Omnivorous third person agreement in Algonquian*

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Abstract

I argue that third person is not underspecified: there must be a distinct third person feature. I add to the existing body of morphological arguments for this conclusion (Nevins 2007, Trommer 2008, a.o.) a *syntactic* argument: I show that there is omnivorous third person agreement in several Algonquian languages. I focus here on two, Blackfoot (Plains Algonquian) and Plains Cree (Central Algonquian), demonstrating that they have an agreement suffix (the PERIPHERAL SUFFIX, analyzed as a probe in C) that indexes number, animacy, and obviation of the structurally-highest third person argument, skipping over first and second person if it has to. I argue that alternative analyses of this agreement pattern in terms of animacy, obviation, and the categorial feature D do not work; thus, third person must be specified even in the syntax (contra Preminger 2019).

1 Introduction

There's an ongoing debate about what the right representation of phi features should be. One particularly controversial point in this debate is the status of third person, with there being a core divide between those who think that third person is the lack of more specified person features, a view that we can dub 3NOP (mnemonic for "third person is not a person"), following Nevins (2007), and those for whom there is a distinct third person feature, a view we can dub 3YESP.

What kind of data would help us decide between 3noP and 3yesP? Under a 3noP theory, there is no way refer directly to third person to the exclusion of first and second, as the representation of third person is contained within the representation of first and second. 3noP would thus predict that there should be no morphosyntactic phenomenon that targets third person and only third person—let's call this INVISIBILITY:

(1) *Invisibility*

In no language can third person explicitly be targeted to the exclusion of first and second person in various kinds of morphosyntactic processes.

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Thus, there should be no morphological process, like Impoverishment, that could target only third person. Nor could there be a syntactic process, like agreement, that targets only third person. In contrast, 3yesP does give us the formal tools to refer exclusively to third person, predicting that we should get counterexamples to Invisbility. The literature has provided us with morphological counterexamples to Invisibility—we get morphological processes that can see third person to the exclusion of first and second (Nevins 2007, Trommer 2008, a.o.). Here, I add to this body of work by providing an example of a *syntactic* counterexample to Invisbility.

The empirical domain is the PERIPHERAL SUFFIX in Algonquian. This suffix appears in the INDEPENDENT ORDER, which is generally characteristic of matrix declaratives, and it surfaces linearly rightmost on the verb, to the right of various kinds of tense/mood/evidential marking. I'll follow the majority of the generative literature on Algonquian in placing the peripheral suffix in C across the family (Halle and Marantz 1993, Branigan and MacKenzie 1999, Bruening 2001, Bliss 2013, Oxford 2017a, a.o.; though see Oxford 2014 for a dissenting view). This suffix can be reconstructed back to Proto-Algonquian, and it has the peculiar property across the family of only having exponents for third person.[1]

In several Algonquian languages, the peripheral suffix displays a clear OMNIVOROUS AGREEMENT pattern (Nevins 2011), agreeing with a third person, no matter if it's a subject or an object. In these languages, the peripheral suffix has the following behavior:

(2) *Omnivorous third person peripheral agreement*

C indexes the animacy, number, and obviation status of the closest third person DP.

Here, I'll guide us through data from two Algonquian languages from different branches of the family, Blackfoot (Plains Algonquian; Frantz 2017, Goddard 2018) and Plains Cree (Central Algonquian; Wolfart 1973, Dahlstrom 1991, Okimāsis 2018), though this particular agreement pattern is widespread across Central Algonquian, found also in Menominee (Bloomfield 1962), Meskwaki (Goddard 1994, 1995, Dahlstrom 2013), Miami-Illinois (Costa 2003), and across the Cree-Innu-Naskapi dialect continuum (e.g. in Innu-aimûn; Clarke 1982, Drapeau 2014). After outlining the omnivorous third person agreement pattern, I'll respond to some potential alternative accounts that attempt to analyze it away in order to save syntactic 3noP: agreement for animacy, agreement for obviation, and agreement for D features.

[1]There is a clear diachronic explanation for this: the peripheral suffix was originally a nominal suffix that marked a nominal's animacy, number, and obviation status—thus, it only ever appeared on third person noun phrases. The Proto-Algonquian independent order can be internally reconstructed as arising from nominalized verbs (Goddard 2007), thus accounting for the appearance of nominal morphology on verbs and the restriction of the peripheral suffix to third person forms only. In fact, all of the agreement structurally outside of the reflexes of these historic nominalizers (the "formative" suffixes) is historically derived from nominal morphology, and in many Algonquian languages is still synchronically identical to nominal morphology.

2 Setting the stage

But before we dive into the weeds, let's set up the theoretical backdrop a bit more to see why omnivorous third person is particularly important for the 3noP vs. 3yesP debate.

Let's start with theories of person features. One influential proponent of 3noP is Harley and Ritter (2002) (though the insight is longstanding; see Forchheimer 1953 for discussion), who propose that third person lacks person features entirely. They propose the following representations of person features:

(3) a. [ ]: third person — Harley and Ritter (2002)
b. [PART, ADDR]: second person
c. [PART, AUTH]: first person exclusive
d. [PART, AUTH, ADDR]: first person inclusive

Thus, they adopt a privative feature system, with the only person features being PART, AUTH,[2] and ADDR. Third person is underspecified for person features.

In contrast, Nevins (2007) argues for 3yesP, arguing for a theory with binary [±PART] amd [±AUTH] features:[3]

(4) a. [−PART, −AUTH]: third person — Nevins (2007)
b. [+PART, −AUTH]: second person
c. [+PART, +AUTH]: first person

Under this representation, there *is* a dedicated third person feature: it's labelled [−PART]. In principle, we could also imagine a privative 3yesP theory, with privative [3], [PART], [AUTH], and [ADDR] features, but to the best of my knowledge no such theory has been explicitly defended in the literature. Of course, these two exemplars of 3noP and 3yesP do not exhaust the possibility space, but they will do to illustrate the two opposing camps.[4]

One of Nevins's (2007) central arguments is the existence of 3-on-3 dissimilation effects. In the abstract, these involve the ungramamaticality of two linearly-adjacent third person clitics that can be fixed by removing the person specification of one of the offending clitics, thus resulting in the spellout of an underspecified form. Both the conditioning

[2] Harley and Ritter (2002) use "Speaker", but I adopt the modality-neutral label AUTH, for "author".

