately 10 miles west of the highway, but smaller enclaves of Lumbees are located throughout the county. The map also indicates the Lumber River, along which the Lumbee have lived for some time, and the Cape Fear River, an important early navigational route in terms of the contact situation between Europeans and Native Americans in the 1600 and 1700s.

[2] Although there is current dispute over the use of the term "Indian" versus "Native American", we have opted to follow the common labeling practice found among most Lumbees, who use the term "Lumbee Indians" in self-reference.

Figure 1. Location of Robeson County, North Carolina



Along with the Lumbee, Robeson County is home to significant populations of European Americans and African Americans; Native Americans comprise approximately 40 percent of the Robeson County population, European Americans 35 percent, and African Americans 25 percent. The Lumbee presence in the county is quite different from that of other Native Americans in the Eastern United States, who typically constitute a small minority of the regional population. For example, in Graham County, the home of the Snowbird Eastern Cherokees in Western North Carolina, Native Americans represent less than 5 percent of the population (Anderson 1998). The significant population of Lumbees in Robeson County in relation to the other ethnic groups is a significant factor in considering language variation, since the monoethnic demographics of particular locales may serve to foster the maintenance of language distinctiveness. The town of Pembroke is over 85 percent Lumbee and the settlement of Prospect is an exclusive Lumbee settlement which is over 95 percent Lumbee (Dannenberg and Wolfram 1998).

The three ethnic groups in Robeson County are relatively divided, as *de facto* segregation continues to be reflected in many facets of Robeson County community life (Miller 1996). Although the exclusive Indian schools closed in the 1950s, and the school system has been legally integrated since the early 1970s, some community-based schools are comprised almost exclusively of one ethnicity. Even in the schools that reflect the county's ethnic diversity, however, distinctions are still made according to ethnic status. For instance, one interviewee reported (Miller 1996) that in his integrated high school, three presidents of the student body and three homecoming queens were elected—one for each ethnicity. The three ethnic groups think of themselves as separate, and most residents live their lives accordingly.

Ethnic boundaries seem relatively fixed though not impenetrable, as evidenced by recent changes in political representation. European Americans have held a majority of the political offices in the county historically, but this is shifting, as more Lumbees now hold political office. The office of County Sheriff is now filled by a Lumbee Indian--a Robeson County first long thought to be unattainable. Economically, the county is shifting from an agricultural to a factory employment base, as several companies have recently established factories in the area. Small tobacco farms—once the staple of Robeson County subsistence—can no longer compete with larger agricultural conglomerates.

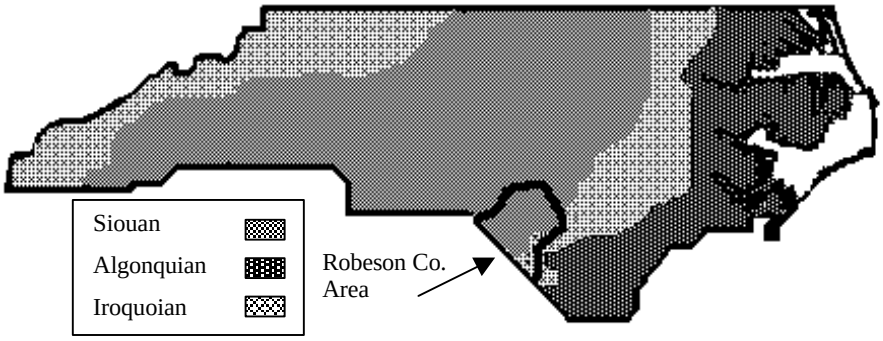
2.1 Lumbee Language Roots

One of the most noteworthy aspects of the Lumbee Indians involves their ancestral language roots. It is difficult to say precisely what ancestral language or languages they spoke because of their current geographic location and their loss of the ancestral language. There are a couple of hypotheses as to where the Lumbee community came from and what their ancestral

language roots were. One hypothesis maintains that the Lumbee Indians of Robeson County came originally from the Carolina coast (Dial and Eliades 1975; Dial 1993), migrating inward into the area now delineated as Robeson County. The other hypothesis argues that the Lumbee have inhabited their current area for a much longer period, living in the vicinity for well over a thousand years. Indeed, archaeological, anthropological, and linguistic evidence suggests continuous Native American occupation of the Robeson County area since prehistory (Knick forthcoming).

Historically, there were three ancestral Native American language families in the region where Robeson County is presently located--Iroquoian, Siouan, and Algonquian--and this makes it difficult to say definitively which of the languages the Lumbee may have spoken. Figure 2 gives the location of Robeson County in relation to the distribution of ancestral languages of North Carolina, based on Ward (1944) and Wetmore (1975).

Figure 2. Native-American Language Families in North Carolina, in Reference to Robeson County



It is important to note that the current location of the Lumbees straddles the location of the Siouan and Iroquoian language groups as shown in figure 2. The area is also not far removed from the coast, thus adding possible exposure to Algonquian languages to the mix of possible ancestral language roots. Whether or not the Lumbee migrated inland from the coastal region, contact with Algonquian languages is likely due to their current location and navigational routes such as the Lumber River and Cape Fear River. Also, the borderline language zone indicated in the map makes it reasonable to speculate that the ancestors of the Lumbee might well have been familiar with varieties from all three language families. This situation is one reason why it might be speculated that the Lumbee emerged as a conglomerate group from a multilingual ancestral language situation. Assuming that they lost their language relatively early in their contact with Europeans, vestiges of source language transfer and borrowing from the ancestral language to English also would be reduced accordingly, making it difficult to speculate about specific ancestral language identity.

Unfortunately, we can only speculate as to when the Lumbees lost their ancestral language and when they acquired English. Our consideration of some relic dialect features may, however, give a clue to the formative period of English influence. One reference (quoted from McMillan in Dial 1993:20) notes that as early as the 1730s, Europeans moving through the area encountered "a large tribe of Indians, speaking English, tilling the soil, owning slaves, and practicing many of the arts of civilized life." We assume that there was a period in which both English and the Native-American language were known and a period in which the transfer of structural features from the Native-American language was still evident in the English of Lumbees, but we cannot say exactly when these periods might have been. It is, however,

