The pace of change in Appalachian English

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With the founding of the American Folklore Society in 1888 with the American Dialect Society in 1889, the rallying call went out for researchers to collect and document features of American culture and language, especially in remote and isolated areas, that were supposedly in imminent danger of passing into history. The challenge particularly cited the need to gather material from African-Americans and from Appalachia, the latter region having begun to enter American popular and scholarly consciousness as a culturally distinctive entity in the decade following the Civil War (Shapiro 1978). Thus began the rush to mountain hollows and coves to collect many types of verbal lore – tales, ballads, proverbs, expressions, and others – before they were lost. Many hundreds of publications have resulted.

Spoken in the backwoods and uplands of the Eastern United States, from West Virginia southwestward to Alabama, Appalachian English has continued to be one of the most recognizable of the nation's regional varieties of English. Because it retains many archaisms, it has drawn the interest alike of lay people, who have often romanticized it as a carryover from Shakespeare's day, and writers of widely varying scholarship. More than seven hundred items dealing with Appalachian English have been published (as noted in McMillan and Montgomery 1989) since the first serious studies, Calvin S. Brown's "Dialectal Survivals in Tennessee" and James Mooney's "Folk-lore of the Carolina Mountains", were published in 1889.

From the time of the early studies of a century ago, even though most of these were little more than word-lists, writers have had two enduring and dominant impressions of Appalachian speech. First, they have stressed its archaicness, which has usually meant that many resemblances could be found in mountain English to the language of Shakespeare, Spenser, Chaucer, and their contemporaries – these writers being the primary sources of comparative data, albeit literary data, with which most modern commentators have been familiar. This identification of relic forms in Middle English and other older stages of the language in Appalachian English has had more than antiquarian motivations. Along

with research on ballads and other cultural phenomena, it has been part of the effort to establish a definite cultural identity for Appalachian people – one connected directly to Old world forebears – in the face of a prevailing national view that saw the region as socially and culturally backward and Appalachian speech patterns as having low status. This effort to document and stress archaicness continues apace, at least among popularizers, and was exemplified in an episode of *The Story of English* television series produced by the BBC (1987).

At the same time, a second theme in much of the writing on Appalachian English has stressed how rapidly its vocabulary and grammar are changing, this being frequently accompanied by the claim that the distinctiveness of Appalachian speech was quickly heading the same way as other varieties of American English were supposedly going under the influence of various modernizing forces – comprehensive schooling, modern highways, the national media, and so on. Appalachian English, it has often been alleged, was eroding so fast that it might be completely lost within only one to two generations. Older speakers who used the distinctive forms were dying off and younger people were not using them. Moreover, the prospect of such an erosion was said to be as regrettable as it was inevitable. A typical expression of this from earlier this century is as follows: "Probably not many of the old mountaineers will change their expressions but most of the new generation have already begun the mighty change that will soon wipe away forever our admirable mountaineer with his quaint and delightful manner and speech" (Coleman 1936: 30).

While Appalachian English has undoubtedly undergone and continues to undergo significant and extensive changes in the twentieth century, scholars interested in Appalachian speech know very little in specific terms about these changes, for a variety of reasons. For one, the bulk of published work cites only unusual, often quite rare, usages and thus does not provide a basis for comparison of the typical language patterns from one generation to another. For another, studies have normally generalized for all features for all speakers in each generation (e. g., Berrey 1940, Dial 1969, and Williams 1978) and have rarely made any social or gender distinctions in usage. For a third, until quite recently studies completely lacked the quantitative orientation needed to provide indices by which linguists could make measurements between speakers and produce comparability between studies. As a result, despite many studies we are not much closer to answering larger questions about change in Appalachian English, even though it has been perhaps the most intensely studied

regional variety of American English for a century. Particularly with regard to its grammatical patterns, linguists have been able to say little about how change has been occurring and thus whether – or how quickly – Appalachian English may be losing its distinctiveness.