[3] To capture inclusive first person, Nevins adds a privative ADDR feature: [+PART, +AUTH, ADDR].

[4] A common elaboration to Harley and Ritter's (2002) 3noP theory is one in which third person is not completely underspecified, but the featural representation of third person is a subset of first and second person. Béjar (2003) proposes a view like this, with the feature [π] (for "person") found in the representation of all person values, both third person as well as first and second. Third person is thus not completely underspecified, but it is underspecified relative to first and second person—it lacks certain featural distinctions that first and second person have. Another version of 3yesP involves a theory in which there isn't a dedicated third person feature, but the the featural representation of third person isn't a subset of first and second person. Harbour (2016) argues for such a theory, with third person represented as [−PART, −AUTH], sharing [−PART] with exclusive first person, and sharing [−AUTH] with second person. As third person is not underspecified in any sense, this is still a 3yesP theory.

environment for these kinds of rules (adjacency to a third person clitic) as well as the target of the rule (a third person clitic) have to be able to make reference to some kind of feature found only in third person, and not first or second.

For a concrete example, let's consider the case of Ubykh (Northwest Caucasian), discussed by Deal (2020).[5] In Ubykh, the third person absolutive clitic *ɐ=* cannot linearly precede a third person singular clitic—instead, you either drop the absolutive clitic (which is independently possible—absolutive clitics are optional), or you realize it as the otherwise unattested form *jɨ=*:[6]

(5) a. * *ɐ́=* *Ø=* *n=* *tʷɨ-n*
3ABS= 3SG.DAT= 3SG.ERG= give-PRS
Intended: '[She] gives it to her.'

b. ∅ *Ø=* *n=* *tʷɨ-n*
3SG.DAT= 3SG.ERG= give-PRS
'She gives (it) to her.'

c. *jɨ́=* *Ø=* *n=* *tʷɨ-n*
3ABS= 3SG.DAT= 3SG.ERG= give-PRS
'She gives it to her.' Ubykh (Deal 2020:18-19, 21)

Deal (2020) argues that this really is a surface morphological restriction, not a syntactic one, as it arises only when third person *ɐ=* is linearly adjacent to a third person singular clitic, no matter the case or syntactic role of the offending clitics. Additionally, if there is another clitic intervening between the two third person ones, then there is no issue: *ɐ=* surfaces and is not replaced by *jɨ=*. Deal proposes that person features on a third person absolutive clitic are deleted when linearly preceding another third person clitic, and *jɨ=* is the default spellout of an absolutive clitic, which only has a chance to surface when person features are deleted.

Data like this seem to push us away from 3noP in favor of 3yesP. However, there's a

[5] Nevins (2007) actually focuses on the "spurious *se*" rule in Spanish (Romance), where a third person dative clitic *le(s)* becomes the "reflexive" clitic *se* when it precedes another third person clitic. I do not reproduce this classic example here, as Alcaraz (2018) demonstrates that there are numerous *syntactic* distinctions between spurious *se* and dative *le(s)* that pose a significant challenge to any morphological dissimilation account (see also Fábregas and Cabré 2021, who take up Alcaraz's challenge and put forth a syntactic account of spurious *se*). Outside of Spanish and Ubykh, similar restrictions are found across other varieties of Romance (Bonet 1995, Pescarini 2010, a.o.), in Arabic (Semitic, Walkow 2012), Kambera (Malayo-Polynesian, Klamer 1997), and Caquinte (Arawakan, Drummond and O'Hagan 2020), though in several of these cases the repairs don't involve dissimilation.

[6] Abbreviations: 1 = first person, 2 = second person, 3 = third person, ABS = absolutive, ADDR = addressee, AF = agent focus, AI = animate intransitive, AUTH = author, CJ = conjunct, COM = completive, DAT = dative, DEM = demonstrative, DIR = direct, ERG = ergative, EXC = exclusive, FOC = focus, IC = initial change, II = inanimate intransitive, IN = inanimate, INV = inverse, NEG = negative, OBJ = object, OBV = obviative, P = P formative, PART = participant, PL = plural, PRN = pronoun, PROX = proximate, PRS = present, REL = relative, SBJ = subject, SG = singular, TA = transitive animate, TI = transtitive inanimate, Ẅ = umlauting W formative.

possible response that the 3noP camp could make that's combatible with this data, which Preminger (2019) nicely articulates. Preminger notes that all of the counterexamples to Invisibility in the literature involve *morphological* phenomena, and thus argues for a modular view: the representation of features across different modules—syntax, morphology, semantics—can differ. He proposes that 3noP holds specifically *in the syntax*, not the morphology: for the purposes of narrow syntactic processes, third person is the absence of more specified person features. Inspired by phonological redundancy rules, which insert predictable featural information into underspecified phonological representations (Archangeli 1984, 1988, a.o.), Preminger proposes that in the mapping from the output of the narrow syntactic derivation to the morphology we can "fill in" third person features into underspecified syntactic representations, thus rendering third person visible to the morphological component, and allowing us to capture effects like 3-on-3 dissimilation:

(6) a. $[\textsc{part}]_{\text{SYN}} \Rightarrow [+\textsc{part}]_{\text{MORPH}}$

b. $\neg\exists[\textsc{part}]_{\text{SYN}} \Rightarrow [-\textsc{part}]_{\text{MORPH}}$

All the syntax can see is [PART], but the morphology can see both [+PART] and [−PART]. Let's call this more nuanced version of 3noP SYNTACTIC 3noP.

