Y'ALL IN AMERICAN ENGLISH:
FROM BLACK TO WHITE, FROM PHRASE TO PRONOUN*

JOHN M. LIPSKI

1. Introduction: *y'all* in Southern American English

1.1. A mainstay element of southern AmE, as well as of dialects bordering on this region or derived from southern English (including most varieties of black AmE), is the second person plural pronoun *y'all*. This word appears to derive historically from *you all* (but cf. Montgomery 1992 for an alternative source), but has syntactic and semantic properties not identical to those of the latter element. Most descriptions of AmE which treat *y'all* assume, often without proof, that it is a direct continuation of *you all*, at times even adducing purported precursors among writers in England, including Shakespeare. In such accounts, the presence of *y'all* in Black English (BE) is not mentioned, but would presumably be included among the 'southern' characteristics of BE. A smaller number of observers, including those who believe that BE derives from an early 'plantation creole English', have suggested that *y'all* may have originated in BE, and may even represent a calque of a creole or African second person plural pronoun. Despite the significant differences between these hypotheses, little work has been done to trace the origin and development of *y'all* in any variety of AmE. The present study is offered as a partial response to this research gap. In particular, it will be suggested that the full range of syntactic combinations involving *y'all* entered White Southern English (WSE) through BE, after having undergone considerable syntactic and semantic modification in the latter. This does not preclude a European etymology for *y'all*, including a possible Scots-Irish or Hiberno-English contribution (as proposed by Montgomery 1992); in fact Scots-Irish English and BE undoubtedly reinforced each other in the emergence of *y'all* as a uniquely 'southern' element. The widest range of combinations based on *y'all* is found precisely in

those areas of the United States where the two varieties of English coexisted for long periods of time. The exclusively creole origin of BE *y'all*, while not entirely discarded, is greatly weakened by systematic comparative study.

1.2. The most difficult methodological aspect of studying the origins and contemporary manifestations of *y'all* is the lack of accurate documentation on earlier stages of both WSE and BE. Available written sources are suspect on at least some basis. The form *y'all* belongs principally to casual and colloquial speech, where it is unlikely that complex constructions involving this word have always been accurately transcribed. Observers for whom *y'all* is not a familiar form usually fail to pick up subtleties of usage, at the same time overgeneralizing the applicability of *y'all*, while those who routinely employ *y'all* in their own speech often instinctively filter the form out in writing, replacing it with *you*.

Tapping native speaker intuitions regarding usage of *y'all* is also difficult, given that this form is often sociolinguistically stigmatized, or regarded as jocose, familiar and inherently unable to be 'frozen' for introspective judgements of acceptability. Presenting *y'all* users with examples for judgements of acceptability may produce erratic results, and intuitions which do emerge are not always convergent for more complex examples, e.g. involving quantifier scope or multiple coreference. In any research program, some finite group of speakers' intuitions must be relied upon for corroboration, with the risk that the ensuing grammaticality judgements will not entirely coincide with those of other groups which might be chosen. In the case of the present study, an attempt was made to obtain judgements from a representative cross-section of WSE and BE users,[1] but it is inevitable that not all readers will agree with the interpretations presented here.

In the following paragraphs, an attempt will be made to determine the point of entry of *y'all* into BE and WSE, both geographically and chronologically. Such an endeavor must of necessity be approximate and subject to later revision, since the absence of attestations (particularly of a vernacular form like *y'all*) from a corpus representing a given set of space-time-ethnic coordinates does not constitute adequate proof that the form in question was not in use. Positive, explicit comments on *y'all* usage in earlier periods are extremely scarce and fragmentary, and the investigator must rely on the traditional assumptions of historical linguistic reconstruction, in which rough correlations may be drawn between density of written attesta-

tions across time and space and the emergence of a given item in daily speech. In other words, if no attestations of *y'all* are found in materials from a given time period, and if *y'all* occurs frequently in comparable materials from a later time period, the assumption will be made that, if *y'all* was not actually introduced during the interval in question, at least its frequency rose appreciably in the intervening years.

A related issue involves graphological representations. For the majority of contemporary WSE and BE speakers, the term *y'all* is monosyllabic, and rhymes with all *ball*, *shawl*, etc. Many of the same speakers claim to actually be using *you all*, although Montgomery (1992) discovered that native speakers' intuitions did not always support this equation — and some do in fact use the two-word combination, exclusively or in alternation with *y'all*. Regardless of the pronunciation, *y'all/you all* as used in contemporary WSE and BE can nearly always be distinguished from *you* + *all* = *all of you*. In interpreting written documents for data on earlier usage, one discovers a plethora of written variants, including *you all*, *you-all*, *yo-all*, *ya'll*, *yawl* and *y'all*. The value of these elements must be determined on a case-by-case basis, but in the majority of the documents consulted for the present study, *you all* embodies the syntactic properties of *y'all*, and has been regarded as an equivalent token.

In view of the vernacular nature of *y'all*, and the at times marginalized status of the groups who propagated its spread, there is no accepted reference source for appropriate examples. In the analysis presented below, a wide variety of written sources was consulted, representing WSE and BE from the turn of the 19th century to the present time. The contemporary language was also represented by the protocol sheets of the *Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States* (LAGS = Pederson *et al.* 1981), in which a number of examples involving *y'all* appear, accompanied by accurate demographic data on the informants. As an informal cross-check, a personally-collected series of taped materials representing some 40 hours of vernacular BE and WSE speech from eastern Texas, Louisiana and northern Florida was scanned, and the range of examples converged with those of the LAGS and the other written sources. By far the largest source of materials on earlier stages of BE, and at the same time one of the most controversial research documents in AmE dialectology, is the set of WPA Slave Narratives, compiled in the 1930s using interviews with former slaves, the oldest of whom were born in the 1820s. The slave narratives are fraught with inconsistencies and methodological lacunae, and must be used with great caution in

basing claims on earlier BE usage (cf. Brewer 1980, Maynor 1991, Montgomery 1991, Rickford 1991, Wolfram 1990). No individual instance of *y'all* can be taken at face value, but a thorough perusal of the entire collection, more than 40 volumes including interviews with over 2000 individuals (Rawick 1972, 1977, 1979), provides the best available documentation of the history of *y'all* in BE, yielding hundreds of instances of *y'all* in both simple sentences and more complex configurations. Maynor (1988) and others have probed into the sometimes sordid history of the WPA narratives, revealing the fact that fieldworkers were often prompted by compilers in Washington to use a stereotypical and exaggerated 'Negro dialect', even when the informants spoke reasonably St E. In the case of attestations involving *y'all* in the WPA narratives, there is a good chance that the variant *yo'* as in *yo-all* fell into the category of stereotype; the entire combination *y'all*, which was also present in WSE, evidently did not figure among the list of 'typical' BE elements whose presence in the WPA narratives is suspect. Unlike stereotyped forms for which occasional metalinguistic commentaries reveal transcribers' or compilers' prejudices, there is no hint that by the time of the WPA transcriptions (the 1930s), *y'all* in any configuration was exclusively associated with BE, and therefore subject to exaggeration by white fieldworkers.

1.3. A few preliminary observations on current usage will demonstrate the full range of combinatory possibilities of *y'all*, and to motivate the claim that both syntactically and semantically, *y'all* is equivalent neither to phrasal *you all* nor to a plural reading of the pronoun *you* (cf. also Axley 1927, 1929, Mencken 1936, Morrison 1926, 1929, Smith 1920, Spencer 1975, Wilson 1960). In contemporary WSE and BE, *y'all* occurs in most frames in which *you* can appear, including subject, direct and indirect object, object of preposition, vocative, and in quantified and partitive constructions. The following examples represent BE and WSE over a period of more than a century, and all are typical of contemporary usage in both varieties:

(1)   **BE**
    a.   … what kind o' hair *yawl* want? (Dance 1978:8) [subject]
    b.   Ah mean to carry *y'all* to Palatka and bring *yuh*$_i$ back by de way of Winter Park (Hurston 1935:189) [direct object]
    c.   I told *yawl* what I was gon' to do to (Dance 1978:86) [indirect object]

    d.   Ah been here wid *y'all* fuh eight years and mo (Hurston 1934:197) [object of preposition]
    e.   How many of *y'all* wanna live to an old age? (Smitherman 1977:77) [quantified]
    f.   Don't *y'all* sell off all dem pretty li'l pink toes befo' Ah git dere (Hurston 1935:30) [negative imperative]
    g.   Aw *y'all* shut up! (Smitherman 1977:119) [imperative]
    h.   I feel pretty good, *y'all* (soul singer Wilson Pickett, 'Land of 1000 dances') [aside]
    i.   Here the bread and there the meat; come on *yawl*, let's eat! (Dance 1978:75) [exhortative]
    j.   If'n I was *y'all* I believe I'd buy a piano wid de money (Brewer 1965:36) [predicate nominative]
    k.   What *you'all* blubberin' 'bout? (Harris 1899:93) [nominative]
  WSE
    l.   *Y'all* don't have them out there? (LAGS #772)
    m.   I passed *y'all's* house (LAGS #258) [genitive]
    n.   the rest of *y'all* find you a place around (LAGS #570) [quantified]
    o.   What kind of problems did they give *y'all* for dancin'? (Louisiana; recorded by JL) [indirect object]
    p.   Just be glad he's not the first grandchild for *y'all* (LAGS #117) [object of preposition]

