

The Evolution of Creole Languages:
Real and Apparent Time Evidence

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1.0 Introduction

How wonderful to have a panel on creoles at a conference on sociolinguistic variation! Why **WHY?** Why **SHOULD** variationists interest themselves in creole languages? Why **SHOULD** creolists interest themselves in the issues and findings of students of sociolinguistic variation in non-creole communities? Part of the reason is historical—the fact that sociolinguistics and creole studies both emerged as significant subfields around the same time (the early 1960s), and that many scholars involved in the one field were/are also involved in the other. But more important than historical accident is the fact that the kinds of data and issues which linguists in both areas have dealt with are very similar, and that methods and theoretical approaches from these subfields have nourished each other and have the potential to do so even more (see Rickford 1988).

One natural connection between variationists and creolists is a common interest in language change. Students of sociolinguistic variability have always been interested in inferences from synchronic patterns about past and ongoing linguistic change (Fischer 1958, Gansch 1905, Labov 1981), and issues of genesis and development have always been central to creole studies (Alleyme 1980:5).

Creole communities are valuable to variationists for the extensive evidence they offer of socially marked grammatical (not just phonological) variation, with the greater challenges such variation poses to assumptions that speakers' grammars don't change significantly after puberty. Change also seems to take place faster in creole communities than elsewhere, and to be set against a backdrop of demographic shifts and social history which creolists have tracked down in more detail than sociolinguists working in metropolitan communities have (see Baker and Come 1982, Dutton 1985, Hancock 1986, Le Page 1960, Reinecke 1937, Rickford 1987).

Creolists in turn need sociolinguistics and variation theory for analytical models and theorizing, especially for the principles which variationists have developed for the study of change in apparent and real time, that is, from the evidence of different age groups at one point in time (apparent time) or from samples drawn at two or more periods (real time). If you go back to a classic like Hall (1966), for instance, you will discover that our generalizations about the 'life cycle of pidgins and creoles' are based almost entirely on comparisons of pidgins in one part of the world with creoles in another. It is only with more recent work that creolists have compared real or apparent time data from one community (Hawaii, for instance, or Papua New Guinea), and this newer work has resulted in some striking modifications of older ideas about the evolution of creole languages. Similarly, discussions of decreolization in creole studies are often limited, as Labov (1981:178) notes, in inferring linguistic change from synchronic data 'without age distributions and without regard to the possibility of stable variation or retrograde movements.'

What I want to do in this paper is illustrate some of the issues which have faced creolists attempting to study change in real and/or apparent time, and discuss some of our findings. I'll begin with an example from Gillian Sankoff's work on Tok Pisin, then discuss several examples from my own work on Guyanese Creole (GC), which began with sociolinguistic field recordings in the 1970s, but has recently been extended to the analysis of early historical texts. As a unifying principle, I'll focus on pronominal and related developments, beginning with real time evidence and then switching to apparent time evidence.

2.0 Changes in real time (data from different periods)

Labov (1981), adopting a terminological distinction drawn in social survey methodology, notes that real time studies may be either *trend* studies, involving repeated random samples of a community at different time periods, or *panel* studies, involving longitudinal reinterviews of one individual. With one or two exceptions (Le Page 1980, Sato, in progress), creole studies has no panel studies. Our real time studies are essentially all trend studies, depending on written texts for samples of earlier usage.

2.1 Tok Pisin clitics

One of the best trend studies in creolistics is G. Sankoff's (1977) discussion of the development of predicate clitics in New Guinea Tok Pisin, which compares textual data from three earlier time periods, 1885, 1911, and the 1930s, with recordings made by Laberge and herself in the 1970s. G. Sankoff's study was perhaps the first to incorporate quantitative measurement and adherence to the sociolinguistic accountability principle in the discussion of creole changes. She showed, for instance, that only five out of 200 sentences (or 2.5%) in the 1885 material included a noun followed by *he*, as in

- (1) 'Jack he talked.'
(Jack talked)

That is, the subject pronoun, (*he*) hadn't really begun to function as a general predicate marking clitic, as it did later. But by 1910, the frequency of this NP + *he* + V type had risen to 65%, and by 1930, to 71%, from which it subsequently declined, partly as a result of a second wave of cliticization involving *em* as shown in Figure 1. (See appendix for all figures).