Now the question becomes: what data would distinguish between syntactic 3noP and 3yesP? We would need to find cases of crucially-syntactic phenomena that exclusively target third person. One such phenomenon is agreement,[7] and in particular the phenomenon of omnivorous agreement (Nevins 2011), which involves an agreement marker that seems to specifically seek out certain features (e.g. PART or PL) no matter if they are found on the subject or object. A classic and by-now standard account of omnivorous agreement in a Probe-Goal model of agreement (Chomsky 2000, 2001, a.m.o.) is to make use of the idea that probing is *relativized* (Béjar 2003 extensively explores this intuition): probes are specified to look for certain types of features, and only interact with those features on a goal (e.g. *wh*, ϕ, etc.). Omnivorous agreement is thus analyzed as a probe relativized for a particularly "specific" feature: a probe relativized for PART, [uPART], would only interact with PART goals, skipping over any third persons, deriving the omnivority. Under this light, *all* agreement is at least slightly omnivorous: for instance, plain phi agreement skips over potential goals that don't bear phi features.

One classic example of omnivorous person agreement is found in the Kichean Agent Focus construction, which appears in contexts where the transitive agent is Ā-extracted. In this construction, the verb will agree with first or second person arguments (i.e. it's looking for the feature [(+)PART]), no matter whether they are the subject or object, as in the following Kaqchikel (Mayan) examples:

(7) a. *ja rat x-**at**/***Ø**-ax-an ri achin.* 2>3
FOC 2SG COM-**2SG**/***3SG.ABS**-hear-AF the man
'It was you that heard the man.'

[7] Bobaljik (2008) argues that agreement is postsyntactic; see Arregi and Nevins (2012) and Preminger (2014) for responses affirming that (at least one component of) agreement occurs in the narrow syntax.

b. *ja ri achin x-**at**/*Ø-ax-an rat.* 3>2
FOC the man COM-**2SG**/*3SG.ABS-hear-AF 2SG
'It was the man that heard you.' Kaqchikel (Preminger 2014:18)

In the Agent Focus construction, then, the verb agrees with first or second person arguments, skipping over third persons if it has to.

If there is a third person feature, we should be able to specify a probe for it: we predict the existence of [u3] (or [u–PART]) probes. Thus, 3yesP predicts the existence of omnivorous third person agreement: we should find instances of an agreement marker that specifically seeks out third persons, ignoring first and second if it has to. True omnivorous third person agreement has been assumed to not exist (e.g. Preminger 2019, a.m.o.), and this assumption has formed part of the argument for (syntactic) 3noP.[8] Here I'll argue that omnivorous third person agreement *does* exist. In doing so, I show that even the weakest form of 3noP—syntactic 3noP—is untenable. We must accept 3yesP, even in the syntax.[9]

3 The data

With the theoretical stage set, let's now turn to the data from Blackfoot and Plains Cree peripheral agreement (analyzed as a probe in C), first examining configurations where there's only one third person (intransitives, PART>3, and 3>PART), then configurations with two third persons (skipping PART>PART forms, which never feature the peripheral suffix). I'll use first person exclusive forms as exemplars for PART (other forms behave similarly). Throughout, I use "subject" to refer to the single argument of an intransitive and the external argument of a transitive, and "object" to refer to the internal argument of a transitive. I will bold the peripheral suffix when it appears, and underline the controller of agreement in the translation. I default to 'she' as the translation for third person singular. As a reference, below are the possible exponents of the peripheral suffix in Blackfoot and Plains Cree:

[8] Preminger (2019) notes that the distribution of the Menominee "formative" suffix (to use Goddard's (2007) term for it) seems to show an omnivorous third person agreement pattern, citing Trommer (2008). Roughly speaking, there's a slot in the verb that can appear as *-w*, *-m*, or *-n* in various verb forms, and in simple cases *-w* seems to appear whenever there's any third person argument in the clause. However, there are a number of complications. Firstly, Trommer (2008) doesn't provide a syntactic analysis of this phenomenon, but rather a morphological, OT-based analysis, and thus strictly speaking doesn't make an argument against syntactic 3noP. Secondly, as Trommer (2008) discusses in great depth, *-w* does not appear in all contexts that contain third person arguments—for instance, it's absent in (most) negative verb forms, PART>IN verb forms, and verb forms that contain only inanimate arguments—and thus it's not actually very straightforward to say that *-w* spells out omnivorous third person agreement (and this is part of the reason why an OT analysis with competing contraints works so well).

[9] This argument is prefigured by Bondarenko (2020), who proposes that the Passamaquoddy (Eastern Algonquian) THEME SIGN (agreement on Voice) is specified for third person in the independent order—she does this to derive the distribution of the inverse marker in the independent. However, there are several plausible alternative analyses of inverse marking that don't involve reference to third person features (Bruening 2001, Oxford 2017b, 2019, Hammerly 2020, a.o.).

(8) Blackfoot

	IN	AN.PROX	AN.OBV
SG	*-wa*	*-wa*	*-yini*
PL	*-yi*	*-yi*	*-yi*

(9) Plains Cree

	IN	AN.PROX	AN.OBV
SG	*-Ø*	*-Ø*	*-a*
PL	*-a*	*-ak*	*-a*

3.1 Intransitives

In intransitives, the peripheral suffix indexes the animacy, number, and obviation of third person subjects. If the subject is not third person, there is no peripheral suffix.