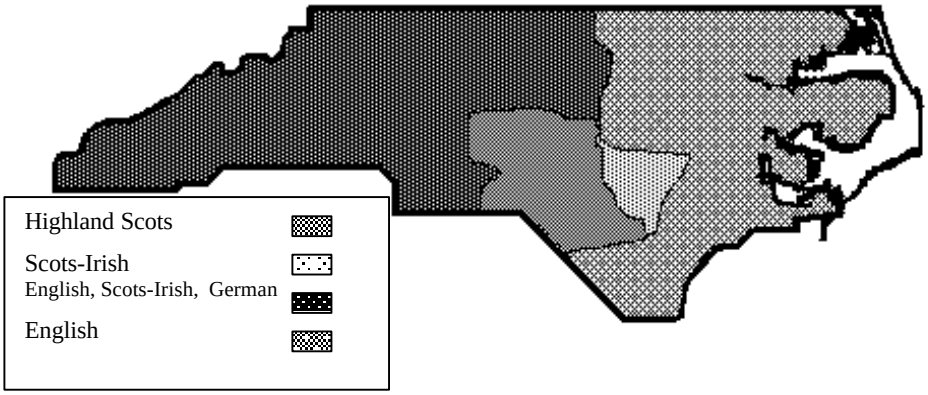
noteworthy, that a fieldworker conducting an interview for the *Linguistic Atlas of the Middle and South Atlantic States* in 1934 with a Native American, born in Pembroke of Native-American parents in the 1860s, aborted the interview because of slow responses by the speaker; in doing so, the interviewer noted that the subject "preserves traces of the foreign speech." (Kretzschmar, McDavid, Lerud, and Johnson 1994:350). This observation of apparent language transfer is also consistent with some reports by elderly community members who have spoken of grandparents still using expressions from Native-American languages. So there certainly may have been vestiges of a Native-American language evident in the previous century, and also a protracted period of bilingualism for some Lumbees well through the 1800s.

2.2. Formative English Influence

For understanding the current Lumbee English language situation, it is, of course, essential to identify the formative influence of donor European-American varieties of English. Although the Lumbees have been speaking English for a couple of centuries, it is again not entirely clear where they learned their English historically. The coastal areas of North Carolina were the site of several early, temporary English inhabitants in the late 1500s and started to get regular inhabitants in the mid-1600s, and particularly during the end of the 1600s and early 1700s. From the coastal point of English settlement, there was migration inward. Many of the inhabitants in the 1600 and 1700s were from Virginia, but some came directly from the British Isles, and some even came from Caribbean areas such as Bermuda. This is not to say, though, that there was extensive colonization of the North Carolina area during that period. Major immigration into North Carolina did not take place until the 1700s when Scots and Scots-Irish immigrants began infiltrating.

There is evidence that the Highland Scots came up the Cape Fear River and resided in the area in the early 1700s, bringing with them varieties of Scottish Gaelic and Scottish English. In the mid-1700s, the Ulster Scots from Ireland moved southward from Pennsylvania and Virginia, spreading into the Appalachian and Piedmont areas of the Carolinas as they migrated. Just before North Carolina became a royal colony in 1729, both Lowland and Highland Scots emigrated from Scotland into North Carolina. Although a few Lowland Scots colonies were established, the Highland Scots comprised the substantial majority of the immigrants, therefore providing the most early influence on the developing language varieties of the region. Highland Scots apparently migrated from the Argyll Peninsula of Western Scotland (Montgomery and Mishoe forthcoming) and established colonies along the North Carolina coast, just inland along the Cape Fear river, and later in the interior of Carolina in the Cape Fear River Valley. Figure 3 indicates the major early European settlement areas in North Carolina.

Figure 3. European Settlement Groups in North Carolina
(map adapted from Meyer 1961)



A final component of Robeson County early sociolinguistic landscape was the African population which was brought to the region by European settlers in the mid-1700s. Although the number of slaves per household was relatively low in the region by comparison with other areas of the South (Bailey forthcoming), African-American English varieties in Robeson County also could have been important in the development of Lumbee English, especially after the turn of the 19th century. African Americans coming to the region would have spoken a number of varieties of English, possibly including a derivative of creole-based Gullah since some slaves came north from the Charleston area (Dial and Eliades 1975) as well as south from Virginia. There were some free African Americans as well as slaves in the area in the 1700s. The population of African Americans, limited by comparison with some large plantation areas in neighboring South Carolina, has held steady for a long period now. The proportion of African Americans, fluctuating between a fourth and a third of the population over the last couple of centuries, is not unlike that found in other Coastal Plains areas of North Carolina (Kay and Cary 1995). There are, however, questions about the reliability of demographic statistics given the historic patterns of demographic classification that did not distinguish Native American from other non-whites. The exact historic mix of European groups, African groups, and the influence of various language varieties on the developing English varieties of Robeson County is difficult to determine precisely, but studies of the type undertaken here certainly should help provide some insight into the kinds of English language contact situations that have influenced and continue to effect the Lumbee sociolinguistic context.

One explanation for the origin of Lumbee English believed among some of the Lumbees themselves points to Sir Walter Raleigh's Lost Colony of Roanoke. In 1587, Sir Walter Raleigh assembled colonists from the South and Southwest of England for an expedition to Roanoke Island along the northern coast of North Carolina. Reportedly, the colonists and a Native-American group they called the Croatan Indians, who were located on Outer Banks of the Carolinas, maintained a peaceful relationship (Haklyut 1973) and were in regular contact in the first few months of colonization. When John White, the leader of the group, traveled back to England to replenish low provisions for the colony, he left a group of people to maintain the settlement. By the time White returned from England nearly two years later, the group had disappeared. There is no historical evidence documenting the fate of these colonists, so whether the colonists perished or sought shelter with coastal Native Americans like the Croatan tribe remains an open question. If the colonists did survive and unite with a Native-American group, though, they might have had some impact on Native-American language varieties in North Carolina.

According to one theory, the colonists of Roanoke survived and blended their culture with that of the Croatan Indians, who migrated south and inland to the Lumber River in Robeson County. Local historian and Lumbee leader, the late Adolph Dial argues:

> While proof of Lumbee descent from the Lost Colony, in the form of birth records and other documents is most unlikely to be found, the circumstantial evidence, when joined with logic, unquestionably supports the Lumbee tradition that there was a real and lasting connection with the Raleigh Settlement. The survival of colonists' names, the uniqueness of the Lumbee dialect in the past, the oral traditions, the demography of sixteenth century North Carolina, the mobility of the Indian people, human adaptability and the isolation of Robeson County, all prove the "Lost Colony" theory. (Dial and Eliades 1975:13)

Although this original English influence cannot be ruled out, the Lost Colony connection remains largely unsubstantiated in the historical and archeological record. Perhaps more important, however, is the symbolic significance of the appropriation of the Lost Colony theory;

it speaks poignantly to the ethnic paradox of Native Americans. Native Americans have been asked to provide proof of their heritage such as a connection to one particular Native American ancestral language while, at the same time, being subjected to a sociopolitical system that has historically granted privilege on the basis of European-American identity. A sense of privilege in this society would most naturally be achieved through an association with a European rather than Native-American or African lineage. The Lost Colony lore serves to connect Lumbee status with an authenticating group while maintaining Native-American identity with a specific coastal tribe. If nothing else, the perpetuation of lore connecting the Lumbee with both a distinct Native American group and a mysterious but prestigious British group shows how mythmaking may function in the construction of ethnic identity. In the final analysis, of course, it is the construction of cultural identity rather than blood lines that serve as the basis for cultural and linguistic uniqueness.