Sankoff also showed that there was a parallel process in the development of transitive clitics from object pronouns over this period, Verb + *him* + NP sentences like

- (2) 'I no savez count him moons.'
(I don't know how to count moons/months)

constituting about 9% of noun complement sentences in the 1885 corpus, but 26% or more by 1910 (11 out of 42 or 11 out of 27, if 15 cases with *him* as sole complement are discounted) and even more by 1930. Overall, G. Sankoff's quantitatively analyzed real-time data allow us to see the evolution of Tok Pisin in concrete terms, although the validity of the analysis depends on the reliability of the data and the author urges caution in interpreting it.

2.2. Late 18th Century Guyanese pronouns

Recently, I have been working with early samples of GC, attempting to move discussion of several open questions about its evolution beyond the abstract or speculative level. One such question is whether the varieties spoken by 18th or 19th century African slaves show pidgin-like characteristics, which the life-cycle theory would predict but which Alleyme (1980) disputes. The main problem in investigating this issue is the limited availability and reliability of the textual data. I have extracted every single sample of slave speech (37 in all) from three British travellers (Pinckard, Bolingbroke and St. Clair) who were in the Guiana colonies for one year or more between 1796 and 1808, but the total yield in terms of dialogue is only about six double-spaced pages, equivalent to less than fifteen minutes of tape-recorded speech. There is also the general issue of whether these amateur outsiders heard what was said around them correctly, whether they missed forms which had no analogues in their own grammar or in contemporary literary dialects, and whether they modified forms in transcribing or remembering them. There is also the question of how representative their samples are: house servants and boat hands, the types these expatriate visitors most often encountered, are overrepresented, and we usually get

samples of slaves speaking to the author rather than to each other. Of course, similar questions for representativeness arise even with recorded real time data, for instance, the ex-slave recordings made in the 1940s (see Bailey et al. in press).

Despite these limitations, these early texts do include some features which were not characteristic of later samples, and at least two of these show the reduction and generalization associated with pidginization. One, discussed in greater detail in Rickford (1987:86ff), is the absence of tense-aspect markers like *bin* and *go*, comparable to the earliest stages of Pacific pidgins. Another is the use of *him* with plural reference, suggesting that the form was not marked for gender. Here is an example from St. Clair (1834: 2.158):

- (3) Him all good. Misse Chatrine good, Misse Sophie good,
(They are all good. The mistress is good, Miss Chatrine is good, Miss Sophie is good.)

Him in fact occurs as plural subject four out of five times (*they* occurring once) in St. Clair's texts. The only trouble is that the other contemporary observers in Guyana, Pinckard and Bolingbroke, record no similar use of *him* as plural subject, but instead record *them* (10 tokens) and *they* (3 tokens). There is, however, one comparable contemporary example from Jamaica, one which occurs in Morreton (1790), cited in Cassidy and Le Page (1980:225):

- (4) 'You no work him like-a me!'
(You don't make them [the hips] move as I do [in dancing])

There are other features in contemporary Guyanese texts which may represent temporary influence from slaves brought in from Jamaica in the late 18th/early 19th century (see Hancock 1986), for instance, the use of *him* as singular subject pronoun, and the use of *for* + NP Possesives, as in the following example from Bolingbroke 1807:105:

- (5) 'one blacksmith countryman for me'
(one of my countrymen who was a blacksmith)

However, the textual evidence for a numberless *him* in early Guyanese or Jamaican speech is simply too slim, and we cannot be sure that St. Clair and Morreton were not mishearing reduced forms of *dem* (*em*) as reduced forms of *him* (*im*) or otherwise making connections between the two forms which the native speakers did not.

One person who may have made such a connection, although with different grammatical consequences, is Pinckard (1806), who attests a feature I have so far found in no other contemporary texts from Guyana or elsewhere: the use of *him* as a singular definite or demonstrative article, as in these quotations of the speech of Doctor Bob, resident African physician at a black hospital:

- (6) 'It always so, Massa, at this time o' year, because *him weather* change from wet to dry...[And referring to the high fever of a patient] '*Him fever* shall go, when *him water* come low; him always come hot, when *him tide* low.'
(Pinckard 1806:82)

(It is always so, Massa, at this time of year, because the weather changes from wet to dry. The fever shall go when the tide is low; it always rises when the tide is high.)