(10) Blackfoot

a. *nit-á'po'taki-hp-innaan*
1-work$_{AI}$-P-1EXC
'we$_{EXC}$ worked'

b. *á'po'taki-**yi***
work$_{AI}$-**PL**
'<u>they</u> worked'

c. *á'po'taki-**yini***
work$_{AI}$-**OBV.SG**
'<u>she</u>$_{OBV}$ worked'

d. *soká'pii-**yi***
be.good$_{II}$-**PL**
'<u>they</u>$_{IN}$ are good'
(Frantz 2017:170)

(11) Plains Cree

a. *ni-pimipahtâ-nân*
1-run$_{AI}$-1EXC
'we$_{EXC}$ run'

b. *pimipahtâ-w-**ak***
run$_{AI}$-Ẅ-**PROX.PL**
'<u>they</u>$_{PROX}$ run'

c. *pimipahtâ-yi-w-**a***
run$_{AI}$-OBV-Ẅ-**OBV**
'<u>she</u>$_{OBV}$ runs'

d. *mihkwâ-w-**a***
be.red$_{II}$-Ẅ-**IN.PL**
'<u>they</u>$_{IN}$ are red'
(Dahlstrom 1991:20)

While it may look like the 1PL agreement markers in the (a) examples are in complementary distribution with the peripheral suffix, they actually occupy a different slot in the verbal template—the CENTRAL SUFFIX, typically analyzed as occupying Infl/T (Halle and Marantz 1993, Coon and Bale 2014, Oxford 2014, a.o.). Below, we'll see forms that feature both the central as well as the peripheral suffixes.

3.2 PART>3

In configurations involving a PART subject and a third person object, the peripheral suffix indexes the *object*. The probe skips over a PART subject in preference for a third person.[10] This is the core property we would expect from an omnivorous probe: ignoring more local potential goals in favor of more distant matching ones.

[10]Note that I do not provide Plains Cree forms with a PART acting on an inanimate object: these forms lack a peripheral suffix. I assume this is due to an idiosyncratic Impoverishment rule, following similar proposals by Halle and Marantz (1993) and Xu (2021) for Potawatomi and Menominee, respectively.

(12) Blackfoot

a. *nits-ikákomimm-a-nnaan-**a***
1-love$_{TA}$-DIR-1EXC-**SG**
'we$_{EXC}$ love <u>her</u>'

b. *nits-ikákomimm-a-nnaan-**i***
1-love$_{TA}$-DIR-1EXC-**PL**
'we$_{EXC}$ love <u>them</u>'

c. *nits-ííkoon-ii-hp-innaan-**a***
1-take.down$_{TA}$-IN.OBJ-P-1EXC-**SG**
'we$_{EXC}$ took <u>it</u> down'

d. *nits-ííkoon-ii-hp-innaan-**i***
1-take.down$_{TA}$-IN.OBJ-P-1EXC-**PL**
'we$_{EXC}$ took <u>them$_{IN}$</u> down'

(Frantz 2017:46-47, 56-57)

(13) Plains Cree

a. *ni-mow-â-nân-**Ø***
1-eat$_{TA}$-DIR-1EXC-**PROX.SG**
'we$_{EXC}$ eat <u>it$_{AN.PROX}$</u>'

b. *ni-mow-â-nân-**ak***
1-eat$_{TA}$-DIR-1EXC-**PROX.PL**
'we$_{EXC}$ eat <u>them$_{AN.PROX}$</u>'

(Okimāsis 2018:145-146)

In the left column we have singular objects and singular peripheral suffixes; in the right column we have plural objects and plural peripheral suffixes.

3.3 3>PART

In configurations involving a third person subject and a PART object, the peripheral suffix indexes the subject.[11]

(14) Blackfoot

a. *nits-ikákomimm-ok-innaan-**a***
1-love$_{TA}$-INV-1EXC-**SG**
'<u>she</u> loves us$_{EXC}$'

b. *nits-ikákomimm-ok-innaan-**i***
1-love$_{TA}$-INV-1EXC-**PL**
'<u>they</u> love us$_{EXC}$' (Frantz 2017:61)

(15) Plains Cree

a. *ni-pâhpih-iko-nân-**Ø***
1-laugh.at$_{TA}$-INV-1EXC-**PROX.SG**
'<u>she$_{PROX}$</u> laughs at us'

b. *ni-pâhpih-iko-nân-**ak***
1-laugh.at$_{TA}$-INV-1EXC-**PROX.PL**
'<u>they$_{PROX}$</u> laugh at us'

(Okimāsis 2018:187-188)

Thus, the peripheral suffix always indexes third person features, no matter whether they come from the subject or the object—the characteristic property of omnivorous agreement.

That brings us to the end of the basic only-one-third-person forms. To summarize: whenever you have only one third person argument, the peripheral suffix agrees with it, skipping over first and second persons if necessary. This is precisely the behavior one would expect from an omnivorous third person probe.

[11] I do not provide inanimate subject forms for Blackfoot because inanimates cannot be the subject of a transitive in Blackfoot (Frantz 2017). I do not provide inanimate subject on PART object forms for Plains Cree because they lack peripheral suffixes, just like PART>IN forms—again I assume this is due to Impoverishment.

3.4 3>3 direct

In contexts with two third persons in direct configurations (PROX>OBV, AN>IN), the peripheral suffix indexes the subject.

(16) Blackfoot

a. *ikákomimm-ii-**wa***
love$_{TA}$-DIR-**SG**
'she$_{PROX}$ loves her/them$_{OBV}$'

b. *ikákomimm-ii-**yi***
love$_{TA}$-DIR-**PL**
'they$_{PROX}$ loves her/them$_{OBV}$'

c. *ikóón-im-**a***
take.down$_{TI}$-IN.OBJ-**SG**
'she took it/them down'

d. *ikóón-im-**i***
take.down$_{TI}$-IN.OBJ-**PL**
'they took it/them down'

(Frantz 2017:46-47,58)

(17) Plains Cree

a. *mow-ê-w-**Ø***
eat$_{TA}$-DIR-Ẅ-**PROX.SG**
'she$_{PROX}$ eats it/them$_{OBV}$'

b. *mow-ê-w-**ak***
eat$_{TA}$-DIR-Ẅ-**PROX.PL**
'they$_{PROX}$ eat it/them$_{OBV}$'

c. *wâpaht-am(-w)-**Ø***
see$_{TI}$-IN.OBJ-Ẅ-**PROX.SG**
'she$_{PROX}$ sees it/them'

d. *wâpaht-am-w-**ak***
see$_{TI}$-IN.OBJ-Ẅ-**PROX.PL**
'they$_{PROX}$ see it/them'

(Okimāsis 2018:132,145)

In these forms, since the peripheral suffix is only able to index the number of the subject, the number of the object is ambiguous. Here we learn that the peripheral suffix prefers indexing the more local goal—a familiar locality effect.

