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Natalie Schilling-Estes

Walt Wolfram

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Symbolic Identity and Language Change: A Comparative Analysis of Post-Insular /ay/ and /aw/

Natalie Schilling-Estes and Walt Wolfram

1. Introduction*

The study of moribund dialects on the Outer Banks of North Carolina over the past few years (e.g., Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1995; Schilling-Estes 1996; Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1996, Wolfram, Hazen, and Schilling-Estes forthcoming) has tempted us to assume that a generalized model of dialect recession might apply to receding dialects. Our study of dialect change on the island of Ocracoke, North Carolina, supported for the most part a DISSIPATION MODEL, in which traditional dialect features are simply lost or drastically eroded in the post-insular state of an historically isolated variety. The examination of another post-insular Outer Banks island community, Harkers Island (Cheek 1995; Wolfram, Cheek, and Hammond 1996) supported the dissipation model, allowing for minor changes in the regression slope of erosion. It is important, however, to challenge the assumptions of the dissipation model based on a variety of different post-insular dialect situations. Therefore, in this investigation, we examine a quite different post-insular community, Smith Island, Maryland. Our examination will demonstrate that there may be significant diversity in how post-insular dialects recede. In fact, we show that the moribund state of some language varieties may be characterized by a CONCENTRATION MODEL of dialect recession in which features actually intensify rather than dissipate as the variety dies.

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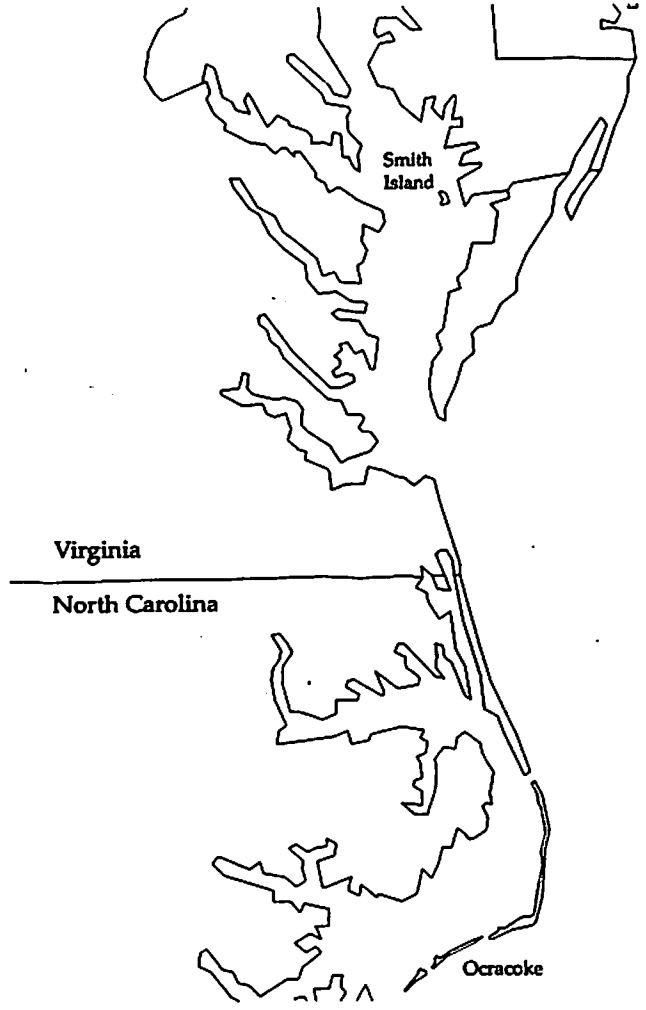
Figure 1. The Location of Smith Island and Ocracoke



Several of our previous discussions have focused on the well-known production of /ay/ with a raised and backed nucleus [ʌ˃I] in Ocracoke English (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1995, 1996; Schilling-Estes 1996). In this investigation, we focus on the production of /ay/ in Smith Island, which is realized with a raised, centralized nucleus, and compare it with the Ocracoke raised and backed variant. We also investigate the patterning of the /aw/ diphthong, the back upgliding diphthong that parallels front upgliding /ay/. As we shall see, /aw/ may be realized with a raised and/or fronted nucleus as well as a fronted glide in both Ocracoke and Smith Island.

The data from Smith Island are drawn from a set of cross-generational sociolinguistic interviews with 42 islanders conducted by Rebecca Setliff in the early 1980s, while the Ocracoke data are drawn from the 70-plus interviews we have collected there to date, beginning in the early 1990s. Figure 1 shows the locations of Ocracoke and Smith Island in relation to each other.

Smith Island is located in the Chesapeake Bay, about 10 miles from the mainland Delmarva Peninsula. Like Ocracoke, which is located 20 miles from the mainland of North Carolina, Smith Island has been accessible only by boat since its first British inhabitants settled there in the latter half of the 1600s. Although both islands have historically been isolated from mainland communities, they are currently undergoing significant social and economic change. The characteristics of each island's transformation are summarized in (1) and (2) below.