Whether or not the Lumbee originated on the coast and migrated into Robeson County or were the county's original inhabitants, they would very likely have been exposed to varieties of English from the South of England, the primary regions of origin for those travelling to North Carolina before 1700. Furthermore, this exposure could have been either direct--from the travelers and new inhabitants themselves--or indirect transmission through other Native-American groups who associated with the travelers. After 1700, the Highland Scots in the Southeastern part of North Carolina and the Scots-Irish influence to the west might have had some effect on the Robeson County area. By the close of the 18th century, Lumbee English might have been affected not only by the varieties of English but also by possible varieties of Gaelic and Scots spoken in the region. Reportedly, the Lumbee and Highland Scots did not live completely separately within the county but associated with one another on a fairly regular basis. Thus, it is not unlikely that language features from several different language backgrounds might have been shared between the groups in their early association.

The types of contact and social relationships that existed between the Lumbee and other groups has naturally shifted over time. Social relationships with other groups have been negotiated and renegotiated through centuries of contact with other Native Americans, European Americans and African Americans. For example, prior to the 19th century, there were reports of egalitarianism between the Lumbee and the Scots-Irish and Highland Scots groups. However, if this was indeed true, the nature of this relationship changed drastically over time, particularly after the passage of the Revised State Constitution of 1835 which mandated that people of color did not have the rights and privileges afforded those who were white. Rights and privileges that the Lumbee might have appropriated prior to the 19th century were therefore stripped away by government fiat. Moreover, this legislation effectively deprived the Lumbee of their ethnic identity as Native Americans since the Lumbee no longer had a discrete identity; instead, they were grouped with other "free people of color" or "mulattos". Such a classification also would have an essential effect on how they defined themselves in relation to other groups since privilege now came though affiliation with the dominant white group--from whom they now were legally disenfranchised. At the same time, their legal classification with other people of color would serve to motivate their disassociation from African Americans, the primary target of the legislation. In an important sense, they were caught between whites and blacks. Certainly, such an indeterminate status might serve to foster a sense of "otherness"--distinct from both white and black.

Evidence also suggests that the relationships between Lumbees, African Americans, and European Americans have varied widely over time, place, and individual. For example, before they petitioned for funds to create their own schools staffed with Native-American teachers in the late 1800s, the Lumbee reportedly went to school with African Americans and European

Americans. After the funds were granted by the state government, however, Lumbee students were schooled only with other Lumbees, lasting in some instances until legal desegregation in the early 1970s. Since the 1970s, the schools have been more mixed, although, as noted above, *de facto* segregation still exists on many levels.

Historical and ethnographic evidence also document the fact that at certain periods in history, some Lumbees worked outside of the county for extensive periods of time. In the early half of the 20th century, for example, Native Americans and European Americans alike worked in the logging trade. This required extensive periods of absence and travelling down into South Carolina along the Lumber River. Indeed, the insularity of the Lumbee in Robeson County is quite relative and has shifted over time based on social, historical, and political circumstances within and outside of the community. This kind of fluctuation cannot be ignored as we describe the past, current, and future state of the English used by groups of speakers and individual Lumbee speakers.

3. Constructing Ethnic Identity

The indeterminate ethnic status, cultural isolation, and discrimination that the Lumbee endured are important background for understanding the development of Lumbee English. The sociopolitical and cultural context not only fueled the Lumbee incentive to carve out a unique niche within the Robeson County community, but also served to create a sense of Lumbee solidarity. Historically, the Lumbee have endured acts of discrimination based on their non-white status, and reports of violence, segregation in the school and workplace, along with asymmetrical power relations in county government are still recounted vividly by many Lumbee people. But in the face of such oppression, history has also demonstrated a Lumbee proclivity for fighting back against acts of discrimination and terrorism.[3] Documented episodes point to a strong and persistent sense of determination in the face of external threats to their sense of peoplehood. In these events, the Lumbee as a people served notice through their resistance to oppression that they would stand in solidarity against those who attempted to strip them of their dignity and identity.

From at least the 1800s until today, the Lumbee have worked proactively to construct and reconstruct their heritage as Native Americans in the face of regular acts that challenge their sense of peoplehood. The Lumbee not only were the first Native American group in North Carolina to petition the state government and win formal recognition and entitlements on a state level (as opposed to the federal level mentioned above) in the 1880s, but were also the first to petition for and receive funds from the state government to create an Indian Normal School whose purpose was to train Native Americans how to teach Native American children.[4] Moreover, the Lumbee have regularly petitioned the federal government for official recognition and entitlements for their Native-American status since the mid-1950s. Still other proactive acts in the maintenance and reconstruction of the Lumbee identity include the revival of regular *pow wows*, a cultural event featuring traditional Native-American ceremonies and themes, and the

[3] One example of such a historical incident is the so-called "Lowrie War" (1865-1872), which featured a group of Lumbees who fought against the tyranny of whites against Native Americans (Farris 1925; Evans 1971). In fact, a play about the Lowrie gang, titled *Strike at the Wind,* played for many years in the outdoor theater located at the Lumbee Cultural Center. Practically all Lumbees are familiar with the insurrection and the leader of the band, Henry Berry Lowrie, is accorded Robin Hood-like stature by many in the historical tradition of the Lumbee.

[4] A "normal" school is an older term for a school dedicated to training teachers, roughly equivalent today to a "Teachers College" in the United States today.

revitalization of Native American arts and crafts. These events and activities are all emblematic of group membership that celebrates Native-American identity. Meshed into a society that seems focused on a bi-polar, white/non-white dichotomy, the Lumbee have thus been able to negotiate a cultural identity that is neither white nor black in the context of Robeson County and beyond. As Blu (1977:283) notes, "By acting upon their image of who they are as a people, the Lumbee have tried to carve out a third niche for themselves in a society whose racial ideology provides for only two."

One of the most telling remarks that comes up repeatedly in discussions about history and identity with Lumbee leaders is the phrase, "We knów who we are." As one interviewee put it:

> We know who we are, and we don't need anyone here trying to tell us who we are, you know; we know who we are, we know where we come from, and really, that's all that matters (35 year-old Lumbee male).

Such a statement asserts in no uncertain terms the unique cultural identity of the Lumbee while addressing the doubts that others, or even some Lumbees themselves, may have about their precise history and their connection with Native-American ancestry. It is indisputable that many Lumbees, regardless of historical documentation according to the European-American canon, have a strong sense of cultural identity and distinctiveness that sets them apart from their European-American and African-American cohorts in Robeson County or in other areas where they live. At the same time, their indeterminate historical status has led to persistent doubts about their Native American identity in the eyes of some external groups, as well as other Native American groups who may feel that Lumbees are less culturally "pure" than other Native-American groups. This often places them in a position of "having to prove" their cultural distinctiveness in general and their Native American Indian heritage in particular. Such a cultural background is essential in understanding why the Lumbee might have molded and continue to perpetuate a distinct variety of English.