3.5 3>3 inverse

Alternatively, when there are two third persons, we can get the inverse (OBV>PROX, IN>AN). In this case, the peripheral suffix indexes the *object*.

(18) Blackfoot

a. *ots-ikákomimm-ok-**a***
3-love$_{TA}$-INV-**SG**
'she/they$_{OBV}$ love her$_{PROX}$'

b. *ots-ikákomimm-ok-oaa-**yi***
3-love$_{TA}$-INV-PL-**PL**
'she/they$_{OBV}$ love them$_{PROX}$'

(Frantz 2017:62)

(19) Plains Cree

a. *sêkih-iko-w-**Ø***
frighten$_{TA}$-INV-Ẅ-**PROX.SG**
'she$_{OBV}$/they$_{OBV}$/it frighten her$_{PROX}$'

b. *sêkih-ik-w-**ak***
frighten$_{TA}$-INV-Ẅ-**PROX.PL**
'she$_{OBV}$/they$_{OBV}$/it frighten them$_{PROX}$'

(Dahlstrom 1991:23)

These cases may seem to fly against the picture we've been building up so far: why are we skipping over the subject to agree with the object? The subject is third person, and thus should satisfy the probe's needs.

Locality is restored once we realize that the 3>3 inverse crucially involves A movement of the object over the subject, following Bruening (2001, 2005, 2009), Bliss (2013), Hamilton (2015, 2018), and Oxford (2022), among others. The only assumption we need to make here is that this step of A movement happens before C probes, something that seems quite reasonable given C's structural height and given the fact that CP is typically an Ā domain.

3.5.1 The syntax of the inverse

To show that the inverse, but not the direct, involves A movement of the object over the subject, we can use the classic variable binding diagnostic: A movement should be able to feed variable binding. Put another way, while Ā movement of a quantifier can trigger Weak Crossover (WCO) effects, A movement of a quantifier does not (Postal 1971, Wasow 1972, Koopman and Sportiche 1983, a.m.o.). In both Blackfoot and Plains Cree, the 3>3 inverse reverses binding relations in exactly the way we'd expect from A movement.

Bliss (2013) demonstrates that in direct configurations in Blackfoot, universal quantifier subjects can bind into objects but not vice versa (20), whereas in the inverse, universal quantifier objects can bind into subjects but not vice versa (21). First let's take a look at the direct configurations:

(20) Direct: subject can bind into object, but not vice versa

a. *Amo-ksi aakííkoa-iks$_i$ ohkaná-ísinao'sskip-**ii**-y=aawa* [*om-i sááhkomaapi-i*
DEM-PL girl-PL all-kiss$_{TA}$-**DIR**-PL=3PL.PRN DEM-OBV boy-OBV
ot-áákomimm-a-yi pro$_i$].
3-love$_{TA}$-DIR-OBV
'Every girl$_i$ kissed [the boy she$_i$ loved].'

b. * [*Ann-a sááhkomaapi ot-áákomimm-ok-a pro$_i$*] *ohkaná-ísinao'sskip-**ii**-y=aawa*
DEM-PROX boy 3-love$_{TA}$-INV-PROX all-kiss$_{TA}$-**DIR**-PL=3PL.PRN
amo-ksi aakííkoa-iks$_i$.
DEM-PL girl-PL
'[The boy she$_{*_i, \checkmark_j}$ loved] kissed every girl$_i$.' (Bliss 2013:291)

In (20a) we have a proximate universal quantifier subject, 'every girl' (*amoksi aakííkoaks* 'the girls' plus the quantificational prefix *ohkana-* on the verb) binding a variable contained inside a relative clause modifying the obviative object, *omi sááhomaapii otáákomimmayi* 'the boy she loved'. This is acceptable under the bound reading, which is perhaps what one would expect given that subjects are first-merged c-commanding objects. In (20b), on the other hand, we are attempting to have an obviative universal quantifier object 'every girl'[12] bind into a proximate subject *anna sááhomaapi otáákomimmoka* 'the boy

[12]Though the Blackfoot plural marker *-iksi* is ambiguous between proximate and obviative, we know that

that she loved'. The bound reading here is not available—only an unbound reading is.[13] This indicates that in direct configurations, subject and object retain their first-merge c-command relationship.[14]

In the inverse, exactly the opposite state of affairs obtains:

(21) Inverse: object can bind into subject, but not vice versa

a. *Amo-ksi aakííkoa-iks$_i$ ot-ohkaná-ísinao'sskip-**ok**-y=aawa [om-i*
DEM-PL girl-PL 3-all-kiss$_{TA}$-**INV**-PL=3PL.PRN DEM-OBV
sááhkomaapi-i ot-áákomimm-a-yi pro$_i$].
boy-OBV 3-love$_{TA}$-DIR-OBV
'[The boy she$_i$ loved] kissed every girl$_i$.'