The reflexive or intensive pronoun paradigmatically related to *y'all* can only be *yourselves*; there is no **y'all's selves*, except perhaps as a facetious improvization:[2]

(2)   **BE**
    a.   Jinny, *yo all*$_i$ don' b'long to me no more, you and Wesley and the chilluns, *yo*$_i$ jes' b'long to *yo*$_i$ selfs (Rawick 1977: vol. 8, part 3.1227)
    b.   I hope *y'all*$_i$ enjoyed *yourself*$_i$ (LAGS #648)
  WSE
    c.   *Y'all*$_i$ help *yourself*$_i$ (LAGS #393)
    d.   *Y'all*$_i$ going have your coffee by *yourself*$_i$? (LAGS #635)

1.4. As pointed out by Richardson (1984:56) and Herman and Herman (1947:92), *y'all* admits of quantifiers, including *any/some/none/both/all of y'all*, while the clearly phrasal *you all*, which may be interchanged with *all*

(of) you, does not admit these possibilities, allowing only premodification with *almost*. Moreover, as behooves a true phrasal item, *all of you* is referentially free and cannot be coindexed with another instance of itself in the same sentence, unlike *y'all*:

(3) **GENERAL**

    a. *all of *you all*

    b. *all of *all (of) you*

    c. almost *all of you*

    d. I want *all of you* to let me know when (*all of) *you* get home.

    e. I want *y'all* to let me know when *y'all* get home.

    BE

    f. One a *ya'll* smart nough to figure it out just when I'm tellin it (Holt 1972:203)

    WSE

    g. Most of *y'all* either knowed or has heard of ol' man Robert Stone ... (Brett 1979:39)

The contrasts suggest that the *all of y'all* is not analyzed as a true quantifier associated with an NP, but rather as part of an indivisible element.

1.5. There are a few uses of *y'all* which are more frequent in BE, at least among the written examples. This occurs principally with appositives. Some WSE consultants accept such forms, especially those coming from groups where sociolinguistic contact with BE has been extensive. There is as yet no unequivocal evidence of BE as the source for this use, some examples of which are:

(4) **BE**

    a. Okay! I know *y'all* disciple hungry now (Jones-Jackson 1987:109)

    b. All *yawl* whiteys look alike anyway (Dance 1978:223)

    c. Strack uh light, dere, some uh *y'all* chaps (Hurston 1934:13)

    d. Come over here now *y'all* guys (LAGS #571)

2. Coreferential complexities of *y'all*

2.1. The examples presented above suggest that *y'all* is a pronoun with the features [2, pl.] (plus additional pragmatic limitations), in effect replacing earlier and dialectal English *ye*.[3] Further investigation reveals that this

metamorphosis is incomplete, and that much of the apparently idiosyncratic variation surrounding use of *y'all* stems from the fact that this element continues to straddle two categories. This is most evident in the case of the coreferential possibilities of *you* and *y'all*.

If *y'all* has become a true pronominal, it should obey the Binding Conditions (cf. Chomsky 1981). Thus, *y'all* must be free in its governing category, meaning essentially that *y'all* cannot have an antecedent in the same clause. However, as a pronominal, *y'all* should be able to have a binder in a higher clause, meaning an antecedent in a c-commanding position. Moreover, multiple cooccurrence of *y'all* where c-command is not involved, e.g., in coordinate structures or when a subordinate clause has been fronted, should produce no pattern of unacceptability. In practice, however, *y'all* patterns uneasily with the remaining pronouns. *Y'all* in effect exhibits characteristics of a R-expression (essentially, a noun), which according to the Binding Conditions is incapable of being bound (e.g. of having an antecedent in a c-commanding position).[4] Identical pronouns, on the other hand, may freely corefer, although disjunctive reference is also possible, when pragmatically allowed. Frequently, under conditions not yet completely understood, a first instance of *y'all* is followed by coreferential *you*. In the same circumstances, repeated *y'all* should also be possible, but speakers often do not feel comfortable with this alternative. Some examples involving potential binding of *y'all* are:

(5) **WSE**

    a. *Y'all*$_i$ be quiet when *you*$_i$ go in there [observed by JL]

    b. Will *y'all*$_i$ let me know when *y'all*$_i$ [observed by JL]/*you*$_i$ find out?

    c. If *yawl*$_i$ thank ah'm gonna walk up all them stars *yawl*$_i$ are crazy (Everhart 1968:18)

    d. *You-all*$_i$ kin set up if *you*$_i$'re a mind to (Rawlings 1933:8)

    e. *Y'all*$_i$ better look out where *you*$_i$ hittin tnat ball (LAGS #445)

    f. *Y'all*$_i$ jerk one of them palings off of Doctor Green's fence and frail hell out of them, next time them boys try to run *ya*$_i$ (LAGS #233)

    BE

    g. Jist like *yall*$_i$ wuz talkin bout dat lady where *yall*$_i$ at (Twiggs 1973:80)

h. Did *y'all*, have any words before *you*, fell out? (Hurston 1935:43)

i. Well, all *y'all*, want to marry my daughter and *youse*, all good men ... (Hurston 1935:61)

j. Ah don't want *y'all*, settin' 'round waitin' for me tuh die tuh git whut Ah'm gointer give *yuh*, (Hurston 1935:70)

k. *Y'all*, had better g'wan over to the mill and see if they need *you*, over there (Hurston 1935:95)

l. Ah told *y'all*, to come an' go inside but *you*, wouldn't take a listen. *Y'all*, think Ah'm an old Fogey (Hurston 1935:126)

m. *You*, see ... *y'all*, ain't got into de technical apex of de business. When *y'all*, see a great big platter of fried fish *y'all*, jus' grab hold of a fish and bite him any which way (Hurston 1935:174)

In these examples, although multiple instances of *y'all* do occur, it is very unlikely for *you* to be coindexed with a *following* instance of *y'all*, and virtually impossible for *you* to bind (i.e. both precede and c-command) *y'all*:[5] Examples of 19th century BE (no adequate corpus of 19th-century WSE examples has yet come to light) show the same fundamental distribution of *you* and *y'all*, although it appears that *you* can at times precede coreferential *y'all* (examples 6d-f):

(6)   **19th-century BE**

a. Now den, ladies en gents ... *you all*, go wid Brer B'ar up dar in de woods en I'li stay yer, en w'en *you*, year me holler, den's de time fer Brer B'ar fer ter see ef he kin haul in de slack er de rope. *You all*, take keer er dat ... (Harris 1880:113)

b. Honey *you all*, is gwianter git blisters out in de sun like *you*, is widout no hats on. Don' *you all*, know *you*, had orter take keer o thet purty white skin o *yourn* ? (Rawick 1979: vol. 1.112)

c. Well suh, *you all*, wants me to tell *you*, 'bout slave times, an' I'll tell *you*, fust dat I had mighty good white folks ... (Rawick 1979: vol. 4, part 3.1285)

d. ah'll sho tell *yo-all*, whut *yo*, wants ter know ... not fo' bits fo th' two uv *yo*, but fo' bits each. *Yo*, say *yo all*, aint got much money and *yo all*, wants ter know th' same thing. Well ah

reckon since *yo all*, is been comin' roun' ... one question fuh both uv *yo*, fuh fo' bits between *yo*, ... *yo all*, will have tuh come inside (Rawick 1972: vol. 9, parts 3 and 4.120)

If the greater permissiveness of (earlier) BE for multiple instances of *y'all* and binding of *y'all* by both *you* and *y'all* is accurate, and not just an artefact of inadequate data, then this is a first indication that *y'all* may be undergoing an evolution from pronominal to a configuration more closely approximating a noun.