4. An Overview of Lumbee Vernacular English

Since 1993, the staff of the North Carolina Language and Life Project has been conducting sociolinguistic interviews (Wolfram and Fasold 1974) with local residents of Robeson County. Thus far, we have tape recorded conversational interviews with more than 100 Lumbees throughout Robeson County ranging in age from 10 through 96.[5] We have also interviewed more than 40 European-American speakers and 20 African-American speakers in Robeson County as well in order to situate Lumbee speech with respect to present-day contact varieties. Interviews with cohort European-American and African-American vernacular speakers in Robeson County serve as a basis for systematically comparing the dialect profiles of these three ethnic groups. However, it is also possible to situate Lumbee dialect with respect to other historically isolated groups in region as well, such as Outer Banks English to the east (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1997; Wolfram, Hazen, and Shilling-Estes 1999) and Appalachian English to the west (Wolfram and Christian 1976; Christian, Wolfram, and Dube 1988). This broader

[5] We have also listened to recordings of Lumbee speech made available through other projects, such as the oral history interviews conducted by Adolph Dial in the early 1970s (Dial and Eliades 1975; Dial 1993) and a sampling of other interviews available through the Oral History collection at the University of Florida. Earlier recordings with Lumbees are of particular interest since they provide a historical perspective on the development of this variety over time. An 80-year old speaker interviewed in 1970 gives us and idea what Lumbee English would have been like a century ago. Such a time depth is important to determine how the dialect is changing and to see if the dialect is converging or diverging with other varieties of English.

comparative base allows us to appraise the dialect status of Lumbee English in its relation to more diffuse historically isolated varieties of English in the region. In the following sections, we compare dimensions of Lumbee Vernacular English grammar, phonology and lexicon in terms of the immediate ethnic groups of Robeson County as well as other prominent historically isolated varieties of North Carolina.

4.1. The Grammatical Status of Lumbee English

Table 1 provides a qualitative profile of socially diagnostic dialect structures (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1998) for Lumbee Vernacular English in relation to the cohort vernacular varieties of Robeson County spoken by African Americans and European Americans, along with the broader context of Outer Banks and Appalachian English as discussed above. The examination of Lumbee English in this framework gives insight into possible donor dialects in the development of Lumbee English, as well as insight into historical and contemporary dialect affinities. In this and in the following tables, a check ✓means that the item is found in this particular variety; in a few cases, parentheses around the (✓) indicate that the item is found but to a very limited extent. We include of a number of diagnostic morphosyntactic and syntactic features in our inventory, but the inventory is still quite selective in terms of a comprehensive description of the variety.

Table 1. Comparative Dialect Profile of Lumbee Vernacular English Grammar

Grammatical Structure	**Rob. Euro. Am.**	**Lumbee**	**Rob. Afr. Am.**	**Appal.**	**Outer Banks**
finite *bes* e.g. *She bes there*	(✓)	✓			
Perfective *be* e.g. *I'm been there; They might be lost it*		✓			
weren't regularization e.g. *She weren't here*		✓			✓
was/is regularization e.g. *We was there*	✓	✓	✓	✓	(✓)
a-prefixing e.g. *He was a-fishin*	(✓)	✓		✓	✓
copula absence e.g. *They nice, She nice*	(✓)	(✓)	✓		
3rd sg. absence e.g. *She like_ cats*			✓		
Plural noun phrase agreement e.g. *The dogs gets upset*	(✓)	✓		✓	✓
plural absence with measurement nouns e.g. *twenty mile_*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
completive *done* e.g. *She done messed up*	✓	✓	✓	✓	_
double modals e.g. *He might could come*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
for to complement e.g. *I want for to get it*		(✓)		✓	(✓)
irregular verb (1) generalized past/part. e.g. *She had came here*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
(2) generalized part./past e.g. *She done it*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
(3) bare root as past e.g. *She give him a dog*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
(4) regularization e.g. *She knowed him*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
(5) different irregular e.g. *He retch up the roof*		✓		✓	

The comparative profile of grammatical structures in table 1 shows both shared and divergent grammatical structures in terms of the surrounding contact vernacular varieties. At the same time, it suggests some affinity with more remote, historically insular varieties of English such as those spoken on the Outer Banks and in Appalachia. For example, *a-* prefixing in constructions such as *She was a-huntin' and a fishin'* is a fairly common retention of a relic form of English found in a number of historically isolated rural dialects, as is the attachment of *-s* to verbs occurring with plural noun phrases as in *The dogs barks* or *People gets upset* (Christian, et al. 1988; Hazen 1996). This subject-verb concord pattern is well-documented in Appalachian and in Outer Banks varieties. At the same time, however, it contrasts with the extensive *-s* absence on verbs with 3rd sg. subjects (e.g. *She go to the movies a lot*) found in the neighboring AAVE-speaking community.

Table 1 indicates a couple of distinctive structures in Lumbee Vernacular English that are quite restricted in terms of present-day American English dialects and are not currently shared by cohort vernacular dialects in Robeson County. One is the regularization of past tense *be* forms on the basis of polarity rather than the person and number of the subject. In this remorphologization, *were(n't)* leveling is restricted to negatives (e.g. *I/you/(she/we/y'all/they weren't*) while *was* leveling is largely confined to positive constructions (Wolfram and Sellers forthcoming). This pattern is quite restricted in present-day American English dialects, and is found predominantly in isolated coastal dialect areas such as those on the Outer Banks of North Carolina (Schilling-Estes and Wolfram 1994) or the Chesapeake Bay areas of Virginia and Maryland (Schilling-Estes 1997b). In a quantitative analysis of variability in the regularization of past tense *be* for Lumbees, African Americans, and European Americans in Robeson County, Wolfram and Sellers (forthcoming) suggest a number of points of alignment as well as some divergent qualitative and quantitative parameters. A summary comparison of the qualitative and quantitative similarities and differences from Wolfram and Sellers (forthcoming), is given in table 2. For quantitative dimensions, a ✓+ indicates relatively high frequency levels of usage, a ✓ medium levels of usage , and a ✓- relatively low levels of usage

Table 2. Summary Comparison of Past *be* Leveling: Robeson County European Americans, African Americans, and Lumbees

Past *be* Leveling	**Rob. Euro. Am.**	**Lumbee**	**Rob. Afr. Am.**	**Appal.**	**Outer Banks**
Positive *was* leveling	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Plural NP subj. constraint favoring *was* leveling	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Frequency of *was* leveling	✓	✓+	✓+	✓+	✓
weren't leveling		✓			✓
Frequency of *weren't* leveling		✓			✓
Existential constraint favoring *weren't* leveling					✓
1st sg. subj. constraint favoring *weren't* leveling		✓			
Leveled *wont* variant	(✓)	(✓)	✓		

For positive, conjugated forms of past *be*, Lumbee Vernacular English aligns with contact European-American and African-American vernacular varieties, but for negative past *be* it has reconfigured the remorphologization process in its own way--or at least in a way that does not simply align isomorphically with the contact European-American and African-American varieties in the area, or even with other English varieties that are characterized by *weren't* leveling. For example, Lumbee English is much like the vast majority of vernacular varieties of English (Tagliamonte forthcoming), including Robeson County AAVE and European-American

Vernacular English, in leveling to *was* in positive constructions. Furthermore, it is like many varieties in favoring variable *was* leveling with subject noun phrases over pronoun subjects (e.g. *The dogs was barking* is more likely to occur than *They was barking*). The use of *weren't* leveling, however, is prominent only among Lumbees in Robeson County. By the same token, Lumbees do not typically use the *wont* variant (phonetically [w↓nt]) that is found in some Southern European-American and African-American communities (Hazen 1998), including Robeson county to some extent.