This feature occurs in five of the seven slots for a singular definite article in Pinckard's texts. It is an interesting singular parallel to the well-established Creole use of *dem* as a plural definite article or demonstrative, also attested in Pinckard (1806:164):

- (7) 'only Tony left in *'em tocks*'
(only Tony is left in the stocks)

But did Pinckard artificially introduce this feature to give his texts 'local color', as some of the transcribers of the American ex-slave narratives apparently did (Malyon 1987)? If he didn't—if it actually was a feature of contemporary slave speech—it must not have been

widespread, and it certainly never gained ground, unlike the occasional subject clitics which G. Sankoff found in the 1885 Tok Pisin material.

2.3 Late 19th Century/ early 20th Century Indo-Guyanese object clitics

Indentured laborers from India (East Indians) were introduced to Guyana in waves between 1838 and 1917: 30,162 between 1838 and 1859, 93,137 between 1860 and 1880, 78,869 between 1880 and 1900, a total of 239,756 in all (Nah 1970:220). As we consider the issue raised by Bickerton (1975:8) of whether they pidginized Guyanese Creole English as they learned it, we are on surer ground than with the late 18th century material. In the first place, there are many more sources, especially between 1880 and 1916. Secondly, their number includes works by J. Graham Cruickshank, who as ethnographer, amateur lexicographer and grammarian, stands head and shoulders over his 18th century predecessors. Unlike Pinckard, Bolingbroke and other 18th Century travel authors, Cruickshank was no fly-by-night visitor. Born in Guyana in 1877, but educated in Scotland, he worked in Guyana from 1896 until his death in 1944. Nor did he restrict his observations to those who happened to work around expatriates (boat-hands, house-sevants and the like). He ventured into the streets, in the style of Professor Higgins, to record the vernacular, and even corresponded with John Reinecke, the pioneer creolist, about his findings. Note his (1905:21) remarks about field methods:

- (8) "Do you want to know how the other half of the City lives...? Stroll through the market on Saturday night—eyes and ears open, forgetting you are somebody, remembering you are nobody...Listen to the talk, the badinage, the greetings in the marketplace..."

Here is part of one market interchange he recorded, one involving an East Indian vegetable seller:

- (9) "Sup-pose white people buy, *sell um* everything.
(If white people were buying, I'd sell everything:)
bittle buy, *full um* belly, tomacco s-moke. H-a...
(buy food, fill my belly, smoke tobacco. Ha.)
"Ow much want *um*, muma?" ...
(How much do you want, madam?)
"Babu, *got um* any lime?" ...
(Babu, do you have any limes?)
"Sup-pose *buy um* anyting--mus' *gi'e um* peppa--
(If you but something, I'll give you a pepper for sure--)
two peppa *gi'e um*. ..."
(two peppers I'll give you.)

There are several features in this text which do not appear in earlier attestations of GC and which have parallels in pidgins elsewhere: the use of *suppose* instead of *if* as conditional marker (compare Tok Pisin, Mihalic 1971:31), the absence of overt pronouns, especially with first and second person reference (compare English jargons in the Pacific, Mithläusler 1986:158), and the use of pronominal *um* before full noun-phrase objects as a transitive or object marking clitic, comparable to its use in Tok Pisin and other pidgins, as in this Petit Negre or West African Pidgin French sentence (cited from M. Vincent in Mithläusler 1986:293).

- (10) 'Je l'allume le feu'
(I light it the fire)

I wish to focus on this last feature, first noted by Devonish (1978:39-42), and discussed in greater detail by Rickford (1987:117-119) with examples from Cruickshank (1905) and other sources. I will omit most of the grammatical analysis I provide there, concentrating here on its diachronic significance.

The first thing we can say about this feature is that it was not something that Cruickshank invented or misheard (as we suspect Pinckard's *him* articles to have been), but really was a feature of the speech of some Indians in the late 19th and early 20th century. The evidence for this is its attestation in at least four other contemporary sources, including an 1891 Guyanese newspaper cartoon, with the following line (see Rickford 1987:104 for full citation):

(11) 'pose you give *um* for me one bit, me sa go sappel.'

(If you give me eight cents, I will go to chapel.)

and an 1888 travel guide for neighboring Trinidad with this one:

(12) 'me sabby *do um* all something dis side'

(I know to do everything over here)

The second thing we can say about it is that it was not attested in GC before the introduction of the Indian indentured servants, and has not persisted in modern GC. The only modern examples occur in folksongs, which tend to preserve old and obsolete forms.