The differential behavior of *you* and *y'all* is also noteworthy when *y'all* is combined with the genitive *y'all's*, where the latter form is uneasily replaced by *your*. In view of the existence of *y'all's* as the genitive corresponding to *y'all*, if the latter word is a true pronominal, then *y'all* and *y'all's* should freely coexist in the same clause, since in noun phrases containing a preposed genitive, the NP itself constitutes the governing category for which the Binding Conditions obtain. The genitive pronoun can freely corefer to the subject of the main clause. On the other hand, if *y'all* is behaving as a noun or R-expression, genitive *y'all's* should not be able to co-occur with *y'all* in a position which would bind the genitive (e.g. as subject). In practice, *y'all* in subject position can coexist with both *your* and *y'all's* in genitive position, but when explicitly questioned, WSE and BE speakers exhibit the same uncertainty of judgement as in other cases involving potential binding of *y'all*. In reflecting speech, and in much written literature, *your* is more common; for example although the LAGS contains many examples of genitive *y'all's*, only *your* was ever recorded in combination with coreferential *y'all*. Some contemporary examples of genitive *your/y'all's* are:

(7)   **WSE**

a. *Y'all*, are moving *y'all's*, legs too much [said by a swimming instructor, observed by JL]

b. *Yawl*, and *your*, George Wilkins! (Faulkner 1942:75)

c. *Yawl*, ain't drunk *you*, water ... Leave the bucket in the truck when *you* 're finished with it (O'Connor 1989:284-5)

d. *Y'all*, left *your*, lights on (LAGS #535)

BE

e. Maybe *yawl*, seed um pass in de carriage dat time he went to Washn'ton to tell *yawl's*, president how he ain't like de way *yawl's*, president wuz treating de people (Faulkner n.d.:755).

f. *Yawl*[i] out there pickin' them fruit. Say, I'm gon' take some of them fruits an' ram it up *your*[i] ass (Dance 1978:86)

g. *Y'all*[i] hush *your*[i] signifying ... that there's a lady, and I won't have *y'all*[i] signifying 'bout her like that (Anderson 1959:78)

h. *Y'all*[i] go back and tell *your*[i] mama (LAGS #224)

Regardless of the status of *y'all*, genitive *y'all's* is almost never coreferential with non-conjoined *you* in the matrix sentence (only *your* may be used); coreferential *y'all's* is also problematic if the matrix sentence contains *you* in coordination with another element.[6] Written examples of these configurations are hard to come by; one possible case is:

(8) Gus, *you and Jerry*[i] better go outside; I know who that is coming, and more than likely he's gonna stop here ... And if he does, *y'all*[i] take the horse and go on and put him in the lot (Hartsfield 1987:63)

3.   Situating *y'all* with respect to time, space and Gullah

3.1. The chronological data on use of *y'all* in WSE and BE are sketchy and incomplete. For both varieties, the first reliable attestations come in the 19th century, with earlier usage being purely speculative. A number of direct and indirect bits of information suggest that *y'all* entered WSE via BE, or at least that its usage was significantly expanded through contact with an already vigorous paradigm of *y'all* usage in BE. BE, in turn, appears to have initiated the shift from true pronominal to quasi-nominal, in syntactic terms and, with all probability, in the phonological dimension as well.

3.2. Examples of *y'all* which antedate the second half of the 19th century are rare. A possible harbinger of later usage (in WSE) is found in a letter written in North Carolina in 1768, in which *you all* is taken to be the precursor of the modern monosyllabic *y'all*: 'I reckon I shall feel completely lost, without you or Pattie or Ella or Anna. What will I do without you-all' (Eliason 1956:238). Another letter, written in 1781, contains the passage 'however so great a Specific as I now send, will enliven you all so much' (Eliason 1956:238). The usage in both examples, however, is not much different from examples found in England, and does not necessarily represent an early attestation of contemporary *y'all*.

One of the first reliable attestations of *y'all* in any form of AmE, from Singleton (1824:82) and set in Virginia, refers to transfer from BE to WSE: 'Children learn from the slaves some odd phrases ... as will *you all* do this? for will *one of you* do this?' A letter written by a North Carolina slave in 1862 contains a genitive which coincides with contemporary USBE usage: 'I am sorry to hear of you all greaf about Mas Willie' (Eliason 1956:238). Despite these occasional hints of *y'all* in BE and its potential transfer to WSE, full entry of *y'all* into WSE probably occurred well into the second half of the 19th century, and possibly even later in some areas. Many detailed descriptions of white and black language in this region from throughout the 19th century often do not mention *y'all* at all. Travel accounts such as Redpath (1859), Pollard (1859), Parsons (1855) and Olmstead (1860, 1861), which contain extensive comments on 19th-century WSE and USBE, contain no examples of *y'all*, despite the fact that the authors were keen observers of Southern speech, and would undoubtedly have picked up on such an innovation with respect to Northern usage.

3.3. Although the precise geographical origins of *y'all* in BE remain to be determined, it is almost certain that this form entered BE, whence WSE, somewhere in the southern US. However, by the first third of the 19th century, *y'all* is attested in BE varieties spoken in the Appalachian and Ozark regions, although incorporation of *y'all* by white English varieties of the same regions did not come until later, and then only partially.[7] Initial research suggests that *y'all* is found in white Ozark and Appalachian English in regions where contacts with speakers of BE were more frequent; the isolated white communities appear to have preferred other forms. This distribution remains to be empirically verified, and constitutes an important piece in the still incomplete puzzle of Appalachian and Ozark dialectology. *Y'all* also found its way into Samana English of the Dominican Republic, which is largely derived from BE speakers who left the United States in the early 1800s (cf. DeBose 1983, Poplack and Sankoff 1987, Vigo MS). In the southern states, *y'all* in 19th-century BE competed with *youse* and *you'uns*. The former word has largely disappeared in contemporary AmE, while the latter is primarily confined to Ozark and Appalachian highland dialects, spoken mostly by non-blacks.

3.4. Although the default assumption on the origin of *y'all* is phrasal *you all*, with possible antecedents in England or the northern United States, a

few investigators have implicated BE as the principal source of *y'all*, either directly or as a calque of an African/creole pronominal. An attractive target of attention is the indisputably creole Gullah, and investigators who postulate that some variety similar or identical to Gullah was typical of all of BE during the early plantation period have not hesitated to implicate Gullah in the development of *y'all*. The case is stated most eloquently by Edwards (1974:14) (cf. also Dalby 1972:186; Hendrickson 1986:92-93; Holm 1978:284, citing Ian Hancock):

> In the white plantation English of Louisiana, the form *y'all* functioned precisely as did the *unu* of the slaves. The use of *y'all* (semantically *unu*) was probably learned by white children from black mammies and children in familiar domestic situations. The singular form *you* took on a harsh connotation which implied a formal situation or a command. *Y'all*, apparently unmarked for number in 19th century elite plantation speech, implied solidarity, friendship and social equality.

This assertion must contend with the total lack of evidence of Gullah ever being used during any time period outside of coastal South Carolina, Georgia and northern Florida and the corresponding inland areas. Suggestive evidence that might support claims of a Gullah influence in the development of *y'all* comes from the existence of forms similar to *y'all* in several Caribbean varieties of English, most commonly in Barbados and the Bahamas (cf. Holm and Shilling 1982:227). The corresponding genitive is *you-all's*, but consistency of use as opposed to *you(r)* is relatively less than in USBE and even WSE.[8] As in the United States, these creoles may allow *you all* to be coindexed with a following *you*.

Regardless of possible BE origins of *y'all*, matters are more complex than suggested by Edwards, as is apparent upon considering attestations of 19th-century BE and of WSE, ranging from 'plantation' to 'cracker.' First, although there are sporadic cases of *y'all* with singular reference, this has never been the rule; there is no demonstrable diachronic trend away from this claimed ambiguous reference. Second, while in contemporary English, *y'all* may operate as a marker of friendliness and solidarity, it was not always so. Examples from the 19th century suggest values ranging from neutrality to overt hostility. Nor was singular *you* necessarily felt to be harsh and commanding; in earlier stages of English, as now, elimination of *you* was the rule in imperatives, and no recourse to *y'all* would be necessary to avoid *you*.

A more problematic aspect of attempting to unite development of *y'all* with *una* and its offshoots in English-based creoles is the intersection of geographical and chronological data. Assuming provisionally that *y'all* entered WSE via BE, there is no reliable evidence that this transfer occurred first in Louisiana, or in plantation/tidewater regions in general. Nor is there direct evidence that Gullah forms derived from *una* were ever used as far west as Louisiana, or in other peripheral regions of the South where *y'all* became firmly implanted.

3.5. Although no available documentation points to a specific geographical locus for the development of *y'all*, the Gullah-speaking regions of Georgia and South Carolina do not enjoy a special priority among early attestations. Occasional attestations of BE and WSE from the early 19th century, as well as extrapolation from Samana English and the WPA Slave Narratives, show that *y'all* was already established in BE, throughout all of the South as far west as Texas, and into the Ozark and Appalachian regions. Transfer to WSE, however, was only beginning. By this time, if there had ever been a Gullah-like variety of BE spoken outside of coastal Georgia/South Carolina, it had long disappeared from other areas where *y'all* was entering into WSE. Therefore, the geographical proximity required for transfer did not obtain.