Table 2 indicates the alignment of *weren't* leveling with historically isolated varieties such as the Outer Banks (Schilling-Estes and Wolfram 1994), but there are some significant differences in the linguistic constraints on variability. For example, Lumbee English, according to Wolfram and Sellers (forthcoming), strongly favors *weren't* leveling with first person singular over other subjects (e.g. *I weren't there > She weren't there*), while the Outer Banks version of *weren't* leveling favors its use with existentials (*There weren't a house> I weren't there*). The detailed investigation of this structure demonstrates how an individual variety such as Lumbee Vernacular English may be configured in a way which overtly matches other historically isolated varieties while distinguishing itself in more subtle, quantitative ways. But it also demonstrates the versatility of such varieties in configuring the structural and functional details of language structure as they change. In the process of such change, the use of some items may come to be associated with a particular ethnic group and therefore take on ethnic marking, as some aspects of past *be* apparently do for Lumbee Vernacular English.

Another distinctive form of Lumbee Vernacular English in Robeson County is the use of *be* in perfect constructions. Lumbee Vernacular English may use constructions such as *I'm been there* or *We're been there* where other dialects would use a form of *have* as in *I've been there already* or *We've been there*. The use of 1st sg. perfective *I'm* is particularly prominent among some speakers of Lumbee English, an apparent vestige of an earlier period in the English language when *be* and *have* alternated (Wolfram 1996). For example, in the 17th century (Rydén and Brorström1987) alternations between *have* and *be* for perfect uses as in *This gentlemen is arrived* and *This gentleman has arrived* were commonplace, as exemplified in the Shakespeare's plays and the King James version of the Bible. This use of *be* in perfect constructions is still found in insular English-speaking communities as disparate as Samaná English in the Dominican Republic (Tagliamonte 1997), New Hebrides English in Scotland (Sabban 1984), as well as Irish English (Kallen 1989). In Robeson County, this relic use is currently restricted to Lumbee Vernacular English speakers, thus setting this variety apart from surrounding vernacular varieties and other isolated varieties such as the Outer Banks or Appalachian English in terms of its selective retention of older forms.

Finite *be(s)* in sentences such as *She bes here* or *Sometimes babies bes born like that* (Dannenberg and Wolfram 1998) shows how Lumbee Vernacular English has restructured forms derived from earlier donor dialect sources by accommodating surrounding contact dialects, resulting in a type of hyperadaptation (Trudgill 1986:66). The finite use of *be* apparently dates back to early Highland Scots and Scots Irish English influence in the region; in fact, it has been documented in neighboring European-American varieties with a strong Scots linguistic heritage (Montgomery and Mishoe forthcoming). Although such a use is now rare in European-American varieties in Robeson County, it remains fairly robust in Lumbee Vernacular English.

At the same time that *bes* may show a historical affinity to Scots and Scots-Irish donor dialects, it is accommodating the grammaticalization of this form that has taken place in AAVE. In contemporary AAVE, the form *be* occurs primarily in verb + *-ing* constructions and refers to activities that take place intermittently over time, or "habitual", as in sentences such as

Sometimes she be going to the store or *They be taking the dog with them all the time* (Bailey and Maynor 1986; Green 1998). Dannenberg and Wolfram (1998) show that Lumbees under the age of 35, who were more likely to attend school with African-Americans than their older cohorts, are also more likely than Lumbee speakers over 35 to use finite *be* with an habitual meaning in verb +*ing* constructions. So the use of finite *be* in Lumbee English reveals some accommodation of the contemporary AAVE model.

However, finite *be* remains distinctive in a couple of ways. In Lumbee Vernacular English, as in the donor dialects from which it was apparently derived historically, it retains an inflectional *-s* (e.g. *She bes*...), unlike its current use in AAVE where it tends to occur without an *-s* (e.g. *she be talking*).[6] Also, some speakers of Lumbee Vernacular English still retain relic uses of *be* as a perfect in constructions such as *She be got it* 'She has got it' or *I might be lost some inches* 'I might have lost some inches'. Such uses do not characterize contemporary AAVE. The use of finite *be* in Lumbee Vernacular English thus remains distinct--both from the use of habitual *be* in the contact African-American community, which uses an uninflected form for habitual *be*, and from its use in the surrounding European-American community, where the relic form now has vanished almost completely. We therefore have a distinctive, mixed structural alignment that manifests the strains of influence from surrounding European-American and African-American ethnic communities at various points in Lumbee history. The shaping of finite *be(s)* in Lumbee Vernacular English underscores how a dialect community can be resourceful in utilizing past and present language contact situations to mold and maintain ethnolinguistic uniqueness through changing sociolinguistic circumstances.

Finally, we may look at the incidence of copula absence among the three ethnic groups of Robeson County. Table 3 summarizes the results for the three groups of Robeson County varieties based on Dannenberg's (forthcoming) quantitative study of copula absence. The analysis followed the traditional analytical breakdown (Labov 1969; Rickford 1998) in terms of examining *is* vs. *are*, preceding subject (noun phrase vs. pronoun), and different types of verb phrase complements (predicate nominative, adjective, locative, verb *–ing*, and *gonna*).

Table 3. Copula Absence in Lumbee English and Other Varieties

Dimension of Copula Absence	Rob. Euro. Am.	Lumbee	Rob. Afr. Am.	Appal.	Outer Banks
is copula absence	(✓-)	(✓-)	✓		
are copula absence	✓-	✓-	✓+		
Subject Pro favoring copula absence			✓		
gonna> verb *–ing*> adj>nom. complement constraint	✓	✓	✓		

[6] As Bernstein (1988) points out, earlier records of African American speakers in the *Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States* indicate that older African-American speakers do, indeed use finite *be* with inflectional *–s*; however, younger speakers typically do not.

Dimension of Copula Absence	Rob. Euro. Am.	Lumbee	Rob. Afr. Am.	Appal.	Outer Banks
Changes across age groups		✓			

Table 3 indicates that copula absence for Lumbee speakers aligns with European-American rather than African-American speakers in Robeson County. It is relatively rare for *is* and the frequency of overall copula absence is low by comparison with local African-American speakers. Lumbees are also the only group that shows a significant age difference, however, as middle-aged Lumbee speakers have a higher incidence of copula absence than their older and younger cohorts. Dannenberg (forthcoming) suggests several possible explanations for the middle-aged differences, including the possibility of a temporary alignment towards AAVE after school desegregation in the 1970s. The pattern of copula absence again illustrates the kind of mixed alignment that has apparently characterized and continues to characterize the Lumbee community.