b. *[*Ann-a sááhkomaapi-wa ot-áákomimm-ok-a pro$_i$]*
DEM-PROX boy-PROX 3-love$_{TA}$-INV-PROX 3-all-kiss$_{TA}$-**INV**-SG
*ot-ohkaná-ísinao'sskip-**ok**-a ann-iksi aakííkoa-iks$_i$.*
DEM-PL girl-PL
'Every girl$_i$ kissed [the boy she$_{*i, \checkmark j}$ loved].' (Bliss 2013:291)

In (21a) the proximate object is able to bind into the obviative subject, in stark contrast to what we saw above in the direct (20b). Conversely, as we can see in (21b) obviative subjects cannot bind into proximate objects, again contrasting with the direct (20a). This suggests that in the inverse, the object A moves above the subject, allowing the object to bind variables in the subject, and additionally suggests that the object cannot reconstruct for variable binding. Parallel conclusions are drawn from parallel data in other Algonquian languages by Bruening (2001, 2005, 2009) for Passamaquoddy-Wolastoqey (Eastern Algonquian) and Hamilton (2015) for Mi'kmaq (Eastern Algonquian).

Similar variable binding data can be adduced from the literature on *wh* questions and WCO in Plains Cree. Dahlstrom (1986, 1991) argues that Plains Cree does not display WCO effects with examples like the following:

(22) a. *Awîna$_i$ ê-sâkih-**â**-t [pro$_i$ o-mâmâ-wa]?*
who IC-love$_{TA}$-**DIR**-3.CJ 3-mother-OBV
'Who$_i$ loves his$_i$ mother?'

b. *Awîna$_i$ ê-sâkih-**iko**-t [pro$_i$ o-mâmâ-wa] t$_i$?*
who IC-love$_{TA}$-**INV**-3.CJ 3-mother-OBV
'Who$_i$ did his$_i$ mother love t_i?' (Dahlstrom 1986:57)

---

amoksi aakííkoaiks 'the girls, every girl' is obviative here because the subject is proximate and we have the direct marker *-ii* on the matrix verb.

[13] The failure of binding here isn't a proximate-obviative issue—the intended bound variable in the relative clause is obviative, as indicated by the proximate object *anna sááhkomaapi* 'the boy.PROX' and the presence of inverse marker *-ok* on the embedded verb, so we don't have an issue of an obviative trying to be coreferent/bind a proximate.

[14] One might wonder whether word order is relevant here. Bliss (2013) argues that that is not the case.

In (22a), we see that *wh* subjects can bind into the object, just like in English. However, in contrast to English, (22b) shows us that it's possible to *wh*-extract the object and have it bind into the subject—this looks like it should result in a WCO violation, but it doesn't.

But there's an important confound here, as the above discussion (and my bolding) should have primed you to notice: in (22a) we have the direct marker *-â*, but in (22b) we have the *inverse* marker *-iko*. In fact, *all* of the grammatical sentences in the literature on Plains Cree that are meant to show that Plains Cree lacks WCO involve the inverse. However, if the inverse involves the object A-moving over the subject, then that should allow the object to bind into the subject without any issues, just like in Blackfoot.

Interestingly, elsewhere in the literature, we can find examples of attempting to get *wh* objects to bind into subject in the direct, *and these examples are ungrammatical*, just like in Blackfoot: Blain (1997) provides the following data, which involve direct morphology and attempted "inverse" variable binding:

(23) a. * *Awîna*$_i$ [*pro*$_i$ *o-têm-a*] *kâ-nawaswât-**â**-yi-t* *t*$_i$*?*
who.PROX 3-dog-OBV REL-chase$_{TA}$-**DIR**-OBV.SBJ-3.CJ
'Who$_i$ is (it that) his$_{*_i, \checkmark_j}$ dog (is) chasing *t*$_i$?' (Blain 1997:216)

b. * *Awîni-hi*$_i$ [*nâpêw kâ-sâkih-â-t* *pro*$_i$] *kâ-ocêm-**â**-t* *t*$_i$*?*
who-OBV man REL-love$_{TA}$-DIR-3.CJ REL-kiss$_{TA}$-**DIR**-3.CJ
'Who$_i$ did [the man that loved her$_{*_i, \checkmark_j}$] kiss *t*$_i$?' (Blain 1997:219)

The result is ungrammatical. Thus, just like in Blackfoot, when you have direct morphology the WCO violation pops into view. This suggests that the inverse is necessary ingredient in order to avoid a WCO violation, supporting the idea that the inverse involves object movement in Plains Cree.[15]

Example (23a) requires a bit of explanation: here, the matrix verb form indicates that we have a *direct* OBV>OBV configuration (from the combination of the direct marker *-â* and obviative subject agreement *-yi*). However, *awîna* is proximate, and given the verbal agreement, you might have expected obviative *awînihi* (note that *awîna* being proximate doesn't automatically make the sentence unacceptable: it's acceptable when *awîna* 'who' doesn't corefer with the possessor of *otêma* 'his dog'—i.e. when there's no WCO violation). Blain says the following: "the default (proximate) form *awîna* 'who' is usually acceptable where there is no chance of ambiguity" (Blain 1997:62). I think it's conceivable that (23a) is a cleft—e.g. "who is it [that his dog is chasing]?" (Blain actually argues that *all* Plains Cree *wh* questions are clefts)—and you get an "obviation reset" at the clause boundary.

Going back to the main point at hand: the variable binding and WCO data tell us that the inverse involves objects A moving over subjects. This results in the object now being the most local goal to the probe in C, resulting in the peripheral suffix indexing the object in the 3>3 inverse—a standard locality effect.

[15] Blain actually pursues another analysis of the Plains Cree WCO data—her analysis involves analogizing Plains Cree WCO to the phenomenon of WEAKEST CROSSOVER (Lasnik and Stowell 1991, Demirdache 1997). However, I'm not sure that that parallel is warranted, given the quantificational nature of *wh* items.