Yet another obstacle in the way of postulating that *y'all* was a calque of Gullah *una* lies in the syntactic properties of the two forms during the 19th century. In Gullah, *una* and its variants behave as true pronominals, although in later attestations, it may have occasionally served as a stylistic variant of *you*, particularly in vocative contexts. A sample of Gullah pronominal usage is:

(9) a. I swear-to-Gawd I can't see how *oonuh*$_i$ mek out ... an' *you*$_i$, an' all de udder creeter dat ain' fitten to lib in de water, seems to spen' all o' *you*$_i$ time a skirmishin' riyb', till *you*$_i$ mus' be wore out 'fore de day is half done (Hughes and Bontemps 1959:24)

b. *Oonah* soul set free an *oonah* sin fugiwn' (Turner 1949:270)

c. ... if *unna* kyant behave *unna self*, I'll tek yu straight home (Joyner 1977:124)

d. I want *yunner all*$_i$ fur keep *you*$_i$ eye open an, lissen good, an' ef *you*$_i$ ent mine I'le show befo' I get tru dat some *yunner*$_i$ yer ternight da tetter wine Christun' (Brewer 1968:129)

e. *Hoonah* no fush; des' bun foolish 'roun' 'yuh fuh *yo*' bruckwuss (Bennett 1908:334)

f. *Oonuh* t'ink 'cause *yo*' juntlemun bin een Walterburruh jail fuh t'ief hog ... (Gonazles 1924b:34)

g. Ef *oonuh* ain' cut dem wing fuh keep'um frum fly obuh my fench, Uh gwine ... mek *oonuh* fuh pay dammidge (Gonzales 1924b:34)

The preceding examples come from a combination of literary and non-literary texts, and are subject to the same cautions as enunciated for the Slave Narratives. In their totality, the examples converge on the fact that *una/oonah* normally behaved as a pronominal, capable of being bound by another token of the same pronoun. As *una* became less frequent in Gullah (it has all but disappeared among the remaining Gullah speakers), it became more like contemporary *y'all* in normally occurring in combination with a following coreferential *you* or *your*; however, nothing suggests that *una* ever attained the status of a free nominal. The available evidence shows that, at a time when *una* was still behaving as a normal pronominal in Gullah, *y'all* still had a limited use as a free nominal in BE and WSE; if this chronology is correct, a Gullah origin for *y'all* is cast into doubt.

4. Syntactic evolution of *y'all* in BE

4.1. Beginning with the earliest attestations, *y'all* in BE adheres to the command/precede restrictions outlined in Section 2. *Y'all* frequently corefers to a following *you*, but the opposite configuration does not occur, even when *you* does not c-command *y'all*. On the other hand, repeated coreferential *y'all*, when the first token c-commands the second, is quite rare. For example, the Slave Narratives contain 30 examples where *y'all* c-commands a coreferential pronominal; in 27 instances (90%) the following pronoun is *you* (e.g. example 10a), while in only 3 instances (10%) is *y'all* used in the subordinate clause (e.g. 10b, 10c). The Slave Narratives also contain 61 examples where *y'all* is coindexed with a following pronominal but does not c-command it. In 48 cases (79%), the second pronominal is *you* (e.g. example 10d), while in 13 cases (21%), the second pronominal is *y'all* (as in example 10e). The composite for both configurations is 82% *y'all* followed by *you*, and 18% *y'all* followed by *y'all*, with c-command clearly inhibiting repetition of *y'all*:

(10) **BE**

a. What do *yo'all$_i$* say when *ya$_i$* court? (Blassingame 1977:643)

b. *Y'all$_i$* sho must not b'long to no church de way *y'all$_i$* tells lies. *Y'all$_i$* done quit tellin' 'em. *Y'all$_i$* done gone to moldin' 'em. (Hurston 1935:130).

c. *Yo'all$_i$* 'membah dose two li'l rocks *yo'all$_i$* pick' up an' saved? Well, dey isn't rocks. (Alsopp 1931:170)

d. If *you all$_i$* hongry, *you$_i$* better come on. I got hash an' rice for *you$_i$*. 'Member, now, I ain't want *you all$_i$* to do wha' ole man Robin done at de settin'-up when old man Paul die. (Adams 1987:359)

e. But, by God, if *yo' all$_i$* go *yo' all$_i$* will starve to death ... (Rawick 1979: vol. 5, part 4.1469)

f. Ah told *y'all$_i$* to come an' go inside but *you$_i$* wouldn't take a listen. (Hurston 1935:126)

g. But now *you all$_i$*'s done prod me about slav'ry days, I'll tells *you$_i$* what I remembers (Rawick 1977: vol. 5.420)

h. *Y'all$_i$* ain't got into de technical apex of de business. When *y'all$_i$* see a great big platter of fried fish *y'all$_i$* jus' grab hold of a fish and bite him any which way (Hurston 1935:174)

i. Ah been heahin' *y'all$_i$* gittin' up heah talkin' 'bout what de Lawd done did for *you$_i$*, an' how *you$_i$* lub de Lawd ...

4.3. Use of genitive *y'all's* occurs occasionally in 19th-century BE texts, but when coindexed with *y'all*, it is more frequent to find *yo(ur)*:

(11) **BE**

a. Now, all *y'all$_i$* bring up *yo$_i$* rocks. (Hurston 1935:45)

b. Hey Cliff, *you and Thelma$_i$* git up on de floor and raise *yo$_i$* right hand. *Y'all$_i$* ain't been hitched right till Box-Car git thew wid*ja$_i$*. (Hurston 1935:223)

c. Ah kin help *yo all$_i$* ward off evil and jinx, ah kin help *yo all$_i$* git a job, ah kin help *yo all$_i$* ovah come the ruination uv *yo$_i$* home. (Rawick 1972: vol. 9, part 3 and 4.121)

d. *You all$_i$* is free to go make *your$_i$* livin' an take keer of *yourse-lf$_i$* (Rawick 1977: vol. 8.846)

4.4. In the preceding examples, *y'all/y'all's* is exhibiting the characteristics of a referential expression, which is unremarkable if *y'all* indeed derives

from phrasal *you all*. In a few cases, *y'all* already appears to be evolving in the direction of a pronominal, but extrapolation to earlier periods of 19th-century BE yields the conclusion that such a transformation, if it had begun at all, was only in its earliest stages, and may have only affected a small sub-set of speakers. In WSE, by all indications, *y'all* was just beginning to pen-etrate during this time period, and only with the value of a full nominal or R-expression. By the first quarter of the 20th century, in BE at least, *y'all* was moving in the direction of a true pronominal, as indicated by the exam-ples in (5) and (7). In Gullah, on the other hand, *una* was moving in just the opposite direction; becoming a sort of discourse or ethnic identity marker which would be introduced only once in a sentence, preferably at the first available opportunity.

4.5. The evolution of *y'all* in BE, from phrasal expression to quasi-pronom-inal, did not take place in one step, but rather passed through an inter-mediate stage in which *y'all* combined quantifier-like behavior, reflecting the quantificational nature of phrasal *you all* = *all of you*, and pronominal traits. It is postulated that *y'all* entered mainstream WSE during this inter-mediate stage, which continues to characterize most varieties of WSE, and that subsequent, largely prosodic, developments in BE and collateral WSE varieties, were responsible for the evolution toward pronominal status.

Requirements of linear order constrained *y'all* from the very beginning of its use in BE, although contemporary usage has somewhat loosened the constraints; in early BE texts, *y'all* may be coindexed with a *following* instance of *you*, regardless of the syntactic configuration. Conversely, instances of *you* coindexed with following *y'all* or *y'all's* are systematically excluded.[9] In early BE at least, *y'all* exhibits many characteristics of a quan-tifier, in the effect it exercises on the pronominals that can interact with it. However, *y'all* is not a quantifier of the familiar type exemplified by *all*; in the typology of Hornstein (1984), *y'all* in early BE is a 'Type I quantifier,' i.e. an element which does not undergo Quantifier Raising at the level of Logical Form or LF (cf. May 1985). This is the level of abstract syntactic representation where it is postulated that logical scope, e.g. of quantifiers, interrogatives, distributives, etc., is determined. According to this theoreti-cal approach, even quantifiers which remain in their normal position in the surface syntax, 'raise' to a position in the Complementizer, or adjoined to the sentence, at LF. This commanding position in turn determines the scope of the quantification, so that, for example, a quantifier which origi-nally starts out in object position in effect has scope over the entire sen-tence. When two quantifiers have undergone QR, potential ambiguity exists as in the sentence *Everybody sees something*, where either the same thing is seen by all people (*everybody* takes scope over *something*), or each person sees a possible different object (*something* takes scope over *some-thing*).

In moving, the quantifier becomes a logical operator, leaving behind a variable which is subject to the same syntactic constraints which govern var-iables in surface syntax. This movement characterizes 'Type II quantifiers'. Some quantifiers, however, are claimed not to undergo QR, in which case no sentence-level scope is created, and no operator-variable pair is formed. For example in the sentence *Everybody sang a certain song*, the only interpretation is that of the same song being sung by everyone; it is not pos-sible for *everybody* to have scope over *a certain song*. This fact, according to Hornstein (1984) comes from the obligatory wide scope of Type I quan-tifiers, which, however, remain unaffected by Quantifier Raising. Since Type I quantifiers do not create variables, they behave like R-expressions or names, and may, for example, bind pronominals (example 12a), which is not possible for Type II quantifiers (example 12b). Similarly, Type I quan-tifiers may corefer to pro nominals in conjoined sentences (example 12c), which is again disallowed for Type II quantifiers.

(12) a. If John knows *any songs$_i$*, then he will sing *them$_i$*.
      b. *If John knows *every song$_i$*, then he will sing *it$_i$/them$_i$*.
      c. John knows *a certain song$_i$* and he sings *it$_i$* every day.

If *y'all* is a Type I quantifier, then it should combine with a variety of coin-dexed elements. In fact, comparison of (12) with examples involving *y'all* reveals that the latter word generally fits the Type I diagnostics. However, given the restricted semantic range of *y'all* which is essentially the same as *all of you*, the only pronoun which can feasibly be coindexed with *y'all* is *you*. Naturally, if *y'all* itself is quantified (e.g. *some of y'all*), third person pronouns can corefer to the entire phrase. It appears that the original status of *y'all* as some type of quantifier is precisely the dimension which is suscep-tible to modification as *y'all* begins its evolution in the direction of a true pronominal.