The grammatical overview shows a clear pattern of Lumbee distinctiveness in relation to their Robeson County cohorts—the apparent result of differing rates of language change, selective accommodation, and independent structural reconfiguration as the Lumbees have maintained themselves as a group culturally distinct from other groups.

4.2. The Phonological Status of Lumbee English

Table 4 provides an overview of some of the social diagnostic phonological traits of Lumbee English in relation to other varieties of English (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1998). Although it is based for the most part on a qualitative comparison, for several of the features it is based on quantitative analyses as well (e.g. Miller 1996, Schilling-Estes 1997a; Dannenberg 1996, 1997; Childs, Torberg, and Waldrop 1999).

Table 4. Comparative Profile of Lumbee Vernacular English Phonology

Phonological Structure	Rob. Euro. Am.	Lumbee	Rob. Afr. Am.	Appal.	Outer Banks
[ay] raising, backing e.g. [tʌˈd] 'tide'		✓			✓
[ay] ungliding e.g. [tam] 'time'	✓	✓	✓	✓	
[h] retention in 'it', 'ain't' e.g. [hIt] 'it'	(✓)	✓	(✓)	✓	✓
[æ] lowering prec. R e.g. [ðar] 'there'	(✓)	✓		✓	✓
intrusive [t] e.g. [wʌnst] 'oncet'	✓	✓		✓	✓
[Iz] following s+stop [postIz] 'posts'		✓		✓	✓
[ayr]/[awr] reduction	✓	✓		✓	✓

Phonological Structure	Rob. Euro. Am.	Lumbee	Rob. Afr. Am.	Appal.	Outer Banks
e.g. [tar] 'tire'					
intrusive r, unstr. final [o] e.g. [fɛlr] 'feller'	✓	✓		✓	✓
Palatalization [raitšiə] 'right here'	(✓)	✓		✓	(✓)
unstressed initial [w] del. [y∧ #ənz] 'young unz'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
[I]/[E] prec. [+nas] merger e.g. [pIn] 'pin'/'pen'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
lax vowel gliding e.g. [fI^{i}♣]	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
final ∈ labialization [bof] 'both'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
prevocalic cluster red. [bes eg] 'best egg'		(✓)	✓		
postvocalic r loss [ka] 'car'	✓	(✓)	(✓)		

The comparison in Table 4 again shows the overlapping but distinctive arrangement of Lumbee English pronunciation. Few if any of the pronunciation features of Lumbee Vernacular English are unique to this variety, but the array of pronunciation traits sets it apart from other varieties. The comparison also indicates that Lumbee Vernacular English is somewhat distinct from immediately surrounding varieties while sharing a number of features of historically isolated dialects such as those found on the Outer Banks to the east and in the Appalachian mountain range to the west. For example, the production the /ay/ diphthong with a backed, raised nucleus, as in [s >id] for *side* or [t^{h} >im] for *time*, which characterizes some older speakers from the most conservative locale in Robeson County (Brewer and Reising 1982; Schilling-Estes 1998), aligns Lumbee Vernacular English with speakers from the Outer Banks rather than Robeson County African Americans or European Americans. The retention of *h* in lexical items like *hit* (*it*) or *haint* (*ain't*), and pronunciations like *bear* and *hair* with a lowered vowel, [bar] and [har] respectively, are characteristic of isolated varieties in diffuse areas throughout the region. Intrusive *t* in items such as *acrosst* for *across* or *clift* for *cliff* and the long plural following sibilant + stop clusters in items such as *deskes* and *postes* is also a characteristic of diffusely distributed isolated areas. The comparison, then, points to a more conservative, relic status for a number of phonological features in Lumbee English.

More detailed quantitative examination of variable features such as postvocalic *r* (Miller 1996; Dannenberg 1997) and a backed, raised nucleus for /ay/ (Schilling-Estes 1997) show more precisely how Lumbees might situate themselves with respect to European-American and African-American cohort varieties. Table 5, for example, summarizes the results of postvocalic *r* absence based on studies by Miller (1996) and Dannenberg (1997).

Table 5. Comparative Summary of *R* Vocalization

Dimension of *r* Vocalization	Rob. Euro. Am.	Lumbee	Rob. Afr. Am.	Appal.	Outer Banks
nuclear vocalization (e.g. [b ˞ d] *bird*)					
syllable coda vocalization. (e.g. [ka] *car*,[h s] *horse*)	(✓)	(✓)	✓		
postconsontal *r* loss following /€/ (e,g, [€u] 'through'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
overall frequency of postvocalic *r* vocalization	✓-	✓-	✓+		
change across different generations of speakers	✓-	✓			

Several important observations may be noted on the basis of table 5. First of all, the overall incidence of *r* vocalization for Lumbees by Miller (1996) and Dannenberg (1997) seems to situate them quantitatively between the Robeson County African Americans, who have a high incidence of postvocalic *r* vocalization, and the European Americans, who have relatively low levels of *r* vocalization. Gilbert (1986) found a similar pattern of quantitative intermediacy for *r* vocalization in his study of the Brandywine, a triracial isolate community with Native-American roots in Maryland. Gilbert (1986:110) notes that "quantification of the results for final consonant cluster simplification and for postvocalic *r* 'deletion' shows that whites simplified (or deleted) the least, blacks the most, and Brandywines showed intermediate values." Although the overall figures show intermediate values for Lumbess in relation to their African-American and European-American Robeson County cohorts, a couple of observations must be made about this intermediacy. Of the three communities, the Lumbee community appears to show more change in apparent time, perhaps indicating shifting alignment in terms of their accommodation of postvocalic *r* vocalization. Older and younger Lumbees seem to be more rhotic than middle-aged speakers, thus indicating some possible shifting in dialect alignment over time. Secondly, it is important to note that patterns of *r* vocalization may show considerable interspeaker and intraspeaker variation. For example, Schilling-Estes (1998) shows that a single conversation between two male speakers in their early 20s, a Lumbee and an African American, show dramatic shifts in the level of *r* vocalization based on topic and the alignment of speakers at different points in the conversation. Dannenberg (1997) also shows that individual Lumbee speakers at the same age level may sometimes show considerable variation in their overall rates of *r* vocalization. Quantitative figures that show intermediate levels of *r* vocalization (Miller 1996), then, may simply be a representation of the dynamic, shifting alignments of speakers culturally situated between whites and blacks. In certain situations, at different times, and for different individuals, the alignment may shift more towards one group or the other, the end result being an intermediate level of usage in aggregate figures.

Although a detailed analysis of the vowel system is not considered here, an acoustic analysis of the overall vowel system of selected Robeson County Lumbee, European-American and African-American speakers by Thomas (forthcoming) indicates that the Lumbee vowel system tends to fall more within the range of comparable European-American speakers rather than African-American speakers. For example, Lumbees tend to participate in the fronting of back vowels in words like *boot* and *boat*, a pattern much more typical of Southern European-American than African-American speakers. Schilling-Estes's (1997a) extensive analysis of /ay/ in terms of a backed, raised variant [>i] (e.g. [t^{h} >im] 'time') and the Southern American unglided variant [a] (e.g. [t^{h}am] 'time') underscores the extent of variation within the Lumbee community over time and by locale.