This essay seeks to address four specific questions about change in the grammar of Appalachian English:

1) Which features of Appalachian English have been changing?
2) What is the extent of these changes?
3) What is the rate of these changes?
4) How are changes related to social factors such as the gender of speakers?

In a broader sense, the lack of such information prevents us from addressing more general issues of the evolution of an important regional culture in the United States.

The optimal measurement of linguistic change has several requirements – among these being quantified data based on the systematic analysis of grammatical and phonological variables for speakers of the same age levels recorded at least a generation apart – that is, providing a "real time" comparison of speakers. Although the grammar of Appalachian English has been studied far less than its vocabulary, several quantitatively based studies have been conducted in recent years, most notable by Wolfram and Christian in West Virginia (1975, 1976). These have examined the speech of different age groups (viewing these generational differences as reflecting generational change, i.e., looking at change in what is known as "apparent time"), by focusing chiefly on verbs and pronouns. Such studies have markedly enriched our understanding of change in Appalachian English. While they represent an important step in consolidating our knowledge about how much change has taken place and how archaic Appalachian speech continues to be, they have less validity than real-time comparisons of linguistic change, comparisons based on similar sets of data collected a generation or more apart.

1. The present study

The research presented in this paper represents part of a larger study analyzing change and variation in the Appalachian English of the Tennessee-North Carolina border area, a study that is the first to examine

Table 1. Informants for present study

Generation (Dates of Birth)	Male	Female
Older Generation (1843–c. 1900)	36	10
Middle Generation (1893–1923)	6	7
Younger Generation (1933–1961)	6	5

in real time-depth the pace of changes in Appalachian English and how these changes have been affected by the social and economic transformation of the past three-quarters of a century on this part of the United States. We will focus on three broad generations of speakers, the breakdown for which is shown in Table 1.

2. Data

Representing the oldest generation of speakers are thirty-six men and ten women from the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina. Nearly all of these individuals were born before the turn of the twentieth century, several as early as the 1860s and the oldest in 1843. Many of them were children or grandchildren of the original settlers in the area. Forty-one of them were interviewed between 1939 and 1941 by Joseph Sargent Hall, who was commissioned by the National Park Service to record stories, songs, and reminiscences of remaining natives of the territory that became the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, an extensive, largely wilderness area straddling East Tennessee and Western North Carolina. Data from these interviews, collected on seventy-three phonographic recordings, were analyzed for the phonetics of this variety of speech in Hall (1942). They have been analyzed for grammatical purposes only by the two authors of this essay (Montgomery 1989a and b, Chapman 1989).[1]

These older speakers from the Smoky Mountains represent the earliest, and probably the most isolated, variety of Appalachian English to which we have access. These people, all subsistence farmers, typically had resided their entire lives in remote valleys and isolated homesteads and had very little contact with either formal schooling or life in nearby towns, all of which were at least day's hike away. Most of the interviews comprise

fast-paced stories of bear and panther hunting, moonshining, and the like; as a result, these recordings provide excellent samples of unguarded speech.[2]

With these older speakers we will compare twenty-four people interviewed in 1978 (Montgomery 1979) with a loosely directed sociolinguistic questionnaire. Thirteen of these, seven women and six men, were between fifty-five and eighty-six years old (born between 1893 and 1923) and will be considered the middle generation of speakers in this paper. These speakers had an average of ten years of schooling (although the school year for them in the early 20th century was never more than six or seven months). Eleven other individuals, five women and six men, were between sixteen and forty-five years old (born between 1933 and 1961) and will be considered the younger generation of speakers. All of these speakers were either high school graduates (several had some college education and three were college graduates) or they were currently in high school.