5. *Y'all* as a strong pronoun

5.1. The behavior of *y'all*, straddling the syntactic boundaries between pro-
nominals and nominals, is unusual in English, but it finds a ready counter-
part among 'null subject' Romance languages such as Spanish. In Spanish,
for example, overt subject pronouns are not simply optional counterparts of
null pronouns, but rather are inherently focused, receiving a form of con-
trastive emphasis. Within contemporary syntactic theory (cf. Chomsky
1981), contrastive stress is analyzed as a type of quantifier, and at the level
of semantic interpretation or Logical Form overt subject pronouns undergo
Quantifer Raising to COMP; thus a sentence like *ella habla* 'she speaks'
would have the logical representation:

(13)   *Ella habla* = $[[_{COMP}$ for x = *ella* $[x$ habla$]]$

5.2. Since (type II) quantifiers are raised to the complementizer position at
LF, a contrastively stressed pronoun *qua* quantifier cannot co-occur with
another element in COMP, such as a question word, relative pronoun or
default complementizer. Moreover, for reasons which need not be treated
in detail here (cf. Luján 1985, 1986, Rigau 1986, Montalbetti 1986), stres-
sed pronouns in Spanish normally cannot precede their antecedents, when
the antecedents are lexical NPs.[10] Data from BE and WSE show that *y'all/*
you fit the pattern of stressed/nonstressed pronouns vis-à-vis antecedents
such as conjoined *you* (example 14e is a rare exception, and 14d represents
right dislocation). Examples (14a, b) represent a consensus of judgements
offered by speakers consulted for the present study; examples (14c-e) are
among the rare written attestations:

(14) **GENERAL**

    a. When you_i/*?$y'all_i$ work, do {*you and Mary$_i$*/*you and she$_i$*}
        drink?

    b. Do {*you and Mary$_i$*/*you and she$_i$*} drink when $y'all_i$ work?

    BE

    c. de Lawd's teckin' *you white folks$_i$* outen de worl', 'caze he
        ain't pleased at de way *y'all$_i$'s* treatin' de Nigguhs. (Brewer
        1968:114)

    d. Jinny, *yo all$_i$* don' b'long to me no more, *you and Wesley and*
        the chilluns$_i$. (Rawick 1977: vol. 8, part 3.1227)

    e. I want to congratulate *yawl$_i$* down here as well as *you people$_i$*
        are gettin' along and everything. (Dance 1978:177)

As a strong pronoun, *y'all* is specified [+quantifier] (Rigau 1986), which
accounts for the fact that *y'all* at times behaves like a definite NP rather than
a pronoun. *You*, on the other hand, cannot be a strong pronoun, at least in
dialects containing *y'all*. Naturally, both pronouns, like all other subject
pronouns in English, can be given contrastive stress under appropriate cir-
cumstances.

5.3. To claim that, while it is still acting as a 'strong pronoun,' *y'all* cannot
be bound does not mean that *y'all* cannot corefer to another element, even
one in a c-commanding position. The distinction is rather one of the scope
of quantification. Consider the sentence *Many linguists think they know all*
the answers. The pronoun *they* can be disjoint in reference with *many lin-*
guists. If disjoint reference does not obtain, there are two ways in which
they and *many linguists* can be related (cf. Haïk 1984). *They* can be *bound*
to *many linguists* (structure 15a), or they can simply corefer to the *totality*
of the group *many linguists* (15b):

(15) a.   (many x: x a linguist) x thinks x knows all the answers

     b.   (many x: x a linguist) x thinks **they** know all the answers

It is the bound interpretation, not the coreferential interpretation, which is
not permitted of strong pronouns.

5.4. If *y'all* is a strong pronoun, then it should exhibit the same restrictions
on binding by a quantifier. The 19th-century BE data suggest that *y'all* in a
subordinate clause was not subject to binding by a quantifier, but only
allowed a coreferential interpretation. *You*, on the other hand, has always
been available for bound, coreferential or disjoint reference. Thus, in
examples (5h) and (6c) *you* in the lower clause is almost surely bound by
y'all in the matrix clause. *You* is clearly construed as referring individually
to the members of *y'all*, which is appropriate under the circumstances. The
same holds in (10a), where invididual phrases of courtship are being
requested. In (5k), it is each individual worker who is being exhorted to go
to the mill, where individually, not as an indifferentiated group, they might
be needed. In (5i) and (5j), you is also bound by *y'all*; a coreferential
unbound reading is beyond the bounds of probability. In (6a), the lower
you can only be construed as referring to each of the 'ladies en gents' hear-
ing the hollering, since only an individual, not a group, can hear. The same
holds of (5l). In (6b), the subordinate *you* is obviously bound to the matrix

you all, since each individual is without a hat. In (6c)-(6d), the subordinate *you* presumably refers to the narrator's directing himself individually to each of the interviewers. Sentence (5g), on the other hand, admits of an unbound coreferential construal of the embedded *y'all*, since only reference to a group, not its individual members, is intended. Assuming that only an unbound interpretation is available for a second instance of *y'all*, this alone would account for the preference for *you* in such combinations, since bound meaning is usually intended.

5.5. Another set of data on the behavior of *y'all* in the development of BE involves the use of *you* and *y'all* as 'E-Pronouns' (Evans 1980), i.e. pronouns having a quantifier as an antecedent, but not bound by that quantifer. E-pronouns include such items as *some*, in sentences like (16):

(16)   *Some linguists*₁ study creole languages, and *they*₁ will read this article.

One test for E-pronoun status is to negate the first element; in the case of (16), negation of *some linguists* (e.g. *no linguists*) will result in a nonsensical reading, if *they* is construed as coreferential with the first NP.

Turning to cases involving *you* and *y'all*, in example (5i), *y'all* cannot bind *you* (in this sentence, *youse = you's*), since it does not c-command *you*. Although by the nature of the predicates, *you* can only be construed to mean to each individual covered by *y'all*, *you* is not a referential word. The proof comes in negating *y'all*, in which case a meaningless conjunct results. The same test holds for *you* in (5l), (6a), and (1b). The first sentence in (10d) is also instructive in demonstration that *y'all* is behaving as a quantifier. If *y'all* is negated, the following (E-Pronoun) *you* becomes meaningless.

5.6. In 19th-century BE examples, there is a strong tendency to avoid binding or even preceding *y'all* by another instance of *y'all* (example 5m, where it seems that *you* binds *y'all*, is a rare exception), which indirectly reinforces the claim that *y'all* is a strong pronoun, marked [+quantifier]. Quantifiers cannot act as E-pronouns, because quantifiers cannot have other quantifiers as antecedents. Quantifiers which do not undergo QR cannot be bound, a condition they share with R-expressions (cf. Hornstein 1984).

By claiming that *y'all* is a quantifier which does not undergo QR, we are claiming that *y'all* will enter into binding relations that would exclude

quantifiers that do participate in QR. BE texts provide evidence in favor of this claim, although there is a measure of conjecture in the account, given that judgements of quantifier scope and interpretation cannot be obtained. Consider the first sentence of example (10d). If QR applied to adjoin an operator *y'all* to the nearest sentence node S, *you* would not be in the C-Command domain of the operator, and therefore could not be bound by it. If *y'all* were a 'type II' quantifier, the impossibility of binding the following *you* would make the sentence ungrammatical.

5.7. Yet another way of demonstrating that *y'all* is not an operator-bound variable is to observe its behavior with respect to the Leftness Condition (Chomsky 1976, Higginbotham 1980), which disallows a variable to be coindexed with a pronoun to its left. Thus in (17a), *his* cannot be coreferential with *who*, since the question word has been moved, leaving a variable (*t*) to the right of the pronoun. In (17b), *his* cannot be coreferential with *someone*, since the quantifier *someone* moves at the level of LF, also leaving behind a variable to the right of the pronoun:

(17)   a.   Who does his teacher understand *t*?
          b.   His teacher understands someone.

We have seen that pragmatic considerations normally preclude placing *you* before *y'all*, at least in the same sentence. However, doing so does not create a semantically uninterpretable combination such as occurs when a quantified variable is involved. Even in 19th-century BE texts, coreferential *you* occasionally preceded *y'all* (e.g. examples (5m), (6d)), and the same holds for contemporary BE and WSE, although it is still not the prevailing tendency.