(1) The Socioeconomic Transformation of Ocracoke

- Two and a half centuries of geographic isolation are brought to a sudden end in the 1950s with the implementation of a state-run ferry service and the construction of a paved highway that runs the length of the island.
- Ancestral islanders (approximately 350) become a minority population on the island, as tourists from the mainland vacation there, and other mainlanders establish permanent and vacation residences on the island. Currently, approximately 3,000 to 5,000 tourists per day visit Ocracoke during the tourist season, while 400

mainlanders have set up homes on the island.
- The economic base shifts from a relatively self-sufficient marine-based economy to one heavily dependent on the tourist trade.
- Social networks extend beyond the confines of the island as Ocracokers come into more contact with outsiders; marriage with mainlanders becomes more commonplace, as do working and other social relationships.

(2) The Socioeconomic Transformation of Smith Island

- The land mass of the island shrinks significantly, at a rate of over 1,000 acres of loss in less than a century.
- The population declines significantly, from almost 700 in 1960 to about 450 in 1990.
- Traditional occupations such as crabbing and oystering decline, forcing islanders to move off the island to seek alternative means of sustenance.
- Tourism is a minor trade, and there is little in-migration.
- Social networks are restricted for islanders who continue to live on the island.

A couple of noteworthy contrasts are found in the Smith Island and Ocracoke situations, including the nature of the population shifts, socioeconomic changes and alterations to interactional networks affecting each community. Over the past several decades, Smith Island has lost over a third of its population as its marine-based economy declines, thus forcing islanders to seek work on the mainland. Meanwhile, Ocracoke has grown steadily as its traditional marine-based economy is supplanted by tourism. Regular interaction between outsiders and islanders is quite limited on Smith Island, whereas the expanding service-based industry on Ocracoke is characterized by increased intermingling between outsiders and Ocracokers. The differential sociohistorical and socioeconomic situations lead us to ask obvious questions regarding the process of language change in these two communities: How is language change proceeding in these two island communities? What can a comparison of these two situations tell us about generalized models of language recession? How do linguistic and sociocultural factors converge in the

explication of principles of language change and recession?

In the following sections, we consider these questions by examining two diagnostic diphthongs in Smith Island and Ocracoke, namely /ay/ and /aw/. The variable patterning of each of these diphthongs is changing in each community in significant but different ways. The explanation for their differential diachronic patterning is not reducible to a simple matter of linguistic process or sociohistorical circumstance. Instead, our explication demonstrates how linguistic principles and sociocultural factors intersect to account for patterns of dialect change and recession.

2. The Contrasting Directionality of /ay/

Our previous studies of dialect recession in Ocracoke English indicated that a number of traditional dialect features, including raised, backed /ay/, have receded rather dramatically over the course of the past several generations (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1995; Schilling-Estes 1996). How does this recession compare with the patterning of /ay/ on Smith Island, where /ay/ may be realized with a raised nucleus as well? Results of our comparative quantitative analysis of the diachronic and synchronic patterning of raised /ay/ in Ocracoke and Smith Island are summarized in Tables 1 and 2. Raw percentages for the incidence of the raised variant of /ay/ in Smith Island are given in Table 1. Raw figures are not given for Ocracoke, since they have been provided in our previous descriptions of Ocracoke /ay/ (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1995; Schilling-Estes 1996). VARBRUL results for Ocracoke and Smith Island are given in Table 2. Figure 2 provides a graphic display of the comparative diachronic patterning of /ay/ raising in prevoiceless and prevoiced environments.

Two noteworthy contrasts are evident from the comparison of Smith Island and Ocracoke /ay/ raising provided in Table 2 and Figure 2. First, is the direction of change. Instead of showing a decline for /ay/ raising/backing, as in Ocracoke, Smith Island shows a significant increase in raised /ay/. This increase hardly appears to be a temporary revitalization before an inevitable decline, as we have found with raised /ay/ for certain middle-aged

Table 1. The Variable Patterning of Raised /ay/ on Smith Island

		Vl. Obstr.		Vd. Obstr.		Nasal		Totals	
		[ʌI]	Tot	[ʌI]	Tot	[ʌI]	Tot	[ʌI]	Tot
Older Males (3) Age 55+	N	87	190	23	86	28	132	138	408
	%	45.8		26.7		21.2		33.8	
Older Females (2) Age 55+	N	10	77	1	32	5	63	16	172
	%	13.0		3.1		7.9		9.3	
Middle-Aged Males (4) Age 25-54	N	40	113	8	72	11	71	69	256
	%	35.4		5.0		15.5		27.0	
Middle-Aged Females (3) Age 25-54	N	107	162	2	62	26	105	155	329
	%	66.0		5.5		24.8		47.1	
Young Males (5) Age 13-24	N	124	176	7	72	21	106	172	354
	%	70.5		7.5		19.8		48.6	
Young Females (7) Age 12-24	N	111	180	9	71	25	120	155	371
	%	61.7		6.8		20.8		41.8	
Totals, All Speakers (24)	N	479	898	10	395	116	597	705	1890
	%	53.3		7.8		19.4		37.3	