The middle and younger speakers resided in White Pine, a small town of approximately 2000 people in Jefferson County, Tennessee, located in the Tennessee Valley one county west of the mountains. In general, they were much better educated than the forty-six older speakers from the Smoky Mountains. Although several were part-time farmers, most of them were employed in local industries and businesses and had a distinctly more urban orientation than the older speakers. For these and other reasons, one might question their comparability to the older generation of informants, but they turn out to be directly comparable nonetheless. The middle and younger speakers or their parents had all moved down into Jefferson County from Sevier or Cocke County, Tennessee, or Haywood County, North Carolina, just across the border from Tennessee. In short, all twenty-four had immediate ancestors who grew up in one or more of these three mountain counties and whose relative isolation approximated that of the older speakers in this study. Their migration down the Tennessee Valley within the past two generations coincides with the decline of subsistence farming in the region, the coming of compulsory schooling, increased economic diversification and opportunity, and wider social contacts for its citizens.

This radical transformation of the lives of most natives of East Tennessee, rather than indicating social forces that prevent the present study from drawing conclusions because these forces cannot be controlled for in a strict sense, presents a way of investigating the effects of these powerful forces on the region's speech. It is hardly possible to study the same range and profile of speakers in a given community today as were

interviewed a generation ago, but more important, our approach represents a pointed way to study the modernizing influences that are at work in Appalachia as well as everywhere else in the country. It also permits study of the effects of actual social forces rather than the putative ones (e.g., the media). As we will see, the coming of the above-mentioned forces, particularly compulsory schooling, has had less effect on some grammatical patterns than we might expect.

3. Features studied

This paper examines the patterning, across generations and across genders, of variation in four contexts found within a single type of clause – the existential. These contexts are 1) the initial, semantically empty, slot of existential clauses, which is filled by an element called the "existentializer" (with the variants *they*, *there*, *it*, or zero); 2) the second position in such clauses, usually taken by a copula verb (*is*, *are*, etc.), examined as to whether or not the verb is contracted; 3) the form of the copula verb in existentials with plural subjects (i.e., type of concord marking); and 4) the form of the relative pronoun that heads restrictive relative clauses following grammatical subjects (with the variants zero, *that*, *which*, *who*, etc.). A total of 1169 existential clauses from the three generations of speakers constitute the data for this study. The four contexts are chosen because they all come into play, the first one obligatorily, in existential clauses and because they provide a convenient means for examining several types of variation which may well represent competing changes in progress. That is, in sentences like (1–3), a speaker chooses between one form or another in several of these four contexts:

(1) *They's nobody went by hardly ever.* (Existentializer, Contraction, Relative Pronoun)

(2) *[He] said they's grown children there that never had been in a church house.* (Existentializer, Contraction, Subject-Verb Concord, Relative Pronoun)

(3) *Because there's lots of mountains that's higher than the Smokies.* (Existentializer, Contraction, Subject-Verb Concord, Relative Pronoun)

Thus an examination of only the existential clauses in a corpus gives us evidence of several choices a speaker makes and enables a preliminary assessment of the variation and change in these four contexts, with reference to generation and gender. This study presents only the outlines of the resulting patterns and acknowledges the fact that some details are being ignored that a closer examination would consider. In particular, in grouping speakers by generation and gender, it obscures individual variation, about which a few comments will be made toward the end of this paper.

3.1. Form of existentializer

The four forms taken by the existentializer, the introducer of an existential clause, in Southern Appalachian speech are illustrated in sentences 4–11.

They:

(4) *They's one set right down here, big log house.*

(5) *They was a lot of Ogles emigrated to the state of Illinois.*

There:

(6) *There wasn't any doctors, just midwives.*

(7) *Because there's lots of mountains that's higher than the Smokies.*

It:

(8) *It'd be a lot of people would faint.*

(9) *It was fairly enough room to walk behind it, barely.*

Zero:

(10) *[0 was] No way of gittin' there, only walkin'.*

(11) *[0 is] Lots of rain up there.*

Of these four forms, the most interesting are *they* and *it* (the zero form, which sometimes also includes the copula verb, as in the examples above, results from a discourse process affecting various utterance-initial elements, a process that is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss further). Both *they* and *it* were noted in West Virginia by Wolfram and Christian, who comment that "*it* and *they* are used to a considerable extent in [Appalachian English]; however, most speakers show a clear preference for one or the other as the correspondence for [existential] *there* ... younger speakers tend to prefer the *it* correspondence while older speakers show a preference for *they*" (Wolfram–Christian 1976: 126). A close look at Table 2 shows that the data in the present study are not entirely consistent with these findings. *They* is indeed preferred by the older speakers, but existential *it* occurs at a marginal rate for all generations.[3]