The third thing we can say about this feature is that it occurs almost exclusively in the speech of low-class and/or newly-arrived East Indians, except for one case in Cruickshank (1905:22) in which a woman who does not seem to be Indian uses it to address someone who is:

(13) "Babul come *his' um* dis basket."

(Babul! Come lift this basket.)

Given this fact, it is tempting to attribute it to interference or transfer from Bhojpuri, the native language of most Indian indentured immigrants. Bhojpuri does contain an object marking position *ke*, as in the following example from Shukla (1981:98):

(14) ham laiki: (*ke*)

I girl (Object marker) love-(1st, sg, fut.)

I will love the girl.

But the Bhojpuri form differs from object-marking *um* in turn-of-the-century Indian GC in almost every respect: *ke* is never used with nonhuman object nouns, for instance, and is always restricted to indirect or dative objects, whereas *um* never occurs with indirect objects, and always with nonhuman object nouns.

The fourth thing we can say about this feature is that while it is similar to the transitive *im* of New Guinea Tok Pisin (as in *har-im* 'hear', and *bruk-im* 'break'), it differs from it in several respects. In Tok Pisin, the *im* is obligatory for many transitive verbs, the transitive verbs take *im* whether the object is a pronoun or a full NP, and they allow co-occurrence of direct and indirect pronominal objects (Wurm 1971:22-38), all unlike late nineteenth century Indo-Guyanese GC.

One interesting parallel between the two cases is that the Tok Pisin construction does not appear to have come directly from the substrate or native languages of the Tok Pisin speakers either (G. Sankoff, personal communication), although the existence of subject agreement or predicate markers in Pacific pidgins does appear to represent transfer from native languages (Keesing 1988.) This phenomenon of Indo-Guyanese, Melanesians, and West African French adults independently employing pronominal clitics to highlight transitive constructions in the course of second language acquisition, without direct substrate or superstrate evidence, may relate to what Givón (1976) described as a common tendency among languages to develop subject and object agreement markers out of pronominal forms, maybe (as he suggests) via reanalyses of 'marked' topic shift (TS) and after-thought topic-shift (AT):

(15) *IS (marked) => AT (semi-marked) => NEUTRAL (demarked)*

the man, I saw him => I saw him, the man

There are certainly parallels in first language acquisition—in the acquisition of German, for instance (Clahsen 1984, cited in Mühllhäuser 1986:293), and in the acquisition

of English and Creole by our son, Luke, who, at two, produced sentences like (16) without evidence from us, abandoning them after a few months:

(16) 'I see it the light'

I see the light

Whereas this type of construction took root in the evolution of Tok Pisin and grew, it did not do so in Indo-Guyanese English, either in terms of grammatical scope or frequency, and eventually disappeared from the Indian immigrants' language, much as Luke dropped it after a while. The crucial difference between the Guyanese situation and the New Guinea situation is that the Indo-Guyanese immigrants were essentially acquiring Afro-Guyanese varieties of Creole which had developed before they arrived, and which did not contain object marking *um*, just as Luke found no object marking reinforcement in surrounding adult speech, while the Tok Pisin speakers were not similarly constrained. (Note though that the older subject marking clitic, as in *di pipil dem di iifin tuu baad* 'The people are stealing too much is still in GC.) Gambhir (1980) found few lasting linguistic influences from Bhojpuri on GC outside of the lexicon; we may compare here the temporary pronominal influences from Jannatican slaves in the late 18th century.

3. Change or stability in apparent time (age distributions)

Most of the work that has helped to concretize our ideas about what happens in creolization or decreolization has involved change in apparent time—comparisons of the outputs of old pidgin speakers with young creole speakers, or of old creole speakers with young decreolizing speakers. This was true of Bickerton's (1981) work on Hawaiian Creole, which found major differences between pidgin-speaking adults and creole-speaking children and provided the basis for his hypothesis that creoles represent the operation of an innate bioprogram. This was also true of Sankoff and Laberge's 1974 study of the emergence of rhotals *bai* in Tok Pisin, and of Mühllhäuser's (1986:214-215) discussion of the development of number in Tok Pisin. My (1974) hypothesis that VBE invariant *be* evolved from Creole *does be* also grew directly out of hearing and recording Sea Island data in which the old folks used and reduced the latter but the children used only the former.