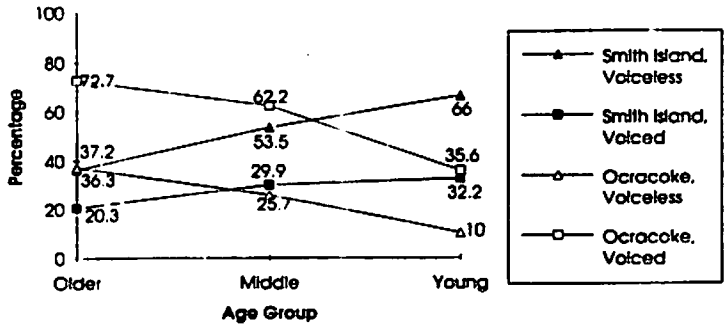
men in Ocracoke (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1995). Instead, it appears to represent a robust change in progress, as evidenced by the steadily increasing usage levels for raised /ay/ among middle-aged and younger Smith Islanders.

Second is the differential ordering of phonological constraints affecting /ay/ raising in each community. Although the

Table 2. VARBRUL Results for /ay/ Raising: Smith Island and Ocracoke

Ocracoke Raising, VARBRUL Results	**Smith Island Raising, VARBRUL Results**
Input Probability = .41	Input Probability = .36
Age Group:	Age:
Older = .63	Older = .38
Middle-Aged = .51	Middle-Aged = .52
Younger = .32	Young = .59
Following Segment:	Following Segment:
Nasal = .56	Nasal = .30
Vd. Obs. = .71	Vd. Obs. = .41
Vl. Obs. = .33	Vl. Obs. = .67
Chi-Square per cell = .221	Chi-Square per cell = 1.356

Figure 2. The Patterning of Raised /ay/ over Time



backed, raised variant is favored in prevoiced environments in Ocracoke, in Smith Island raising is favored in prevoiceless contexts and disfavored in the prevoiced environment, just as is /ay/ raising in Canadian English and a number of U.S. varieties (Labov 1963; Chambers 1973). The contrasting constraint orders may be explained by pointing to the fact that the Ocracoke variant is backed as well as raised, while the Smith Island raised variant seems relatively centralized. In other words, Ocracoke raised /ay/, phonetically more like [ʌ$^{>I}$], is located in peripheral vowel space, while Smith Island raised /ay/, located in the phonetic space of [ə^{I}], could be considered nonperipheral. We have proposed (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1995) that peripheral and non-peripheral vowels may display mirror image constraint orderings in terms of the sonority hierarchy; thus, raised, backed [ʌ$^{>I}$] is more frequent in prevoiced position in Ocracoke but raised and centralized [ə^{I}] is more frequent in the prevoiceless environment in varieties such as Smith Island English and Canadian English.

There is another way in which Smith Island differs from Ocracoke with respect to /ay/. We have noted that in Ocracoke, raised and backed [ʌ$^{>I}$] is a symbolic icon and the object of countless comments by outsiders and islanders. It is also highlighted in performances of the dialect (Schilling-Estes 1995, 1996). In Smith Island, however, raised /ay/ goes virtually unnoticed, despite its dramatic increase in island speech. As we discuss below, the realization of /aw/ with a fronted glide displays the opposite patterning in terms of social salience in the two island communities: Fronted /aw/ serves as a stereotype in Smith Island, where everybody talks about it. In Ocracoke, /aw/ is a marker but not a stereotype, and few islanders comment on it in their discussions of island speech.

3. The Patterning of /aw/ in Ocracoke and Smith Island

Our incipient qualitative and quantitative analysis of /aw/ in Ocracoke and Smith Island addresses several issues central to the comparative investigation of dialect change in moribund dialects. We are obviously concerned with cross-dialectal comparison of

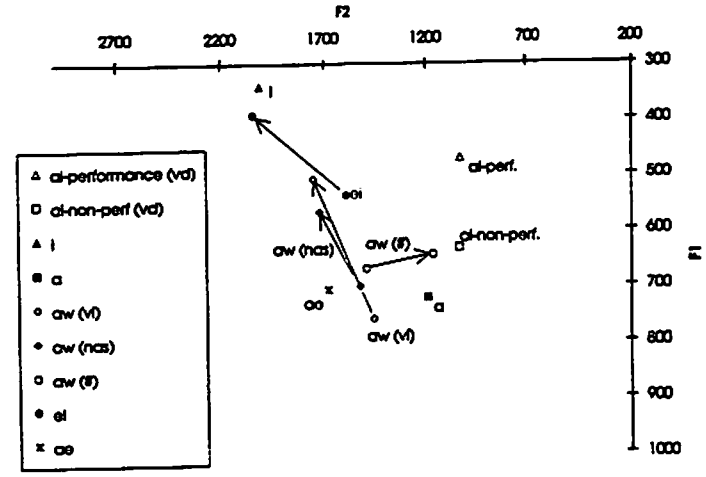
changes in /aw/ and /ay/ in Smith Island and Ocracoke. We are further concerned with how these two diphthongs compare with each other synchronically and diachronically as part of the diphthongal subsystem of English. And finally, we are interested in the consequences of the differential symbolic status ascribed to /aw/ and /ay/ in these two communities.