3.6 Summary of the data

Now that we've gone through all the relevant data, let's take a step back and evaluate where we've gotten to. I've shown that the peripheral suffix in Blackfoot and Plains Cree displays an omnivorous third person pattern, agreeing with the closest third person, no matter if it's the subject or object. A crucial point for this interpretation of the data is the idea that in the 3>3 inverse, the object A-moves over the subject. I provided independent justification for this based on the fact that WCO violations are obviated only in the inverse. Below, I sketch the various configurations. I use privative 3 and PART features here, but that is not crucial—they could be replaced with [−PART] and [+PART], respectively, if one would like to adopt Nevins's (2007) featural representations.

(24) Direct (PART>3, PROX>OBV, AN>IN)

a. $C_{[u3]}$ … [**Subj$_{[3]}$** …] intransitive

b. $C_{[u3]}$ … [$\text{Subj}_{[\text{PART}]}$ … [**Obj$_{[3]}$** …]] PART>3

c. $C_{[u3]}$ … [**Subj$_{[3]}$** … [$\text{Obj}_{[\text{PART}]}$ …]] 3>PART

d. $C_{[u3]}$ … [**Subj$_{[3]}$** … [$\text{Obj}_{[3]}$ …]] 3>3 direct

e. $C_{[u3]}$ … [**Obj$_{[3]}$** … [$\text{Subj}_{[3]}$ … [t_{Obj} …]]] 3>3 inverse

The crucial data point here is thus PART>3 configurations (24b), as those are the only configurations in which C isn't just agreeing with the most local goal—there, C must skip over the PART subject in preference for the third person object.[16] So: omnivorous third person agreement does in fact exist, and thus we need a third person feature *in the syntax*, contra Preminger (2019). It seems we must favor 3yesP over 3noP.

4 Against alternative analyses

Or do we? Before we jump to conclusions, we need to do our due diligence and consider alternative analyses that can capture this data without abandoning (syntactic) 3noP. I'll consider three such plausible attempts here: (i) agreement for animacy, (ii) agreement for obviation, and (iii) agreement for D features. To spoil the plot: agreement for animacy is straightforwardly falsifiable, agreement for obviation fails no matter what your analysis of obviation is, and agreement for D features faces a stark absence of independent evidence.

[16] Bruening (2001) and Hamilton (2015) argue in 3>PART configurations, which also involve in the inverse marker, you also get objects moving over subjects. If so, the 3>PART forms would also involve C skipping over a more local PART goal to index third person. However, Hamilton (2018) and Oxford (2022) argue that the 3>PART inverse does not involve object movement, unlike the 3>3 inverse. While I side with Hamilton (2018) and Oxford (2022) here, this point ultimately doesn't affect the core of my argument.

4.1 Agreement for animacy?

The idea goes like this: first and second person are not contrastive for animacy, as they're always animate, but we do get animacy contrasts for third person. So, we don't need to specify first and second person for animacy, but we do need to do so for third person. Then, we could say that C probes specifically for animacy features, and this will result in the surface appearance of a third-person-only probe.

Unfortunately, that doesn't work, as we can show that first and second person must be specified for animacy in the syntax. The relevant data comes from the distribution of FINALS—derivational morphology found across Algonquian that marks the transitivity of the verb and indexes the animacy of the intransitive subject and transitive object. To get a feel for the basic pattern, consider the Menominee verbs in (25). All of these verbs share the same root, *panât-* 'be spoiled, spoil', and they differ in terms of which finals they involve (there are many more finals than just these four, and finals rather idiosyncratically select for different roots, as well as often bear more concrete, lexical meaning, behaviors characteristic of derivational rather than inflectional morphology).

(25) a. *panât-**at**(-w)*
be.spoiled-**II**-Ẅ
'it is spoiled'

b. *panât-**ese**-w*
be.spoiled-**AI**-Ẅ
'she is spoiled'

c. *panâc-**eht**-a-w*
spoil-**TI**-IN.OBJ-Ẅ
'she spoils it'

d. *panâc-**eh**-æ̂-w*
spoil-**TA**-DIR-Ẅ
'she spoils her'

Menominee (Bloomfield 1962:330)

For this particular root, Bloomfield provides forms with four distinct finals:

- *panâtat-*, with the final *-at*, indicating an intransitive verb with an inanimate subject (INANIMATE INTRANSITIVE, II);
- *panâtese-*, with the final *-ese*, indicating an intransitive verb with an animate subject (ANIMATE INTRANSITIVE, AI);
- *panâceht-*, with the final *-eht* (which palatalizes the preceding /t/), indicating a transitive verb with an inanimate object (TRANSITIVE INANIMATE, TI);
- *panâceh-*, with the final *-eh* (which palatalized the preceding /t/), indicating a transitive verbs with an animate object (TRANSITIVE ANIMATE, TA).

As should be evident, finals appear to be sensitive to the animacy features of what would essentially be the "absolutive" argument if Algonquian languages featured ergative case marking, to echo the way Rhodes (1976:80) puts it.

At this point, we need to ask two questions: (i) is the selection of finals really sensitive to *morphosyntactic* animacy features, rather than notional animacy? (ii) if only one of inanimate and animate is specified for animacy, which one is it?

The answer to question (i) is yes: the selection of finals is sensitive to grammatical animacy, not notional animacy. While many nouns across Algonquian are predictably animate or inanimate—for instance, nouns referring to notionally animate entities like people and animals are overwhelmingly animate[17]—there are several cases where animacy must simply be lexically-specified, most commonly for notionally inanimate nouns that are grammatically animate (see Dahlstrom 1995, Goddard 2002, and Quinn 2019 for nuanced discussion of animacy in Algonquian). Below I provide examples of unpredictably animate/inanimate nouns in Meskwaki:

(26) Inanimates

meški	'blood'
anîpi	'elm'
ahtêhimini	'strawberry'
čîmâni	'canoe'
trêkitêhi	'tractor'

(27) Animates

atôwa	'blood clot'
meškwâwâhkwa	'red cedar'
wîtawîha	'raspberry'
atâpyâna	'wagon'
âtamôpîna	'automobile'

Meskwaki (Dahlstrom 2013:3-6,7,8)

As should be evident from comparison of the inanimates in (26) to the animates in (27), it's not clear what, if anything, could semantically distinguish the two sets of nouns. This behavior is characteristic of animacy across the family.