In my more recent sociolinguistic work on pronominal variation in GC, based on fieldwork in rural Cane Walk (1979, 1987), I have found apparent time evidence for both tendencies—stability and change. The variable which turned out to be stable, despite potential implicational or dynamic inferences of prior or ongoing change, was vowel laxing—the realization of the final vowel in *ju, de, shi, mi* and *wi* as lax instead of tense (*juL, dE, Shi, mI, wI*). I will not enter into details about the conditioning of this variable, which I have discussed at NWAV-8 (Rickford 1981). The main point I want to make is that although preconceptions about ongoing decreolization would lead us to expect that the lax Creole variants are becoming rarer, the age distributions shown in Table 1 (=Table 7.10, Rickford 1979:244), based on 2,759 pronoun tokens in recorded speech, indicate a stable, unchanging variable.

Table 1
Vowel Laxing in the Personal Pronouns by Social Class and Age
(Careful and Casual Styles Combined)

Social Class	55	18-55	18
EC (=WC)	.77 (311)	.74 (594)	.71 (368)
NEC (=LMC)	.53 (375)	.50 (739)	.56 (372)
EC + NEC	.64 (686)	.60 (1333)	.64 (740)

Note: n's in parentheses

We do not have real time data from Cane Walk itself, but Allsopp's (1958) study of pronominal usage among working class speakers in Georgetown shows an overall vowel laxing frequency of 69% (across 921 pronoun tokens), which is comparable to the 64% of the youngest Cane Walk generation, and even more so to the 71% of the youngest Estate or Working Class Cane Walk generation. Furthermore, both in Allsopp's data set and mine, recorded a generation apart, the relative constraining effect of pronoun form is identical, reinforcing the sense of stability in this area of the grammar:

Georgetown (Allsopp 1958): JU 80% DE 59% SHI 58% MI 56% WI 32%
Cane Walk (Rickford 1979): JU 87% DE 74% SHI 75% MI 61% WI 9%

When we turn to grammatical variation in the singular pronouns—for instance, whether people say *ai* or *mi* as first person subject pronoun, marking or unmarking the case distinction, it would be misleading to use Allsopp's Georgetown data as a reference point in real time. From the following data, for instance:

Georgetown (Allsopp 1958:17.25) a/a 99% (627) mi/ml 1% (7)
Cane Walk (Rickford 1979:342) a/a 55% (2927) mi/ml 45% (2394)

we might infer that there has been a massive increase in the frequency of the caseless creole variant (*mi/ml*) over the past generation (from 1% to 45%), and start considering the role of independence, the rise of nationalism and local pride in this reversal of decreolization. But the inference would be wrong in this case at least, because these contrasts really represent the difference between an urban (Georgetown) and rural (Cane Walk) community, grammatical variables being more strongly correlated with this and other social distinctions than phonological ones are. The truth of this is vividly displayed in the percentage of *mi/ai* use in the casual or 'later interview' speech of urban (Georgetown) and rural (Ann's Grove/Clonbrook) subjects recorded around the same time the Cane Walk speakers were by Edwards (1983:301; n's not provided):

Georgetown: a/a 99% mi/ml 1%
Ann's Grove/Clonbrook a/a 56% mi/ml 44%

I could not have a better set of figures to prove my point if I'd made them up myself, for Edwards' rural figures are virtually identical to mine (Ann's Grove/Two Friends is less than ten miles from Cane Walk), and his Georgetown figures are identical to Allsopp's figures from a generation earlier, suggesting that there has been no grammatical change in this subcategory in Georgetown in the interim. I should note parenthetically that this is the great value of having comparable quantitative data sets for creole continuum communities. Between the work of Allsopp, Bickerton, Edwards, and myself, Guyana is quite rich in this respect, while other places like Jamaica, although studied by several linguists over the past three decades, lack comparable quantitative data.