Thus far, we have extracted data on /aw/ for 10 speakers representing three generations of speakers from Smith Island and seven representative speakers from our Ocracoke sample. In our initial attempts to delimit possible variants of the nucleus and glide of /aw/, we posited that variants of the nucleus might be categorized along the raised-unraised or fronted-unfronted dimensions and that glides might be categorized as fronted, non-fronted, or absent (when /aw/ is realized as a monophthong). Given that the fronting of the glide of /aw/ is considered to be contingent upon the fronting of the nucleus which pulls the glide along with it (Labov, Yaeger and Steiner 1972), we might expect that variants of the /aw/ nucleus would always accompany a fronted glide. However, preliminary spectrographic analysis has led us to call this assumption into question. We are even questioning the categorization of variants of the nucleus in terms of binary classifications such as raised/unraised, and fronted/non-fronted, as well as the salience of these distinctions for islanders, since no clear patterns in terms of the /aw/ nucleus with respect to these either of these two dimensions have yet emerged in our spectrographic analysis. However, the distinction between fronted and non-fronted glides seems relatively clear.

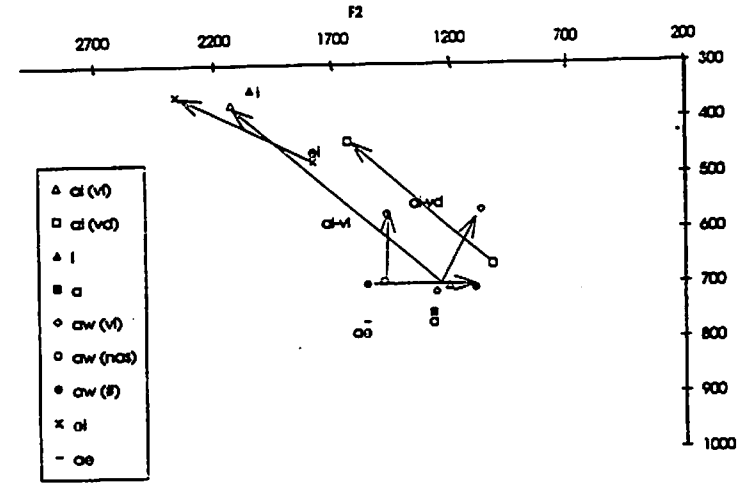
In Figure 3, partial vowel charts based on our spectrographic analysis are given for two speakers from Ocracoke; and in Figure 4, partial vowel charts are given for two speakers from Smith Island. The two Ocracoke speakers are a 39-year-old male and an 18-year-old male; the two Smith Islanders are a 41-year-old female and a 15-year-old female. Points represent mean F1 and F2 values for several tokens of each vowel. Measurements are given for several different types of phonetic environments, including prevoiceless (e.g. *house, out*), prenasal (e.g. *down, brown*) and word-final ((e.g. *how, now*). Other vowels (e.g. /i/,/e/,/æ/, and /a/) are given as anchor points for situating the production of /aw/.

Figure 3. The Positioning of /aw/ and /ay/ in Ocracoke

a. RO, 39-year-old male



b. BB, 18-year-old male



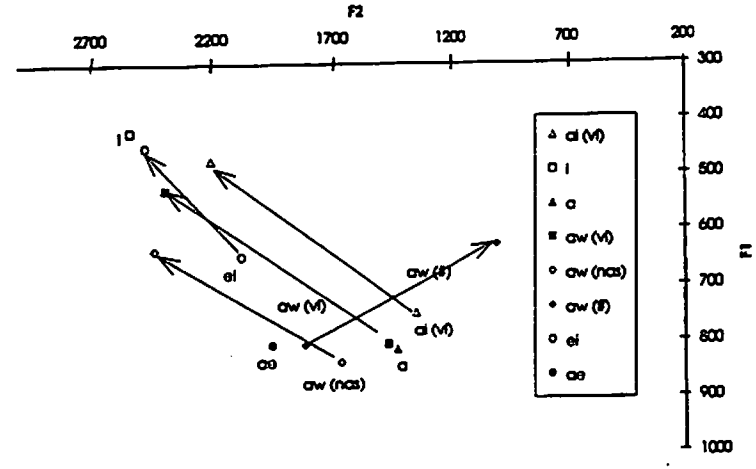
The spectrographic analysis for the 39-year-old Ocracoker whose vowel chart is given in Figure 3a reveals fronting of the /aw/ nucleus and glide in prevoiceless and prenasal position. Incidentally, this speaker also happens to be one of the middle-aged men in our Ocracoke sample who shows high usage levels for raised /ay/; in fact, he is Rex O'Neal, the speaker whose exaggerated /ay/ raising is highlighted in Schilling-Estes' (1995, 1996) discussions of "performance" speech. Although we might maintain that Rex's fronting of the /aw/ nucleus is simply a reflection of his generalized fronting of back vowels, as indicated by a complete spectrographic analysis of his vowel system by Erik Thomas, the fact that the /aw/ glide in word-final position is quite far back causes us to question this assumption. The back-gliding of word-final /aw/ is categorical for all speakers in Ocracoke and Smith Island that we have so far examined, even those with extensive front gliding of /aw/ in other environments. This suggests that /aw/ has undergone an allophonic split.