As a quantifier which does not undergo QR, *y'all* should be exempt from the Empty Category Principle (ECP), requiring that traces (including those formed at the level of Logical Form) be properly governed, e.g. governed by a lexical head. Among other effects, the ECP prohibits 'long' movement of bound variables across clause boundaries. In this respect, *y'all* once more patterns with non-moving quantifiers like *any*; in sentences like (10i), *y'all* takes wide scope over the matrix clause (i.e. the speaker has heard the 'testifiers' getting up one by one), which would not be possible if QR had moved *y'all* from its position in the lower clause (cf. Hornstein 1984:36-39). Another demonstration that *y'all* does not move via QR, and hence is unaffected by the ECP, comes in considering the interaction with

wh-words. Assuming that *wh*-words are moved to COMP by QR, and that quantifiers are adjoined to S at LF, some version of May (1985)'s Scope Principle will assure that in principle, either element can have scope over the other. However, this ambiguity is only realized in practice when the *wh*-word is extracted from *object* position, leaving behind a properly governed trace (18a). When extraction takes place from subject position (18b), only a non-distributed reading, in which the *wh*-word has scope over the quantifier, is possible:

(18) a.   *What*$_i$ did everyone bring t_i for the party?

   a.' Every person brought the same item (*everyone* has scope over *what*)

   a." Each person brought a possibly different item (*what* has scope over *everyone*)

   b.   *Who*$_i$ t_i brought everything for the party?

   b.' One or more people brought the totality of the items (*who* has scope over *everything*)

   b." *Each person brought a possible different item (*everything* cannot have scope over *who*)

The lack of ambiguity of (18b) stems from the fact that movement of *who* to a position where it could freely interact with *everything* via the Scope Principle (i.e. to the 'left' of and c-commanding *everything* at the level of LF) would leave the subject trace ungoverned, in violation of the ECP (cf. May 1985: chap. 2). *Y'all*, however, does not seem to be subject to these limitations. Examples like (1a), in which a distributive meaning for *y'all* is clearly intended (i.e. each individual wants a different hair style), demonstrate that *y'all* can interact in scope with a *wh*- word which has been extracted from object position. Cases like (19) show that this scope is not required, while (1k) can be construed with either *what* or *y'all* as having wider scope.

(19) Fan, whut is *yo'-all*$_i$ doint' here? ... I've a good mind to slap *yo*$_i$ (Rawick 1979: vol. 4, part 3.1232)

Examples where *y'all* interacts with a *wh*- word extracted from subject position are rare in the present corpus, although not in daily speech. Example (20a) is, from the surrounding context, interpretable with both wide and narrow scope of *you*, which in this example was intended as a quantified plural. Example (20b) also has both wide and narrow scope interpretation of *y'all*:

(20) a.   Who dun tol' yo'? I don't believe nobody tol' yo'! (Rawick 1979: vol. 7, part 6.2568)

   b.   Who'all's children is *y'all*$_i$? (LAGS #573)

Sentences like (21) (typically of those actually observed in BE and WSE) can for most speakers, be construed with either *who* or *y'all* having wider scope:[11]

(21) a.   Who drove *y'all* to the party?

   b.   Who told *y'all* to come?

These additional facts add support to the claim that *y'all* remains unaffected by QR and the ECP.

6.   *Y'all* as focused element: prosodic factors

6.1. The apparent constraints on linear precedence and avoidance of multiple coreference which characterize *y'all* to differing degrees in the development of BE and WSE reflect the quantificational nature of this element. When *y'all* was still analyzed as phrasal *you all*, and possibly even during the earliest stages of what came to be distinctly identifiable BE, it may have been a contrastive element, a quantifier which undergoes QR. Such would be the case, for example, when contrasting all members of a group with a less specific reading of *you* (e.g. sentence (22)).

(22) I come to tell *you*$_i$ ... and I wants to be sho' *you all*$_i$ understand, 'cause *you*$_i$ don't have to git up and go by de horn no more (Rawick 1972: vol. 7.282)

However, the diachronic cross-section considered in the preceding sections suggests that the conversion of *y'all* to a quantifier which does not undergo QR was an early event, whose consequences are still prevalent in WSE, and which may be eroding in contemporary BE. In 19th-century BE, *y'all* was largely unaffected by the Leftness Condition and the ECP, and permitted coindexing with other pronouns as well as cross-discourse reference. The motivation which led to the formation of *y'all* in its present form extends beyond a calque, say of second person pronominals in Gullah or African languages. The most probable inspiration for continued evolution of *y'all* was its use as a focusing element, compensating for the lack of second person plural pronominals in developing BE, when emphasis or contrastive focus was intended.[12]

6.2. In subsequent stages of evolution (particularly in BE), when usage oscillated less and some stability became evident in the innovative pronominal system, *y'all* began a slow shift in the direction of a true pronoun. The first step was the acquisition of genitive inflection, a move which in itself does not turn a nominal into a pronominal, but which contributes a type of morphological respectability that makes *y'all* look at least like a single noun, if not yet a pronoun. The next, and decisive, step comes with the increasing acceptance of multiple coreferential *y'all*. As long as *y'all* is not bound by *you*, there is as yet no shift of status vis-a-vis the Binding Conditions, for Condition C allows for repeated coreferential occurrences of an R-expression, just not binding (especially by a pronominal). Contemporary WSE, in all but its most basilectal varieties (including those in close contact with BE) generally embodies this configuration, in which *y'all* approaches the behavior of a true pronominal without attaining unequivocal pronominal status. Some speakers of contemporary BE (and undoubtedly at least some WSE speakers as well) appear to have totally converted *y'all* into a second-person plural pronominal, semantically distinct from *you* and which cannot bind or otherwise be coindexed with *you*. The combined evidence, beginning in the early 19th century, depicts BE as ahead of corresponding varieties of WSE as regards the trajectory of *y'all*.

6.3. Reduction of *you all* to a monosyllable was probably one of the most instrumental factors in the evolution of this form. Such phonological reduction was commonplace in early BE, and would serve to bring *y'all* into line with the rest of the pronominal paradigm. Contemporary *y'all* still retains a certain phonological 'heaviness,' stemming from the origin as a two-word phrase. At the same time, *y'all* retains its status as a marked second person pronoun, not only because of its origin as a phrase but also due to its plural reference. This status, combined with the fact that *you* never totally loses its potential for plural reference even in dialects where *y'all* prevails, leads to the incipient formation of a distinction based on relations of linear precedence as well as level of syntactic embedding.

6.4. The same phonetic erosion is responsible for the prosodic status of *y'all*, as a monosyllabic pronoun which nonetheless retains the strong stress characteristic of its phrasal precursor. This prosodic dichotomy adds to the ambivalent status of *y'all*, rendering it less than totally unacceptable in contexts where cliticized *you* appears. Selkirk (1984: chap. 7) describes the cir-

cumstances under which pronouns and possessives, including *you* and *yours*, adopt their weak or unstressed form. Proclitically, destressing follows from the fact that 'function words' (a category which includes personal pronouns) are unamenable to Silent Demibeat Addition, a process ensuring rhythmic juncture between words. Enclitically, the rule of Monosyllabic Destressing applies automatically, unless external factors such as contrastive focus intervene to block this rule. Judging by both observed and elicited pronunciation, *y'all* (in WSE at least) systematically fails to undergo destressing under the same circumstances:

(23) a.   How are *you* doing?
```
                            x
          x                 x
          x    (x)          x    x
          x    x    x       x    x
```
     b.   How are *y'all* doing?
```
                       x
          x            x    x
          x    (x)     x    x    x
          x    x       x    x    x
```

6.5. Similar prosodic considerations suggest why genitive *y'all's* is difficult to reconcile with normal stress patterns; consider the fragment {*When did y'all*} *get y'all's/your boat*?:

(24) a.   ... get *your* boat?
```
                    x
          x         x
          x         x
          x    x    x
```
     b.   ...get *y'all's* boat?
```
                    x
          x    (x)  x
          x    x    x
          x    x    x
```

If *y'all's* receives strong stress, a clash is produced, whereas a reduced pronunciation contravenes the inherently strong nature of this element.

6.6. Another indication that the prosodic status of *y'all* is different from that of *you* is the general avoidance of *y'all* in tags, which are uniformly unstressed, and in which *y'all* occurs very rarely in practice (example 25d is of questionable legitimacy), and is consistently rejected in questionaires:

(25) **GENERAL**

    a. *Y'all* are going to the party, aren't *you/*?y'all?*

    b. *You and John* are going to the party, aren't *you/??y'all?*

    BE

    c. I'm talkin' about brother Solomon Burke; *y'all* know him, don't *you?* (Wilson Pickett, "Everybody needs somebody to love")

    d. *Ya'll$_i$* is a Yankee nigger, ain't *ya'll$_i$* boy? ... Boy I see *ya'll$_i$* one of them smartass Yankee niggers, ain't *ya$_i$* boy? (Cain 1970:37)

    e. *You all$_i$* chillun ain goin is *you$_i$?* (Rawick 1972: vol. 9, part 3 and 4.335)

    f. *Y'all$_i$* aren't going to have to leave, are *yo$_i$?* (LAGS #117)

7. The social evolution of **y'all**

7.1. To summarize the preceding discussion, a credible case can be made, although still tentatively and not without considerable extrapolation, for the hypothesis that *y'all* first entered mainstream AmE through BE, perhaps late in the 18th century or early in the 19th. It then passed from BE to WSE during the middle of the 19th century, through two different channels which ultimately converged to encompass nearly the entirety of the WSE-speaking population. The first route of entry of *y'all*, especially during the ascendency of the plantation aristocracy, involved transfer of vernacular BE features to the children of wealthy WSE speakers, transmitted by BE-speaking nursemaids and child playmates. Such vernacular forms would at first be confined to the childhood years, and used only in addressing BE speakers, much as the Gullah learned by whites in Georgia and South Carolina. The possibility for retention into adult varieties of WSE also exists, since vernacular or nonstandard forms are often used among upper-class speakers in private, conspiratorial language (cf. Feagin 1979:292). Eventually this can entail a vernacular form entering a broader range of upper-class registers in a direct jump, rather than moving upward through middle-class sociolects. Once a vernacular form is widely used by

prestige-norm speakers, its adoption by linguistically insecure middle- and working-class speakers will be enhanced.