For the rest of the paper I will abandon the idea of getting comparable real-time data for Cane Walk, and use the data we do have for it on change in apparent time. Figure 2 (=Fig. 9.6, Rickford 1979:369) shows the relative frequencies of basilectal pronoun variants, summed across nine singular pronoun subcategories (including first subject *mi/ai*) by social class and age. Between the oldest and youngest age levels within each social class, there is a noticeable decrease in basilectal frequencies, amounting to 16% in the case of the EC, and 12% in the case of the NEC. This distribution closely matches Labov's (1966:325) model of a stigmatized language feature [showing] change in progress'. As Labov (1966:325) suggests, a distribution of this type is symptomatic of a recent increase in the social stigmatization of the variable, so that older speakers will show greater use of the newly stigmatized feature, and the younger groups less'. Note, however, that within

the EC, the intermediate 18-55 age group patterns with the old folks, while within the NEC, it patterns with the youngest group. This suggests that the increase in the social stigmatization of basilect forms comes earlier for the NEC than for the EC because of some other factor.

Table 2 (=Table 9.10, Rickford 1979:370) shows that this factor is the level of education which each age group has managed to attain. The two older EC groups both show an education index score of 5 or more, corresponding to elementary level education or less, while the youngest EC group shows a mean of 4.0, corresponding to the first three years of secondary school—which, incidentally, is usually outside of the village. Within the NEC, however, it is only the very oldest group which is restricted to an elementary level education (5.0); the intermediate and youngest groups have both had some secondary education, the youngest group slightly more. (Note that lower education indexes correspond to more education, not less.)

Table 2
Mean Education Index Scores by Age Level and Social Class

Social Class	>55	Age Level	<18
EC:	5.3	5.0	4.0
NEC:	5.0	4.2	3.7

One of the attractive features of Table 2 is that it also helps to minimize the possibility that the Figure 2 patterns are indicative of age-grading. Fig. 2, in which the youngest groups use less of the stigmatized variant, not more, is of course quite the opposite of the typical age-grading pattern, and the education indexes in Table 2 indicate that, within each class, the youngest generations are not simply repeating the paths of their grandparents, but going where, in educational terms, the older folks have not been before. Given the general correlation between education and decreolization, the education index differences of Table 2 suggest potential change in progress, of the type exemplified in Figure 2. Note that since this is a two class community, we cannot appeal to curvilinear patterns of social class distribution (detectable only with three or more classes, as demonstrated by Labov 1981:185) to decide whether these gradient age distributions indicate age grading or change in progress.

One final point: the overall indications of Figure 2 that the singular pronouns are undergoing grammatical change in progress do not hold true for every pronoun subcategory. The first three subcategories in Table 3 (=Table 9.11, Rickford 1979:371) bear out the overall patterns of Figure 2, but the last three do not, and independent evidence suggests that the basilectal variants in the first three subcategories (first person possessive, third masculine progressive and third neuter object) really are more stigmatized than those in the latter three subcategories (first person possessive, third masculine possessive and third neuter object). One such piece of evidence is the fact that in Allsopp's (1958: 25-26) Georgetown data, basilectal *mi* occurs in the possessive pronoun subcategory more than half of the time (51%), but in the subject pronoun category it is almost categorically absent (occurring only 1% of the time).

4.0 Summary and conclusion

Pidgin-creole studies has long had general theoretical claims about what happens in pidginization, creolization and decreolization without the hard local evidence to back it up. Mühlhäusler (1986:250) ends his chapter on 'The Linguistic Development of Pidgins and Creoles' by bewailing the 'numerous gaps in observation and description,' and expressing

Table 3
Relative Frequencies of Basilectal Variants in Two-Variant Pronoun Subcategories, by Social Class and Age-Level

Social Class	Age Level	1 Sub (mi)	3F Sub (hi)	3N Sub (i)	1 Pos (mi)	3M Pos (hi)	3N Obj (am)
E	>55	.95 (629)	.41 (194)	.90 (96)	.99 (147)	1.00 (42)	.63 (136)
	18-55	.90 (1207)	.40 (209)	.86 (220)	.98 (262)	1.00 (120)	.72 (285)
C	<18	.78 (473)	.25 (292)	.42 (31)	.99 (144)	1.00 (41)	.79 (100)
	>55	.20 (869)	.11 (160)	.28 (153)	.46 (249)	.35 (110)	.03 (186)
E	18-55	.07 (1504)	.02 (331)	.08 (244)	.33 (269)	.45 (107)	.01 (288)
	<18	.10 (639)	.00 (189)	.07 (86)	.51 (51)	.55 (45)	.08 (100)

the hope that detailed descriptions of the development of many more of these languages will become available soon' to facilitate a 'true predictive theory of pidgin and creole development'. In this paper, I have cited and summarized some of the attempts which a number of creolists has made to fill in the gaps for particular language situations, dealing in particular with my own attempts to track pronominal developments in the evolution of Guyanese Creole.