The 18-year-old Ocracoke speaker whose vowels are plotted in Figure 3b shows a fairly typical pattern for a younger speaker with respect to /aw/ gliding in Ocracoke. The trajectory of his glide is backward regardless of the following phonetic environment, except in prenasal position, where /aw/ is sometimes unglided. Interestingly, this speaker is atypical of younger islanders in terms of /ay/ raising. Despite his lack of the distinctive island /aw/ variant, he is one of the few younger speakers in our sample who shows significant usage levels for the distinctive /ay/ variant (about 40 percent). We hypothesize that this selective pattern of retention—keeping the traditional Ocracoke [$\wedge^{>I}$] but losing the distinctive /aw/—is one manifestation of the differential symbolic status ascribed to /ay/ and /aw/ in Ocracoke. Those seeking to project their status as islanders through language may preserve raised, backed /ay/, while glide-fronted /aw/ readily gives way to the mainland back-glided variant [a^{U}].

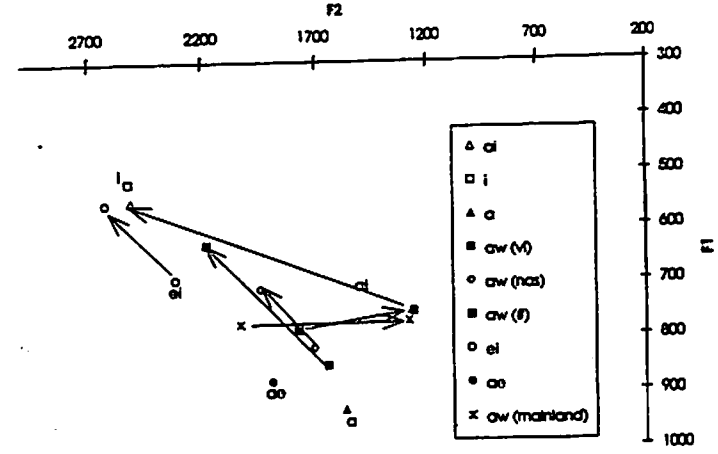
The positioning of the nucleus and glide of /ay/ for Smith Islanders is indicated in the representative vowel charts in Figure 4. The first speaker, a 41-year-old female, indicates some nucleus fronting, particularly in the prenasal environment, but not much raising of the nucleus. The fronted trajectory of her glide, however, is clearly evident, even in environments where a fronted

Figure 4. The Positioning of /aw/ and /ay/ in Smith Island

a. JK, 41-year-old female



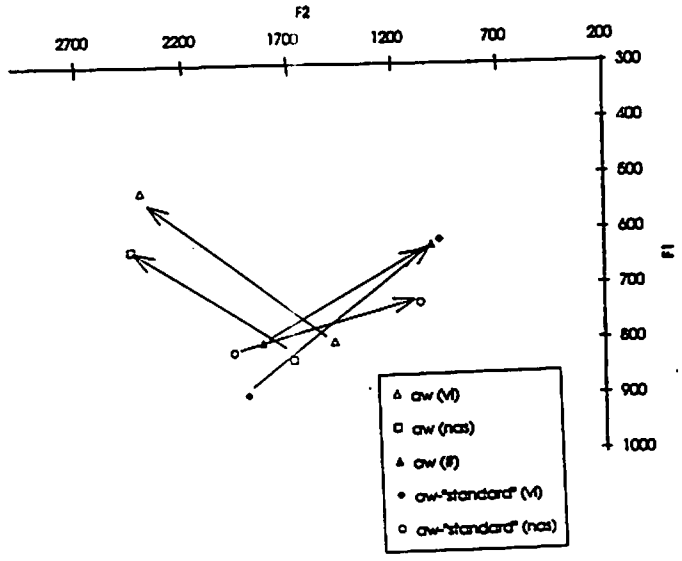
b. DE, 15-year-old female



nucleus is not evident, for example, in prevoiceless position. Thus, it appears that glide fronting may not be phonetically contingent upon nucleus fronting, as suggested, for example, in Labov, Yaeger, and Steiner (1972). Another possible explanation for this apparent incongruence is that the social marking of /aw/ in Smith Island has led speakers to seize on a phonetically unnatural variant, because such a variant may be more noticeable than a phonetically expected one.