The profile of selected phonological features indicates that Lumbees use few features that are not found in other varieties of English, but the combinations of features, the rates of change, and the levels of usage tend to situate them in a way that distinguishes them from the immediate contact varieties.

4.3. Lexical Variation in Lumbee English

Finally, we may examine dimensions of the lexicon. Table 6 provides an illustrative comparison of selected lexical items based on a more extensive dialect lexicon presented in Locklear, Wolfram, Schilling-Estes, and Dannenberg (1999). Our intention here is simply to demonstrate how lexical items may unify and separate groups of speakers rather than detail the comprehensive set of lexical differences found in the area.

Table 6. Comparative Profile of Selective Lumbee Vernacular English Lexicon

Lrxical Item	Rob.Euro. Am.	Lumbee	Rob. Afr. Am.	Appal.	Outer Banks
Lum 'Lumbee person'		✓			
on the swamp 'neighborhood'		✓			
Juvember 'sling shot''		✓			
ellick 'coffee'		✓			
sorry in the world 'badly'		✓			
chawed 'embarrassed'		✓		✓	
kernal 'bump'		✓		✓	
jubious 'strange'		✓		✓	
gaum 'mess'		✓		✓	
toten 'sign of spirit or ghost'		✓		✓	✓
mommuck 'mess'		✓		✓	✓
kelvinator 'refrigerator'	✓	✓	✓		
cooter 'turtle'		✓	✓		
tote 'carry'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
swanny 'swear'	✓	✓	✓	✓	

carry 'accompany, escort'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
young 'uns 'children'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
mash 'push'	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 6 indicates the types of similarities and differences for Lumbee English with respect to other varieties. We find, first of all, that there are a restricted set of items that are unique to the Lumbee. Some of these are local innovations which obviously have a community-based origin, such as *on the swamp*, a metaphorical extension of the swampy terrain found in the area to refer to a neighborhood, and *Lum*, a clipped form of the term Lumbee to refer to a Lumbee person. Distinctions such as a *brick house Indian* 'more privileged, higher class' and *swamp Indian* 'less privileged' refer further to social-status divisions within the community itself. While such innovations are quite localized, they may be socially significant in designating insider-outsider group status. Other unique terms, such as *sorry in the world* for 'doing badly' or 'not feeling well', *juvember* for 'slingshot' or *ellick* for 'coffee' indicate more subtly the separation of the Lumbee community from other communities. Meanwhile, many lexical items indicate a more inclusive but fairly regional distribution. For example, the term *kelvinator* is a brand name for refrigerator that has been generalized to refer to the general category of refrigerators as a Kelvinator factory once existed in the area. All ethnic groups in the area simply extended the proper name to include the general designation, just as other areas have extended the brand name *frigidaire* for general reference to refrigerators. The term *cooter* for turtle is a local term that is shared by African Americans and Lumbees, apparently derived by the Lumbee from their African-American cohorts who originally brought the word into English from the Bambara and Malinké word for turtle, *kuta* (Locklear, et al. 1999:2).

Another set of lexical items shows the longstanding affinity of the Lumbee English with other historically isolated groups not in the immediate contact dialect area, thus showing a kind of founder effect (Mufwene 1996). For example, terms like *mommuck*, *toten*, and *gaum*, which can be traced back centuries in the English language, have been retained in Lumbee Vernacular English just as they have in other historically peripheral dialect areas to the east and west of Robeson County. However, some semantic shift has taken place in the respective regions. Thus, *mommuck*, an older term which is documented in the writings of Shakespeare, had a literal meaning of 'tear to shreds' during the 1600s. On the Outer Banks, this meaning has been extended figuratively to mean 'harass physically or mentally' (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1997:45), while among the Lumbee and Appalachians to the west its meaning has been extended to mean 'make a mess', as in *You sure mommucked the house* (Montgomery and Hall forthcoming). The common etymological origin has been subjected to semantic expansion or metaphorical shift that now subtly defines its use in the different dialect communities while reflecting its relic status. The term *token*, which can be traced back a millennium in the English language, is another relic form that has undergone a meaning shift in different regions. Among Lumbees (where it is usually pronounced as *toten* rather than *token*), it refers to a spirit or ghost, as well as a sign or presage of death, its common meaning on the Outer Banks of North Carolina (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1997:48).

Finally, there is a set of more general lexical items that Lumbee Vernacular English shares with an expansive range of Southern American varieties of English. Thus, the use of *mash* for 'push' and *cut off/on* for 'turn on/off' as in *We mashed the button to cut on the lights* is a fairly widespread Southern American lexical use that sets apart these varieties from non-Southern dialects of American English but not particular dialects in the South from each other. Similarly, terms like *swanny* for 'swear' (e.g. *I swanny that's the truth*) *carry* for 'escort' or

'accompany' (e.g. *I carried her to buy some groceries*), *young 'uns* for 'children' (e.g. *The young'uns are acting up again*) are simply lexical items that characterize a broad-ranging area of Southern American English.

A cursory overview of the lexicon among Lumbee speakers in Robeson County clearly indicates the overlapping yet distinctive base of the dialect--with respect to other contact dialect varieties of English in the immediate area, with respect to other historically isolated varieties in the South, and with respect to more generalized Southern rural dialects. While there is a small core of lexical items that is used exclusively and symbolically by Lumbees, the uniqueness of this variety again lies primarily in the unique combination of forms, not the small set of items that are used only by the Lumbee.

5. Discussion

Our profile of diagnostic grammatical, phonological, and lexical features reveals the development of a variety of English that has become associated with a Southern-based, Native-American Indian group. The sociolinguistic facts indicate that the Lumbees carved out and maintain a dialect niche within the English language that replaced their ancestral language. Blu notes (1977:275) that Lumbees themselves refer to the notion of 'talk Indian", which refers to the fact that they "speak a distinctive 'dialect' of English, and that they keep their word."

A number of processes have converged to effect the development of this variety. First of all, differential language change has operated to set apart this variety. The relic status of some forms would seem to support the claim that the Lumbees learned their English at a relatively early stage in their contact with Europeans. For example, the use of perfective *be*, finite *be*, *h* retention in *(h)ain't* and *(h)it*, lowered /—/ before *r*, and relic lexical items such as *mommuck* and *token* certainly seem to point towards a relatively early time frame for the acquisition of English by the Lumbee. Subsequent cultural isolation resulted in the retention of some of these forms while neighboring groups of European Americans and African Americans participated in more general language changes taking place in American English or simply developed in different directions. For example, the occasional use of finite *be* by some older European-American speakers in the area, along with its more widespread use by European Americans in a adjacent communities (Montgomery and Mishoe forthcoming), certainly indicate that this feature was once a dialect structure shared by European-American cohorts, with the primary distinction between groups in Robeson County deriving from differential rates of change. A similar explanation may be offered for the robust use of *a*-prefixing, perfective *be*, *h* retention, and other features that continue to be found among Lumbees while they are quite recessive among other ethnic groups in the area.