For past centuries, we have no choice but to depend on the real time evidence of surviving texts, digging up as much such evidence as we can and evaluating it through cross-text comparison and other means. Records for the late 18th century are fragmentary, but suggestive of some pidginization and of temporary influence from Jamaican slaves. Records for the late 19th and early 20th centuries are more reliable, and furnish an interesting picture of masses of indentured servants from India temporarily pidginizing GC afresh—via subjectless sentences and transitive or object-marking constructions involving pronominal *im*, these processes displaying interesting parallels with pidgins and child language acquisition elsewhere.

Quantitative studies of linguistic variation in Guyana over the past few decades—unfortunately all too rare in other communities—allow us to detect change or stability with greater precision, primarily through age-distributions. Such apparent time evidence indicates that decreolization is not as ubiquitous as abstract theorizing about continuum communities has suggested. With respect to pronominal vowel laxing, nothing seems to have changed over the past three generations nor to be changing now, and with respect to morphological variation in the pronouns, increased stigmatization, neatly correlated with access to secondary education, has led to reduced usage of basilectal variants in only some subcategories. Real time comparisons of Allsopp's (1958) Georgetown data and my (1979) Cane Walk data are not appropriate, because of the significant urban/rural difference between the two communities; controlling for such differences is a major problem for all

students of change in real time (cf. Labov 1987, and Bailey et al., to appear). But comparisons of Allsopp's (1958) Georgetown data and Edwards' (1983) Georgetown data suggest absolute stability with respect to one pronominal subcategory—first person subject. Increased influence from this stable Georgetown pattern is probably contributing to ongoing linguistic change in Cane Walk and other nearby villages.

The details of what has changed and is changing in specific creole communities at specific times need to be unravelled further and set in the context of the larger, ultimately more interesting questions of why such changes are taking place and how. I hope it is evident that these creole studies draw on the methods and conceptualizations of sociolinguistics and variation theory while offering it in return valuable case studies and issues for reflection.

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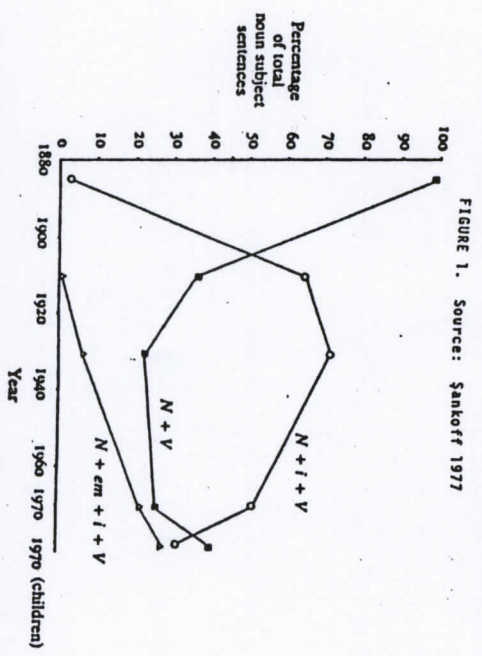
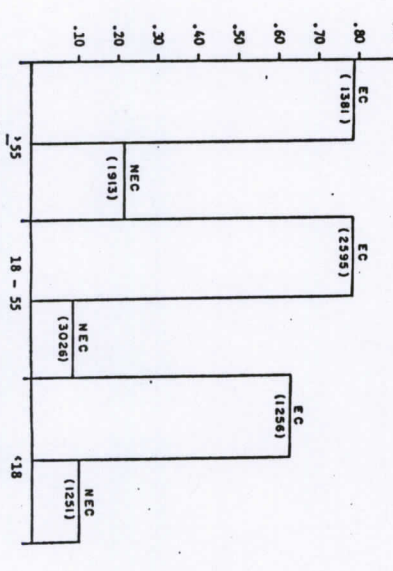


FIGURE 2: Relative frequencies of basilectal pronoun variants overall by social class and age level



Notes: N's in parentheses. Source: Rickford 1979:369