There are two cases in which JK, the speaker in Figure 4a, does not produce clearly fronted glides. First, the /aw/ glide shows a backward trajectory in word-final position, as it did for the Ocracoke speakers represented in Figure 3. Second, /aw/ is back-glided in prevoiceless and prenasal environments when JK demonstrates /aw/ vowels that are different from her own—for example, those of her mother. The positioning of the nucleus and glide of these tokens relative to JK's ordinary conversational tokens is given in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Demonstrating Smith Island and Mainland /aw/



The role of /aw/ in linguistic demonstration is indicative of its salience in Smith Island, especially in contrast with the relatively non-salient /ay/ diphthong. For example, consider the following excerpt from JK's sociolinguistic interview. In this passage, JK is discussing her mother's lack of glide-fronting for /aw/ compared with her own use. The phonetic production of each case of /aw/ and /ay/ in the conversation is given in broad transcription. Glide-fronted /aw/ is represented as [æ^{I}]; nucleus-raised /ay/ would be represented as [ə^{I}], if it had occurred in this passage.

(3) JK: Well, my mother was from Tylerton. I say, um, **house** [hæ^{I}s], **brown** [bræ^{I}n], you know, just as flat and broad as it can be. But they—she still says **house** [ha^{U}s] and **brown** [bra^{U}n].

FW: Just like—like I would.

JK: Yeah, mmhmm. They say it **down** [dæ^{I}n] there ... **down** [dæ^{I}n], **down** [da^{U}n]. I don't know if she says—I don't know about **down** [dæ^{I}n]. I know about **house** [ha^{U}s]. I know about that.

FW: Now she would say, just like this: Would she say **house** [ha^{U}s]?

JK: Uhhuh. Yep. And I say **house** [hæ^{I}s]. I heard her say **house** [ha^{U}s], but I say house [hæ^{I}s]. Cause that's how Tylerton says that. I can pick up a—I don't know how to say it, up at Rhodes Point, it seems like they say—use the long uh /ay/ [a^{I}]. Like I say **pie** [pa^{I}]. And maybe that's right, but it's like they go **pie** [pa^{I}]. It's like a long /ay/ or something in there. I can just pick it up. I don't even know if I'm saying..

FW: You can't necessarily copy it, but you can hear it.

JK: No, no, I can't say it.

The conversation shows that JK is quite proficient in producing different variants of /aw/, including the glide-fronted variant that typifies Smith Island speech. However, she fails in her attempts to produce different /ay/ variants, even though she insists that she can hear them. Most likely, her ability to demonstrate

variants of /aw/ but not /ay/ is indicative of a greater awareness of /aw/ and its variant realizations. The conversation also indicates that JK is aware that glide-fronted /aw/ is more prevalent in the speech of middle-aged islanders such as herself than older islanders such as her mother.

The younger Smith Islander, DE, whose partial vowel chart is given in Figure 4b, shows a pattern similar to the middle-aged speaker in terms of her /aw/ production; she indicates generalized glide-fronting for /aw/, except in word-final position. Her nucleus appears more raised than the middle-aged speaker's, yet it is not clearly fronted. At this point, we are uncertain whether to categorize the raising of the /aw/ nucleus in Smith Island as a fronted and raised variant which is part of the Southern Vowel Shift or as a centralized raised variant which represents a retrograde movement, as in Martha's Vineyard English (1963) or Canadian English (Chambers 1973). We are not even sure that such a categorization is relevant to the social marking of /aw/, since it appears to be the trajectory of the glide rather than the position of the nucleus which makes Smith Island /aw/ so noticeable to islanders and outsiders.

Like the middle-aged Smith Islander, the 15-year-old islander produces a backed glide for /aw/ in demonstrating mainland /aw/ variants, while the front-glided variant is prevalent in other contexts. In fact, her glide fronting is so prevalent that it sometimes leads to real-life cross-dialectal misinterpretation. Consider, for example, DE's report of confusion concerning /aw/ that took place in the mainland town of Salisbury, Maryland. The conversation in (4) takes place between the fieldworker (FW) and two Smith Islanders (LAE and DE) who were 13 and 15, respectively, at the time of the interview.

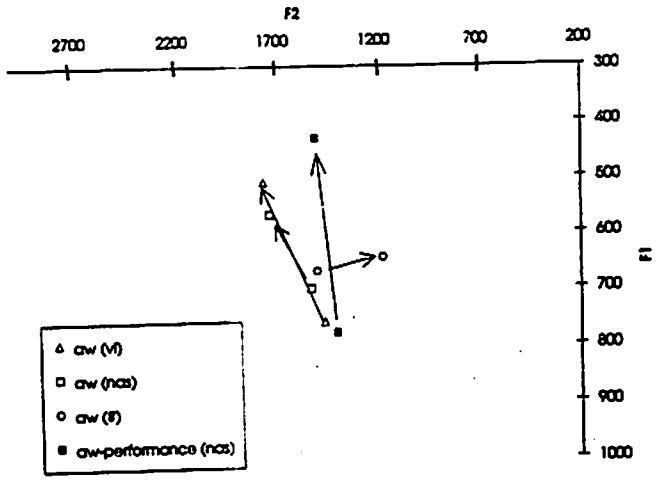
(4) LAE: We say **down** [dæ^{I}n] and **south** [sæ^{I}θ] and all that; we don't say it the way you talk—I don't know how to say it.
FW: **Down** [da^{U}n] and **sound** [sa^{U}nd].
LAE: Yeah, like that.
DE: One time I was in the Salisbury Mall, and I had this **brown** [bræ^{I}n] pocketbook. And I went in the shoe store, and I left it in there, and I went in there and