The formal relationship of existentializer *they* to existentializer *there* is not altogether clear. While it is presumably the /r/-less form of *there* and occurs in many varieties of Southern American speech, in Appalachian English it is phonologically anomalous. Appalachian English is strongly /r/-ful, so the replacement of *they* by *there* is not part of a larger process of restoring postvocalic /r/ under way elsewhere (Bailey–Feagin 1988). Unlike in these other varieties, neither locative *there* nor pronominal *their* is /r/-less in Appalachian speech. At least one writer has proposed (Underwood n.d.) that existentializer *they* is derived from personal pronoun *they* rather than from *there*. However, it is most likely an inherited form, with its source being the speech of colonial immigrants from Scotland and Ulster.[4]

Whatever its history, existential *they* was clearly the dominant form in older Appalachian speech. As Table 2 indicates, it occurred for older speakers in the present study at a rate of more than sixty percent for both males and females. However, existential *they* has been largely replaced by *there* for the middle and younger generations, so that *they* and *there* have almost exactly flip-flopped from the oldest to the youngest speakers. Just as interesting is the split between men and women, more evident in the middle generation speakers than younger ones, with middle-

Table 2. Existentializers by generation and gender

	They		There		It		Zero		Total
Older	166	62.4%	77	28.9%	9	3.4%	14	5.3%	266
Males	152	62.5%	70	28.8%	8	3.3%	13	5.3%	243
Females	14	60.9%	7	30.4%	1	4.3%	1	4.3%	23
Middle	162	31.0%	302	57.7%	12	2.3%	47	9.0%	523
Males	110	41.5%	106	40.0%	8	3.0%	41	15.5%	265
Females	52	20.2%	196	76.0%	4	1.6%	6	2.3%	258
Younger	99	26.1%	268	70.5%	3	0.8%	10	2.6%	380
Males	69	28.2%	166	67.8%	3	1.2%	7	2.9%	245
Females	30	22.2%	102	75.6%	0	0.0%	3	2.2%	135

generation men using *they* at twice the rate as their female counterparts. For the youngest generation, this split has disappeared, with men and women using *there* and *they* at nearly the same rates. *They* is still used by younger speakers, but women made the shift to dominant *there* a generation earlier than men did.

3.2. Contraction

The figures for contraction of singular copula verbs to the preceding existentializing element is shown in Table 3 for the three generations of Appalachian speakers. Of the 1169 clauses, 790 have contexts with contractible copulas; the other 379 clauses have modal verbs, contracted negatives (which produced a form like *wasn't* that was not open to further contraction with the existentializer), plural copulas, zero copulas (47 instances), and other verbs. Plural copulas are not analyzed in this paper. They are rather rare (occurring, for instance, only seven times for the older speakers), as will be seen in the discussion of subject-verb concord, and questions of the phonological distinctiveness and morphological interpretation of [ðer] (i.e., whether it represents *they're*, *there* + zero copula, or *there're*) arise with plural copulas as well.

While Table 3 indicates that for present-tense copulas the contracted form *'s* is dominant across generations, the forms of the past-tense copula most command our interest in Appalachian English existential clauses. Contraction of *is* is the rule for most, if not all, spoken varieties of American English, but contraction of *was* is not. Contracted *was*, examples of which are found in sentences (1), (2), and (4) earlier in this paper, is dominant over the full form *was* for our older generation, occurring at a rate of 62.3%. (It should be noted that the category "contracted *was*" combines both copula forms with a residual neutral vowel, as in [ðeəz]), and forms reduced to the consonant alone, as in [ðez]). The criterion for classifying the forms *they's* and *there's* as contractions of *was* rather than *is* is the presence of another verb in the sentence that is clearly marked for past tense, as in (12–14):