7.2. The second entry point of *y'all* into WSE comes from the close contact between speakers of BE and working-class WSE speakers, from colonial periods to the present. This is a well-documented source of transfer of BE features into WSE, and need not be commented further. As a result of use of *y'all* at both extremes of the social scale of WSE, its generalization throughout the South, and to peripheral areas in the Ozark and Appalachian region, would be greatly facilitated.

The claim that *y'all* in its present form originated in BE is supported both by relative dates of attestation (earlier and more convincing for BE), and in terms of the evolution of *y'all* in BE and WSE away from phrasal quantifier status. It has been suggested that when first adopted by BE, *y'all* became a strong pronoun, a quantifier exempt from QR, and which therefore allowed certain configurations of intrasentential coreferentiality with other instances of *y'all*. The constraints against backward pronominalization involving *y'all* result from this quantificational nature. *Y'all* underwent phonological reduction to a monosyllable (probably first in BE), although still resisting prosodic reduction to a clitic. This monosyllabic realization facilitated the ultimate incorporation of *y'all* into the pronominal paradigm, as a second person plural pronoun rather than a quantifier. Such a transmutation has not been completely carried out in any variety of English, but seems to be closer to realization in BE than in most forms of WSE.

7.3. The analysis summarized in the preceding paragraphs embodies the premise that the situation of *y'all* is far from chaotic and unreasoned; to the contrary, this element has undergone significant and coherent modifications in its history. The present study has suggested a more iconoclastic history, both in terms of origin and as regards evolution and current usage. Much research remains to be done on *y'all* and other quasi-pronominals which, because of their presence in marginalized vernacular varieties of English, have been overlooked, or classified as erratic and devoid of theoretical interest.

Notes

*I am grateful to Manfred Görlach, John Holm, Michael Montgomery, and the anonymous *EWW* reviewers for many helpful suggestions. Due to limitations of space, only a small fraction of the supporting examples are included in the published version. Readers wishing a more complete set of examples and references can write directly to the author at the address given below.

1) For purposes of comparison, the following informal crosscheck on *y'all* usage was carried out. A collection of 40 hours of vernacular speech collected in eastern Texas and western Louisiana was examined. Intuitions for WSE were checked by an informal panel consisting of residents of the following areas, who were raised in lower-working class environments and who feel comfortable commenting on *y'all* usage: Texas (3); Georgia (2); Alabama (2); South Carolina (2); Arkansas (1); Louisiana (2); Florida (2). Intuitions on USBE usage of *y'all* in USBE were graciously provided by another informal panel of 10 long-time residents of Texas, Georgia and Florida. All contemporary data are preliminary and tentative, and the conclusions must be regarded as provisional. I alone am responsible for the interpretations.

2) Ian Hancock (p. c.) claims to have heard this form in Texas; it may occur elsewhere, but always as a spontaneous and momentary creation, and is not attested in written documents.

3) Partially similar cases, all of which also occur in at least some varieties of WSE and BE, include *you'uns* (Randolph and Wilson 1953:56-57, Reed 1961), as well as *who all, what all* (e.g. Herman and Herman 1947:122), *ever-what, ever-who* (Randolph and Wilson 1953:58). To this list can perhaps be added the generally Northern *you(se) guys*.

4) Naturally, there is nothing that formally prohibits coreference among repeated instances of a name when no c-command relationship exists, but unless special conditions of contrastive stress, irony or focus exist, pragmatic factors render such combinations unacceptable (although not strictly ungrammatical; e.g. Evans 1980).

5) Jeremiah (1977:140), in considering a large corpus of early USBE as well as early Antiguan creole, finds that backward pronominalization is in general avoided. In a rare comment on multiple occurrences of *y'all*, Schneider (1989:170) notes that in earlier black AmE, *y'all* is sometimes 'in free variation' with *you*, while in at least one text, '... [*y'all*] can be replaced by *you* only in its second occurrence in a sentence ... that is, *you* is a context-dependent, positional allomorph of *you all*'. The present investigation demonstrates clearly that more than 'free variation' or 'positional allomorphy' is involved.

6) In a reanalysis of Binding Condition C, Lasnik (1989) claims that the more general condition (of which English is a restricted case) is that 'an R-expression is pronoun-free'; in other words, binding of a referential noun by a pronoun is universally excluded, while binding of an R-expression by another R-expression is excluded parametrically only in some languages. Although English is among languages which prohibit all binding of R-expressions, the differential behavior of *you* and *y'all* is illustrative of the situation described by Lasnik. Whereas *y'all* can never be bound by *you*, it may be possible to bind *y'all* by another instance of *y'all*, as well as by other coreferential NPs. This assymetrical behavior is yet another demonstration of the ambiguous status of *y'all*, in this instance patterning with R-expressions.

7) Cf. Brown (1880:173) for examples from 19th-century Missouri; Coleman (1940:73) for early 19th-century examples from Kentucky. Coleman (1940:27) also gives examples of the genitive *we'all's* in early 19th-century Kentucky.

8) In the Bahamas, at least, it is not possible to entirely rule out a direct influence of USBE on Bahamian creole, as regards the possible transfer of *y'all* (cf. Holm and Shilling 1982).

9) The existence of constraints on linear order is not exclusive to *y'all*, for there are other aspects of English pronominal reference which depend upon linear order. These cases involve superficial interpretation of possible coreference, rather than rigid constraints of obligatory or prohibited coreference such as entailed by the Binding Conditions. This is seen in the semantic interpretation of contrastively stressed pronouns. Thus:

$John_i$ hit $Bill_j$ and then {HE_i/*he_i/he_j/*HE_j} hit Fred.

The case of *y'all* vs. *you* cannot be handled as a simple contrastive/noncontrastive distinction, since it is impossible, without fanciful flights of imagination, to create utterances which contrast these two pronouns, e.g.

   a.   ?? Do *you* [sg.] or *y'all* [pl.] want to come to my party?
   b.   ?? I told *you* [sg.], not *y'all* [pl.].
   c.   I used to drive *you*, to church and peep through the door to see *you all*, worship, but *you*, ain't right yet. Marster (Rawick 1972: vol. 19,124)

In the case of alternation between coreferential *you* and *y'all*, heuristic considerations are probably at work, since information transfer is complicated by the needless switching between alternative designations for the same referent (cf. Reinhart 1983).

10) Actually, the situation is a bit more complex in null subject languages, in that a lexical NP antecedent may bind an overt pronoun if this pronoun does not alternate with an unstressed (null) pronoun, for example as the object of a preposition (cf. Montalbetti 1984).

11) May (1985:40) notes that the sentence *Who did they see at the Wimbledon finals?* exhibits the same type of ambiguity, suggesting that the plural pronoun is acting as a quasi-quantifier (cf. Haik 1984), but that the sentence *Who saw them at the Wimbledon finals?* permits only *who* to have broad scope. As noted, the behavior of *y'all* appears to diverge from the scopal properties of *they*. A sentence like *Who caught y'all smoking?* as uttered, e.g., by a school monitor, could well be answered individually by each culprit. In any event, lexical conditioning may be involved, since wide scope readings of *they* (and even *y'all*) appear to be easier with some verbs than with others.

12) This is suggested by comments offered by nonlinguists; for example Wilson (1935:68): 'Personally I am convinced that the essential of the usage is to bestow an emphatically inclusive plural'.

References

Adams, Edward C.L. 1987. *Tales of the Congaree*. Ed. Robert O'Meally. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina.

Alsopp, Fred. 1931. *Folklore of Romantic Arkansas, Volume II*. N. p.: The Grolier Society.

Anderson, Alston. 1959. *Lover Man*. New York: Doubleday.

Axley, L. 1927. "You-all and we-all again". *American Speech* 2:343-5.

———. 1929. "One more word on you-all". *American Speech* 4:347-51.

Beidler, Philip, ed. 1986. *The Art of Fiction in the Heart of Dixie: an Anthology of Alabama Writers*. University of Alabama Press.

Bennett, John. 1908. "Gullah: a Negro patois". *South Atlantic quarterly* 7:332-47.

———. 1909. "Gullah: a Negro patois". *South Atlantic quarterly* 8:39-52.

Blassingame, John, ed. 1977. *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews and Autobiographies*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

Brett, Bill. 1979. *There Ain't no Such Animal and Other East Texas Tales*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press.

Brewer, J. Mason. 1953. *The Word on the Brazos: Negro Preacher Tales from the Brazos Bottoms of Texas*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

———. 1965. *Worser Days and Better Times: the Folklore of the North Carolina Negro*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books.

———. 1968. *American Negro Folklore*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books.

Brewer, Jeutonne. 1980. "The WPA slave narratives as linguistic data". *Orbis* 29:30-54.