told that man, I said, "Have you seen a **brown** [bræ^{I}n] pocketbook in here?" He couldn't understand me, how I said it. And he went back there and got—he understood 'pocketbook'. He went back there and he said, "Is this yours?" I said, "Yeah."
FW: Did you point to it and say, "See? See what color it is?"
DE: Yeah. I tried to talk—I said **brown** [bra^{U}n]. I couldn't say it good; he still couldn't understand me.

The young speakers in this interview, like the 41-year-old speaker cited above, manipulates the glide-fronted and non-glide-fronted variants of /aw/ fairly readily, indicating greater awareness of /ay/ variants than those of /ay/. There are a number of discussions of /aw/ like this one and the one in (3) in the Smith Island interviews, as well as observations by outsiders about this feature. By contrast, there is relatively little overt discussion of /ay/, and islanders do not seem to be able to demonstrate the raised variant [ə^{I}] which is becoming more and more prevalent in their speech. In other words, these speakers are not able to demonstrate their awareness of the [ə^{I}] variant either through direct comment or through what Preston (1996) refers to as "definition by ostentation."

Conversely, Ocracokers are quick to demonstrate what it is that is unique about their /ay/ vowel while ignoring /aw/. For example, Rex O'Neal, the speaker of the Ocracoke dialect studied in Schilling-Estes' examination of performance speech (1995, 1996) indicates greater height for the nucleus of /ay/ in speech performances than in non-performance speech. Although his stock performance phrase, *It's hoi toide on the sound soide* 'It's high tide on the sound side', also contains an /aw/ vowel in addition to three /ay/'s, spectrographic measurements reveal that he is not able to seize on the feature of /aw/ glide-fronting in his speech performances. In fact, his performance production of /aw/ is actually less glide-fronted than his production of /aw/ in ordinary conversation during his sociolinguistic interview. Measurements for /aw/ in Rex's performance and non-performance speech are given in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Ocracoke /aw/: Performance and Non-performance



A preliminary quantitative analysis of glide-fronted /aw/ based on 10 Smith Island and seven Ocracoke speakers reveals a contrast between Ocracoke and Smith Island as dramatic as that indicated by our quantitative analysis of /ay/. In Tables 3 and 4, we present raw figures and VARBRUL analysis results for /aw/ glide-fronting in the two communities. A graphic comparison is given in Figure 7. The internal factor group is following environment, which is limited to prevoiceless and prenasal environments because there are very few examples of prevoiced /aw/.

The results of our preliminary quantitative analysis indicate that glide-fronted /aw/ is increasing dramatically on Smith Island, particularly between old and middle-aged speakers but also between middle-aged and younger speakers. Thus, the move toward /aw/-fronting appears to represent a robust, rapid language change in progress.

Conversely, there has been a rapid decline in glide-fronted /aw/ on Ocracoke. At this point, we are not quite sure what to make of the fact that middle-aged Ocracokers display a higher incidence of glide-fronted /aw/ than older speakers. One possibility is that a change in progress toward increased fronting was abandoned in the face of competition from mainland /aw/. In light

of the small sample of speakers and the high Chi-square per cell scores (3.149) indicated in our VARBRUL analysis, we are hesitant to draw any definite conclusions at this point. What is clear from our analysis thus far, however, is that glide-fronted /aw/ is drastically receding without fanfare in Ocracoke while it is rapidly expanding in Smith Island—with considerable fanfare.

Table 3. The Variable Patterning of Glide-Fronted /aw/

a. Raw Figures: Ocracoke

Age Group	*Prevoiceless* No. Front/Tot. % Fronted	*Prenasal* No.Front/Tot. % Fronted	*Total* No. Front/Tot. % Fronted
Older	7/79 8.9%	6/52 11.5%	13/131 9.9%
Middle-Aged	12/81 14.8%	16/67 23.9%	28/148 18.9%
Younger	3/82 3.7%	0/73 0.0%	3/155 2.0%