At the same time, there is evidence that various structures have been reconfigured structurally and functionally through selective accommodation and independent development. Several different types of reconfiguration are revealed in the structures of Lumbee English. In the case of perfective *be*, we find a kind of selective, structural restriction in which the contracted 1st sg. subject form *I'm*, as in *I'm been there*, has remained quite robust even among many younger speakers, while its use with other subjects, for example *are* as in *You're been there*, has receded[7]. Meanwhile, the use of the *I'm* perfective has been functionally expanded, so that it is

[7] The prominence of perfective *I'm* over perfective *you're* (e.g. *You're been there*) led Wolfram (1996) to conclude that only the *I'm* form is still productive in Lumbee English. Additional data, however, suggest that Wolfram's earlier conclusion was somewhat premature, though the observation that perfective *I'm* is much more salient than perfective *you're* may still be valid.

now used to some extent in simple past (e.g. *I'm forgot the food yesterday*) constructions as well as perfect functions (Wolfram 1996:12). Although perfective *be* has now been documented for a range of isolated English varieties (Sabban 1984; Tagliamonte 1997; Kallen1989), the peculiar combination of structural focusing for *I'm* with its functional expansion to simple past seems to set it apart from these other varieties. Thus, we do not simply find a static retention of relic form, but dialect-specific change in Lumbee English that now serves to separate it from other varieties, even in other isolated areas.

We see restructuring of a different kind with respect to finite *be* in Lumbee English. In this case, *be* has partially accommodated the grammaticalization that has taken place in AAVE while retaining parameters of the concord system of Lumbee English. As noted in our description, younger Lumbee speakers show the increased use of *be* in verb + *-ing* constructions with a habitual reading at the same time that they subject *be* to *–s* attachment with 3rd sg. subjects (e.g. *The train bes coming every day at noon*), and to a lesser extent, 3rd pl. subjects. (e.g. *The trains bes coming*). In contemporary AAVE, *be* does not typically take inflectional *–s* concord.

Finally, there are quantitative differences that distinguish Lumbees from cohort African-American and European-American speakers in Robeson County. The overall incidence of postvocaclic *r* vocalization for Lumbee speakers occurs at intermediate levels of frequency compared with the African-American speakers, who have a relatively high incidence of *r* vocalization, and European-American speakers, who have relatively low levels of *r* vocalization. It was noted further that this kind of frequency distribution does not appear to be unusual for the ethnic group that falls between bi-racial poles in a tri-ethnic situation (Gilbert 1986). But why do they fall in between white and black groups? Do they simply adjust their variable targets and aim for a middle ground that is in between the other groups so that they can remain distinct? While we cannot discount this possibility, it seems more likely that this status is the by-product of shifts in ethnic alignment over time, as patterns of affiliation and interaction have shifted, as well as their association with outside groups. Aggregate quantitative figures that indicate an intermediate status may thus simply represent a history of adjusted social alignments rather than targeted linguistic intermediacy.

It is also possible that some quantitative differences are simply the result of independent change within the community over time. For example, it is difficult to ascribe the patterning of systematic variable constraints on *weren't* leveling simply to accommodation. The unique ordering of systematic constraints on variable *weren't* leveling in Lumbee English apparently have developed in ways that now distinguish it, for example, from the systematic variability of *weren't* leveling for coastal American English varieties. Lumbee English clearly favors *weren't* leveling with 1st sg. subjects (e.g. *I weren't there*) vs. 3rd sg. subjects, and it does not favor it with existentials (e.g. *There weren't a duck there*), quite unlike Ocracoke English (Schilling-Estes and Wolfram 1994). Thus, we see that quantitative differences in particular structural contexts may also indicate language change involving the reconfiguration of orderly linguistic constraints on variability. In other words, some of the quantitative differences may reflect disjunctive language change in which the dimensions of variable constraints are restructured independent of other varieties.

As we see, the possibility of community-based innovation cannot be discounted. Without knowing a more exact history of the structural traits of the donor sources for Lumbee English, it is, however, difficult to say which items might represent language changes initiated from within the community itself and which ones may have been adaptations of founder structures. But it must certainly be admitted that peripheral varieties of a language (Andersen 1988) may initiate

independent change along with diffusion. Some of the lexical items that we have found only among the Lumbee certainly bear ready testament to this innovative process, but apparent independent innovation for some of the grammatical and phonological structures is evident as well.

6. Conclusion

The peculiar set of donor language sources, combined with the dynamics of language adaptation, accommodation, and innovation have converged to mold a distinct variety of English for the Lumbee Indians, just as these processes have operated actively in the development of any other regional or ethnic variety of English. For a Native-American community that has lost its ancestral language and is striving to maintain distinctive cultural identity, however, the stakes of ethnic dialect marking may somewhat higher. Unfortunately, the sociolinguistic situation in the Lumbee community has been subjected to a type of double jeopardy. The Lumbee community lost its ancestral language heritage to accommodate the sociopolitical and economic exigencies of European encroachment, an accommodation which no doubt has hindered their pursuit of full formal status as a Native-American group. But their adoption and maintenance of a dialect of English that marks the community as ethnically distinctive has also been dismissed by schools and other institutions simply as an unworthy approximation of socially favored standard varieties of English with no inherent linguistic integrity apart from the standard.

According to the National Council of Social Studies, Task Force of Ethnic Studies, the definition of an ethnic group includes the following kinds of parameters: (1) origins that precede or are external to the state, (2) group membership that is involuntary, (3) ancestral tradition rooted in a shared sense of peoplehood, (4) distinctive value orientations and behavioral patterns, (5) influence of the group on the lives of its members, and (6) group membership influenced by how members define themselves and how they are defined by others. Of the behavioral traits that may symbolize ethnic and cultural identity, few are as symbolic than language. The current and past sociohistorical and sociocultural circumstances of the Lumbee certainly underscore their cultural and ethnic distinctiveness on a local level and beyond, and their dialect of English demonstrates that language has been integral to their construction of ethnic distinctiveness. Our sociolinguistic findings indicate Lumbee English to be a vibrant, distinctive dialect representative of a community-based culture. That the emblematic role of language has shifted from an ancestral Native-American language to a distinctive dialect of English is a testament to the sociolinguistic adaptability, resiliency, and vitality of the Lumbee language community--even in the face of the *linguistic inferiority principle* (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1998:6) that mainstream society now uses to reject their variety as nothing more than “bad English.” One of our Lumbee participants, a 35-year old male, put it into most succinctly when he noted:

> That’s [i.e. the dialect] how we recognize who we are, not only by looking at someone. We know just who we are by our language. You recognize someone is from Spain because they speak Spanish, or from France because they speak French, and that’s how we recognize Lumbees. If we’re anywhere in the country and hear ourselves speak, we know exactly who we are.[8]

[8] Emerging data from a subjective reaction test in which listeners in Robeson County are asked to identify the ethnic identity of representative Lumbees, European Americans, and African Americans tend to support this contention.

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