Table 3. Contraction by generation and gender

	Present Copulas					Past Copulas				
	is		's (PRES)		Total	was		's (PAST)		Total
Older	7	15.2%	39	84.8%	46	57	37.7%	94	62.3%	151
Males	6	14.0%	37	86.0%	43	49	36.0%	87	64.0%	136
Females	1	33.3%	2	66.7%	3	8	53.3%	7	46.7%	15
Middle	10	6.3%	148	93.7%	158	94	69.1%	42	30.9%	136
Males	2	3.3%	59	96.7%	61	44	59.5%	30	40.5%	74
Females	8	8.2%	89	91.8%	97	50	80.6%	12	19.4%	62
Younger	22	9.1%	219	90.9%	241	54	93.1%	4	6.9%	58
Males	17	11.6%	130	88.4%	147	45	95.7%	2	4.3%	47
Females	5	5.3%	89	94.7%	94	9	81.8%	2	18.2%	11

(12) *[he] said they's grown children there that never had been in a church house.*

(13) *... natural forest like it once was before there's ever an im-, improvement made there at all.*

(14) *There's no traveling that went along at that time.*

Contracted *was* has dropped sharply (from 62.3% to 30.9% to 6.9%) across the three generations of speakers and is clearly being replaced by full *was* (the form with a clear initial [w]). This process is, like the replacement of *they* by *there*, further advanced among women, although the data for older and younger speakers are far fewer and thus less reliable for females than for males, and younger speakers apparently do not continue the trend.

3.3. Subject-verb concord

That Appalachian English employs rules for subject-verb concord different from many other varieties of American English has frequently been documented (Hackenberg 1973, Wolfram–Christian 1976, etc.). These rules involve the use, with third-person-plural subjects, of an *-s* marking (verbal *-s* on non-copula verbs like *goes* and *hunts* and use of copula *is* and *was*) but only with subjects that are nouns, indefinite pronouns, or demonstrative pronouns (i.e., not with the personal pronoun *they* as subject). The history of these rules, which may be traced back through Ireland to Scottish English, is detailed in Montgomery (1989a and b). These studies show that subject-verb concord varies in present-day Appalachian speech according to subject type, with *is* and *was* and their contractions almost categorical in existential clauses; for examples of which, see sentences (2), (3), (5), (6), and (7). The use of *-s* marked verbs with plural subjects is also common in relative clauses, as in sentence (3)

Table 4. Present subject-verb concord by generation and gender (based on items with copula verbs and plural subjects)

	is		are		's (PRES)		Total
Older	2	10.0%	3	15.0%	15	75.0%	20
Males	2	11.8%	2	11.8%	13	76.4%	17
Females	0	0.0%	1	33.3%	2	66.7%	3
Middle	4	3.4%	41	34.7%	73	61.9%	118
Males	2	4.1%	17	34.7%	30	61.2%	49
Females	2	2.9%	24	34.8%	43	62.3%	69
Younger	8	6.0%	7	5.2%	119	88.8%	134
Males	5	6.6%	3	3.9%	68	89.5%	76
Females	3	5.2%	4	6.9%	51	87.9%	58

above. In Appalachian speech the full copula forms *are* and *were* seem to have been marginal forms in existential clauses with plural subjects, especially among older speakers; Wolfram and Christian (1976: 83) cite a 7% rate for *are* in the present tense and 4.1 for *were* in the past with plural subjects in existentials.