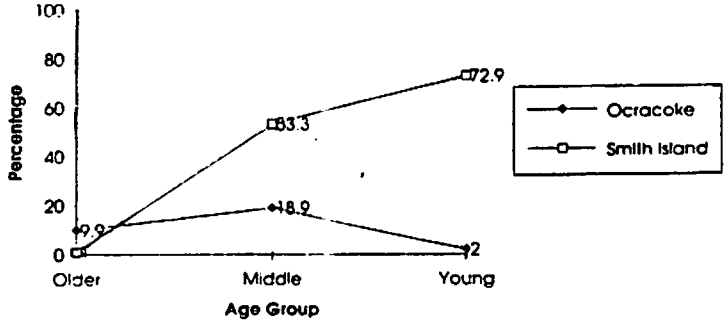
b. Raw Figures: Smith Island

Age Group	*Prevoiceless* No. Front/Tot. % Fronted	*Prenasal* No.Front/Tot. % Fronted	*Total* No. Front/Tot. % Fronted
Older	0/69 0.0%	1/40 3.0%	1/109 1.0%
Middle-Aged	64/126 50.8%	40/69 58.0%	104/195 53.3%
Younger	62/93 66.7%	32/36 88.9%	94/129 72.9%

Table 4. VARBRUL Results for /aw/ glide-fronting

VARBRUL Results: Ocracoke	**VARBRUL Results: Smith Island**
Application = glide fronting	Application = glide fronting
Input Probability = .07	Input Probability = .30
Age Group:	Age Group:
Older = .62	Older = .02
Middle-aged = .75	Middle-aged = .74
Young = .19	Young = .84
Sex:	Sex:
Female = .36	Female = .76
Male = .65	Male = .24
Following Environment:	Following Environment:
Voiceless Obstruent = .46	Voiceless Obstruent = .44
Nasal = .56	Nasal = .61
Chi-square per cell = 3.149	Chi-square per cell = 1.359

Figure 7. The Patterning of Glide-Fronted /aw/ Over Time in Ocracoke and Smith Island



4. Conclusion

The examination of /ay/ and /aw/ in Ocracoke English and Smith Island English has shown that cross-dialectal variants that appear, at first glance, to be somewhat similar may turn out to be quite different in terms of (1) their status within their respective vowel system configurations, (2) the directionality of the linguistic change affecting the variants, and (3) the social embedding and evaluation of the linguistic changes taking place. With respect to the status of /ay/ and /aw/ within the Ocracoke and Smith Island vowel systems, we see differences in peripherality, at least for /ay/. Raised /ay/ in Ocracoke is located in peripheral vowel space, while Smith Island raised /ay/ is non-peripheral. This differential status with respect to peripherality most likely explains the differential ordering of constraints affecting /ay/ raising in the two varieties.

We were also struck by the fact that, whereas Ocracoke /ay/ nucleus-raising and /aw/ glide-fronting appear to be part of the expected continuation of the Southern Vowel Shift, Smith Island /ay/ raising seems to be a retrograde movement, just like Canadian Raising and Martha's Vineyard raising. It may be that varieties undergoing death by concentration are more prone to initiate retrograde movements than those undergoing death by dissipation—perhaps as a defense against the outside language variants that win out in communities like Ocracoke.

The differential social marking of /ay/ and /aw/ in Ocracoke and Smith Island also seems to have an effect on the progression of change. The recession of /ay/ backing/raising in Ocracoke has been shown to be somewhat irregular, both in terms of its change slope and its phonetic conditioning. Meanwhile, the more socially unobtrusive marker /aw/ seems to be receding in a regular way. On Smith Island, raised /ay/ is increasing steadily and straightforwardly, in a phonetically natural manner. However, the more obtrusive /aw/ shows no clear pattern in the directionality of the movement of its nucleus; and it appears that the glide may be fronted independently of the nucleus—a phenomenon which is quite unexpected, phonetically. We suggest further that there will be a difference in the stylistic manipulation of changing dialect features based on their symbolic role and their level of consciousness. Ocracokers indicate "definition by ostentation" for /ay/ but

not for /aw/, while Smith Islanders apparently show the converse. Thus, the symbolic meaning of dialect features has important implications for stylistic manipulation in dialect change and death.

Our examination of /aw/ and /ay/ demonstrates that the dissipation model of dialect death is not applicable to all endangered dialect situations. Dialect recession in Smith Island seems to be characterized by CONCENTRATION or INTENSIFICATION, in which the dialect actually gains in strength as it loses speakers, leading to a sort of 'survival of the dialect fittest.' We are impressed with how rapidly raised /ay/ and glide-fronted /aw/ in Ocracoke are fading; for Smith Island, we are impressed with how fast the changes toward glide-fronted /aw/ and raised /ay/ are progressing. Dialect endangerment due to the loss of speakers rather than extended contact with speakers of other dialects may lead to the compressed intensification of structures, just as linguistic swamping may lead to a rapid loss of features.

Before we confronted the case of dialect intensification in Smith Island, we were not aware that post-insular dialects could become so distinctive as they moved towards death. We were not alone in this belief. Despite the apparent awareness of Smith Islanders that glide-fronted /aw/ is expanding in their community, as evidenced in the excerpt in (3), other comments from interviews suggest that Smith Islanders firmly believe that their dialect is becoming diluted as it dies. Sometimes, however, contrary to popular opinion and scholarly belief, the more things seem the same, the more they may actually differ.

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Department of English, Box 8105
North Carolina State University
Raleigh, NC 27695–8105

estes@unity.ncsu.edu
wolfram@social.chass.ncsu.edu