Brown, William Wells. 1880. *My Southern Home*. Boston: A.G. Brown & Co.

Cain, George. 1970. *Blueschild Baby*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Chomsky, Noam. 1976. "Conditions on rules of grammar". *Linguistic Analysis* 2:303-51.

———. 1981. *Lectures on Government and Binding*. Dordrecht: Foris.

Coleman, J. Winston, Jr. 1940. *Slavery Times in Kentucky*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina.

Dalby, David. 1972. "The African element in American English". In Kochman, 170-86.

Dance, Donald. 1978. *Shuckin and Jivin*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

DeBose, Charles. 1983. "Samana English: a dialect that time forgot". *BLS* 9:47-53.

Edwards, Jay. 1974. "African influences on the English of San Andres Island, Colombia". In David De Camp & Ian Hancock, eds. *Pidgins and Creoles: Perspectives and Prospects*. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1-26.

Eliason, Norman. 1956. *Tarheel Talk*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Evans, Gareth. 1980. "Pronouns". *Linguistic Inquiry* 11:337-62.

Everhart, Jim. 1968. *The Illustrated Texas Dictionary of the English Language, Volume Two*. Lincoln : Cliffs Notes.

Faulkner, William. n.d. *Collected Stories of William Faulkner*. New York: Random House.

———. 1934. *The Unvanquished*. New York: Random House.

———. 1942. *Go Down Moses and Other Stories*. New York: Random House.

Feagin, Crawford. 1979. *Variation and Change in Alabama English*. Washington: Georgetown University Press.

Gonzales, Ambrose. 1924a. *The Captain: Stories of the Black Border*. Reprinted Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1972.

———. 1924b. *Laguerre: a Gascon of the Black Border*. Reprinted Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1972.

Haïk, Isabelle. 1984. "Indirect binding". *Linguistic Inquiry* 15:185-223.

Harris, Joel Chandler. 1880. *Uncle Remus, his Songs and his Sayings*. New York: D. Appleton.

———. 1899. *The Chronicles of Aunt Minervy Ann*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Hartsfield, Mariella Glenn. 1987. *Tall Betsy and Dunce Baby: South Georgia Folktales*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Hays, Donald, ed. 1989. *Stories: Contemporary Southern Short Fiction*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press.

Hendrickson, Robert. 1986. *American Talk: the Words and Ways of American Dialects*. New York: Viking Penguin.

Herman, Lewis and Marguerite Herman. 1947. *Manual of American Dialects for Radio, Stage, Screen and Television*. Chicago: Ziff Davis.

Higginbotham, James. 1980. "Pronouns and bound variables". *Linguistic Inquiry* 11:679-708.

Holm, John. 1978. "The creole English of Nicaragua's Miskito Coast: its sociolinguistic history and a comparative study of its lexicon and syntax". Ph.D. dissertation, University of London.

Holm, John and Alison Shilling. 1982. *Dictionary of Bahamian English*. Cold Spring, NY: Lexik House.

Holt, Grace Sims. 1972. "Stylin' outa the Black pulpit". In Kochman, 189-204.

Hornstein, Norbert. 1984. *Logic as Grammar*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Hughes, Langston and Arna Bontemps, eds. 1959. *The Book of Negro Folklore*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company.

Hurston, Zora. 1934. *Jonah's Gourd Vine*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company.

———. 1935. *Mules and Men*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company.

Jeremiah, Milford. 1977. "The linguistic relatedness of Black English and Antiguan Creole: evidence from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries". Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University.

Jones-Jackson, Patricia. 1987. *When Roots Die: Endangered Traditions of the Sea Islands*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Joyner, Charles. 1977. "Slave folklife on the Waccamaw Neck: antebellum black culture in the South Carolina lowcountry". Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania.

Kochman, Thomas, ed. 1972. *Rappin' and Stylin' Out: Communication in Urban Black America*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Lasnik, Howard. 1989. "On the necessity of binding conditions". In Howard Lasnik, ed. *Essays on Anaphora*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 149-67.

Luján, Marta. 1985. "Binding properties of overt pronouns in null pronominal languages". *CLS* 21 (1), 424-38.

———. 1986. "Stress and binding of pronouns". *CLS* 22 (2), 248-62.

May, Robert. 1985. *Logical Form*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Maynor, Natalie. 1988. "Written records of spoken language: how reliable are they?" In Alan Thomas, ed. *Methods in Dialectology*. Clevedon and Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters, 109-20.

———. 1991. "The WPS Slave Narratives revisited" [review of Schneider (1989)]. *American Speech* 66:82-6.

Mencken, H. L. 1936. *The American Language*. New York: Knopf.

Montgomery, Michael. 1991. "The linguistic value of the ex-slave recordings". In Guy Bailey, Natalie Maynor and Patricia Cukor-Avila, eds. *The Emergence of Black English: Texts and Commentary*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 173-89.

———. 1992. "The etymology of *y'all*". In Nick Doane, Joan Hall and Dick Ringler, eds. *Words of Honor: Essays Presented to Frederic G. Cassidy*. New York: Garland Press.

Morrison, Estelle Rees. 1926. "'You-all' and 'we-all'". *American Speech* 2:133.

———. 1928. "'You-all' again". *American Speech* 4:54-5.

Montalbetti, Mario. 1986. "How pro is it?" In Osvaldo Jaeggli and Carmen Silva-Corvalan, eds. *Studies in Romance Linguistics*. Dordrecht: Foris, 137-52.

O'Connor, Flannery. 1989. "Revelation". In Hays, 271-87.

Olmstead, Frederick Law. 1860. *A Journey in the Back Country*. Reprinted New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1907.

———. 1861. *The Cotton Kingdom*. New York. Reprinted New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953.

Parsons, C. G. 1855. *An Inside View of Slavery*. Reprinted Savannah: Beehive Press, 1974.

Pederson, Lee, *et al.*, eds. 1981. *Protocols of the Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States*. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms [on microfilm].

Pollard, Edward. 1859. *Black Diamonds Gathered in the Darkey Homes of the South*. New York: Pudney & Russell.

Poplack, Shana and David Sankoff. 1987. "The Philadelphia story in the Spanish Caribbean". *American Speech* 62:291-314.

Randolph, Vance and George Wilson. 1953. *Down in the Holler: a Gallery of Ozark Folk Speech*. Norman: University of Oklahoma.

Rawick, George, ed. 1972. *The American Slave: a Composite Autobiography*. 19 Vols. Westport: Greenwood Press.

———. 1977. *The American Slave: a Composite Autobiography. Supplement Series 1*. 12 Vols. Westport: Greenwood Press.

———. 1979. *The American Slave: a Composite Autobiography. Supplement Series 2*. 10 Vols. Westport: Greenwood Press.

Rawlings, Marjorie Kinnan. 1933. *South Moon Under*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap.

Redpath, James. 1859. *The Roving Editor or, Talks with Slaves in the Southern States*. New York: A.B. Burdick.

Reed, Carroll. 1961. "Double dialect geography". *Orbis* 10:308-19.

Reinhart, Tanya. 1983. *Anaphora and Semiotic Interpretation*. London: Croom Helm.

Richardson, Gina. 1984. "Can *y'all* function as a singular pronoun in southern dialect?" *American Speech* 59:51-9.

Rickford, John. 1991. "Representativeness and reliability of the ex-slave materials". In Guy Bailey, Natalie Maynor and Patricia Cukor-Avila, eds. *The Emergence of Black English: Texts and Commentary*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 191-212.

Rigau, Gemma. 1986. "Some remarks on the nature of strong pronouns in null-subject languages". In Ivonne Bordelois, Heles Contreras and Karen Zagona, eds. *Generative Studies in Spanish Syntax*. Dordrecht: Foris, 143-64.

Schneider, Edgar. 1989. *American Earlier Black English*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

Selkirk, Elisabeth. 1984. *Phonology and Syntax: the Relation between Sound and Structure*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Singleton, Arthur [= Henry C. Knight]. 1824. *Letters from the South and West*. Boston: Richardson and Lord.

Smith, C. A. 1920. "You all as used in the south". *Kit-Kat* 9:27-39.

Smith, Edgar Valentine. 1986. "'Lijah". In Beidler, 106-23.

Smitherman, Geneva. 1977. *Talkin and Testifyin: the Language of Black America*. Detroit: Wayne State University.

Spencer, Nancy. 1975. "Singular *y'all*". *American Speech* 50:315-17.

Turner, Lorenzo. 1949. *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*. Chicago: University of Chicago.

Twiggs, Robert. 1973. *Pan-African Language in the Western Hemisphere*. North Quincy, Mass.: Christopher Publishing House.

Vigo, José. n.d. "Transcriptions of Samana English". Unpublished MS. Schomberg Center, New York Public Library.

Wilson, Charles Morrow. 1935. *Backwoods America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina.

Wilson, George. 1960. "You-all". *Georgia Review* 14:38-54.

Wolfram, Walt. 1990. "Re-examining vernacular Black English". *Language* 66:121-33.

John M. Lipski
Department of Modern & Classical Languages
Ortega Hall 235
University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, NM 87131-1146
USA