Tables 4 and 5 display the forms of the copula used in existentials with plural subjects for the three generations of Appalachian speakers.[5] For present-tense contexts, the principal finding here is that contracted *'s* has been dominant for all generations, and the infrequency of the full forms *is* and *are* prevent us from saying much about their status except that they do not seem to be on the increase, from what we can observe of the younger generation. The greater use of *are* by the middle generation

Table 5. Past subject-verb concord by generation and gender (based on items with copula verbs and plural subjects)

	was		were		's (PAST)		Total
Older	29	38.7%	4	5.3%	42	56.0%	75
Males	24	35.8%	4	6.0%	39	58.2%	67
Females	5	62.5%	0	0.0%	3	37.5%	8
Middle	36	53.7%	9	13.4%	22	32.8%	67
Males	20	50.0%	4	10.0%	16	40.0%	40
Females	16	59.3%	5	18.5%	6	22.2%	27
Younger	19	70.4%	7	25.9%	1	3.7%	27
Males	15	78.9%	4	21.1%	0	0.0%	19
Females	4	50.0%	3	37.5%	1	12.5%	8

reflects individual variation, with one female using *are* in 16 of her 18 clauses with a plural subject and one male using *are* on 13 occasions.

For past-tense contexts, however, there is clear evidence for a shift from *'s* to *was* (consistent with the figures in Table 3) and to a lesser extent *were*, in that for the younger generation there is only one occurrence of past-tense *'s* with a plural subject:[6]

(15) *Well, most, most of my life, there's a few years I lived in the city.*

3.4. Relative pronouns

The fourth context for variation we examine is the slot for a subject relative pronoun to head a restrictive relative clause. Two hundred forty-seven of the 1169 clauses have a clause with a finite verb whose subject is relativized to the subject of the existential, as seen in examples (1–3).[7] (The majority of existential clauses have post-nominal prepositional phrases, nonfinite clauses, adverbs of various types, and so on.) A quick glance at Table 6 indicates that only two forms (Zero and *that*) occur often enough in this context to be of interest. In the 247 relative clauses with subject headnouns under consideration for the three generations of speakers, altogether only eight instances of *who* or *which* occur; *wh*-relative pronouns from this evidence appear quite marginal in Appalachian English, especially for the youngest, best-educated speakers, several of whom had college educations. The Zero relative, illustrated in sentences (1), (4), (5), and so on, is the dominant form for older speakers, occurring

Table 6. Subject relative pronoun choice by generation and gender

	ZERO		that		who		which		Total
Older	47	77.0%	14	23.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	61
Males	42	76.4%	13	23.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	55
Females	5	83.3%	1	16.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6
Middle	55	49.1%	50	44.6%	5	4.5%	2	1.8%	112
Males	37	68.5%	15	27.8%	1	1.9%	1	1.9%	54
Females	18	31.0%	35	60.3%	4	6.9%	1	1.7%	58
Younger	34	45.3%	40	53.3%	0	0.0%	1	1.4%	75
Males	20	48.8%	20	48.8%	0	0.0%	1	2.4%	41
Females	14	41.2%	20	58.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	34

more than three times as often as *that*. It continues strong for the two younger generations, especially for men, competing very strongly with *that*.

4. Conclusions

Popular writers have often asserted that the vocabulary and grammar of Appalachian English are changing rapidly and indiscriminately, steadily across generations and for all features at the same time. Linguistic studies rarely provided comparative information. However, for the four contexts of variation examined in this study we can now provide real-time quantitative statements about four types of change: whether features are changing, what the extent of these changes is, what the rates of these changes are, and how these changes are related to social factors such as the gender of speakers.

Our comparison of three generations of Appalachian speakers indicates that at least three changes are taking place in a dramatic fashion in Appalachian English, as detected in existential clauses:

1) choice of existentializer, with *they* being replaced by *there* (Table 2);
2) form of the past-tense copula, with contracted *was* being replaced by full form *was* and by *were* (Tables 3 and 5); and
3) choice of the relative pronoun, with zero giving way to *that* (Table 6).

As for the rate of these changes, the form of the past-tense copula seems to have shifted most quickly, followed by the choice of existentializer and then the choice of relative pronoun. However, only one of these – involving the loss of contracted *was* – has more or less reached completion. Much variation remains within the younger generation, preventing us from unreservedly equating generation differences with a specific direction of change. One younger speaker, an ambitious, upwardly mobile male who is now the state legislator from the area, used *they* twice as often as *there* (23 to 11) and the Zero relative nearly twice as often as *that* (9 to 5). He and other younger speakers demonstrate that the older and more conservative vernacular patterns are definitely alive and well. The factors which can account for this are neither social aspirations nor level of education, but further exploration of this topic is beyond the scope of the present paper.

Further evidence that Appalachian English is not undergoing uniform changes, at least in existential clauses, is seen when we compare the form of present-tense copulas with plural subjects across generations, with contracted *is* continuing to be the dominant form (Table 4). In this respect Appalachian English is not evolving, and not converging with mainstream varieties of American English, if the latter varieties do in fact consistently evidence subject-verb concord in existential clauses.

Of the three changes identified above, women have most led the shift in the choice of existentializer and to some extent also in the replacement of the zero relative with *that*. From a linguistic point of view, why these aspects of Appalachian English would be changing and not others is at present unclear, although they seem to involve what we might describe as more overt grammatical forms and therefore may be more susceptible to social marking. While data for older women are quite limited for some features, this pattern of women in the lead of linguistic change is consistent with numerous other sociolinguistic studies and provides some of the clearest evidence for the changes that we would expect to accompany the social and economic transformation of mountain culture we mentioned earlier.

This paper has examined variation in Appalachian English in four contexts that are found frequently, and in one case always, in one clause-type, the existential. It has provided a quantitative look at how the variation in these contexts differs for three generations as a way of beginning to test some of the claims about wholesale linguistic change made in the literature and a way of beginning to provide an answer to, on the one hand, what aspects of Appalachian English are changing and how fast, and on the other hand, how conservative it continues to be.

It is hoped that this paper has shed some light on the general outlines of the evolution of Appalachian English. Many details need to be sketched in, and it remains an open question how closely differences between generations may be equated with directional change, given continuing variation between speakers within younger generations. A general picture on a real-time basis has now been provided, and directions for continuing research into how Appalachian English is evolving are now much clearer.

Notes

1. The imbalance of men and women reflects both the normal social contacts that an outsider doing fieldwork in the mountains would make and the type of material sought by an early fieldworker like Joseph Hall. Hall (p.c.) always made initial contact with the husband of a household for permission to record, and while he sometimes inter-

viewed men alone, he never interviewed women without men being present. In addition, Hall deliberately sought accounts of bear hunting and other outdoor activity. For both reasons, he interviewed few women, and his interviews with them were short. In addition to the Hall recordings, this study draws on data from five interviews conducted in the 1950s by National Park Service personnel with elderly male residents of the Smoky Mountains, informants closely comparable to those interviewed by Hall. The authors express much gratitude to Professor Hall for permission to use this data.

2. From a linguistic point of view, this means that these interviews have far more past-tense than present-tense verb tokens. Thus they provide more data on verb principal parts than on subject-verb concord.
3. The criterion for identifying existentializer *it* is interchangeability with existentializer *there*.
4. Macafee (1980: 12) reports existential *they* in modern-day Scotland; Ihalainen (p.c.) reports only marginal use in present-day England. The Oxford English Dictionary and the English Dialect Dictionary are silent on this question. However, Peitsara (1988: 72), in the only other comprehensive study of variation in existential elements this author has found, finds *they* to be common for a subset of eight of her Suffolk informants. It clearly appears to be a phonological variant in this variety, however, occurring primarily in the past tense before the consonant in *was/wasn't*. She notes that "*they* never occurs before the full form *is(n't)*", before a vowel.
5. These tables do not include contracted *are* because of the problems discussed above in the morphological interpretation of the phonological form [ðer].
6. The distribution of data between Tables 4 and 5 represents the nature of the interviews. That is, most of the older generation were asked about their younger, more active days; thus their past-tense tokens outnumbered present-tense ones nearly four to one. Younger speakers reflected much less on the past, producing five times as many present-tense tokens as past-tense ones.
7. Other types of relative clauses, such as ones whose direct objects are relativized onto the subject of the existential clause, are extremely rare in the data.

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