And when we put these nouns into a sentence, the verb stem (verb root plus finals) tracks grammatical animacy:

(28) a. *ne-**mîči**-p-ena ahtêhimin-ani.* *inanimate object*
1-**eat**.**TI**-P-1PL strawberry-IN.PL
'We$_{EXC}$ ate strawberries.'

b. *net-**amw**-â-p-ena wîtawîh-aki.* *animate object*
1-**eat**.**TA**-DIR-P-1PL raspberry-PROX.PL
'We$_{EXC}$ ate raspberries.' Meskwaki (Dahlstrom 2013:3-9)

In (28), we have two suppletive verbs, *mîči-* 'eat IN'and *amw-* 'eat AN'—we might imagine treating these as a portmanteau of an abstract $\sqrt{\text{EAT}}$ root plus a TI or TA final. Here, the choice of which verb stem to use is dependent on the grammatical animacy of the object, rather than its notional animacy.

The answer to question (ii) is that inanimate is more likely to be underspecified for animacy. Dahlstrom (2013) argues that "inanimate is the semantically unmarked, elsewhere category of the gender system" (Dahlstrom 2013:3-11). She notes that, in contexts where you have a single (null) pronoun referring to a mixed set of inanimate and animate nouns, the result in inanimate: in the Meskwaki story *wisakea osani okyeni osimeani okomeseani*

[17] Dahlstrom (1995) notes two counterexamples to this in Meskwaki: the inanimate collective noun *mîčipêhi* 'game' (as in wild animals hunted for food), and the inanimate noun *čînawêtîweni* 'kin' (which is an extension of the word's original sense of 'kinship system').

[Wisahkeha, his father, his mother, his younger brother, his grandmother], told by Alfred Kiyana (1913), we find the form *mîčikwêna* 'whoever ate them$_{IN}$', using the TI stem *mîči-* 'eat', to refer to a person who ate strawberries (inanimate) and fish (animate) (Dahlstrom 2013:3-11).[18] Goddard (2002) makes a similar point, noting that the inanimate indefinite pronoun *kêkôhi* 'something' can be used in contexts where it must be referring to an animate entity, providing the following example, coming from the story "Wapasaya's Younger Brother" by Alfred Kiyana, where someone admits that they have not killed a (most likely human) enemy:

(29) *âkwi=mâh=nîna kêkôhi nehtô-yân-ini.*
NEG=you.see=1SG something kill$_{TI}$-1.SG-NEG
'I have not killed anything.' Meskwaki (Goddard 2002:221)

The conclusion that Dahlstrom and Goddard draw from this kind of data is that inanimates must be unmarked. They can in principle refer to both animate and inanimate referents (as revealed by these examples), but inanimate markers are (usually) restricted to appearing with non-animates only because of some kind of morphological competition—for instance, the Subset Principle in Distributed Morphology (Halle 1997).

So, back to the original question: can we show that first and second person are specified for animacy? The fact: when you have a first or second person subject of an intransitive, or a first or second person object of a transitive, you use an animate final:

(30) Menominee

a. *ne-pâhp-**æhcenâ**-m*
1-fall-**snag.AI**-M
'I fall'

b. *ne-tæp-**ahw**-ek(-w)*
1-pay-**by.instrument.TA**-INV-W
'he pays me' (Bloomfield 1962:151,155)

In both these examples we have an animate final: the AI final *-æhcenâ* in (30a), which Bloomfield glosses as 'snag, immerse' (Bloomfield 1962:315), and the TA final *-ahw* in (30b), which indicates the use of an instrument (Will Oxford, p.c.)—here, the instrument would presumably be money.

Since finals track grammatical animacy, and animate is the specified value out of the pair animate-inanimate, we must conclude that the finals here are sensitive to a specified [AN] feature on first and second person DPs. Thus, first and second person are specified for animacy. If so, we cannot analyze the peripheral suffix as probing for animacy, as then it shouldn't be able to skip over first and second person DPs, counter to fact.

[18] We can't use agreement with (overt) coordinations to test for markedness because Meskwaki features closest conjunct agreement (Dahlstrom 2013:3-9).

4.2 Agreement for obviation?

Another attempt: maybe C probes for obviation features, and first and second person are not specified for obviation? This kind of analysis is somewhat tricky to respond to, since there is no general consensus on what exactly obviation is, and there are several distinct proposals in the literature for how it's represented morphosyntactically. Here, I'll focus on three kinds of views, and show that none of them is able to formulate an unproblematic response to the the omnivorous third person pattern. The three views are:[19]

1. Proximate and obviative are in principle contrastive on all persons (Hammerly 2020).
2. Proximate and obviative are only contrastive on third persons, and…
   (a) …first and second person are always proximate (Bruening 2001, Lochbihler 2012, Oxford 2019).
   (b) …first and second person are not specified for obviation (Bondarenko 2020).

For reference, let us call the first view Contrast Everywhere and the second 3 Only. There are two kinds of 3 Only we find in the literature: first and second person are always proximate (2a), and first and second person are not specified for obviation (2b). I'll address these views in turn, considering how they would implement the obviation agreement idea, and arguing that the obviation agreement account of the apparent omnivorous third person pattern fails in each case. Contrast Everywhere and the first subtype of 3 Only (PART is proximate) only make the argument for 3yesP stronger, and the second subtype of 3 Only reduces to positing a third person feature.

4.2.1 Contrast Everywhere

If we adopt Contrast Everywhere, we could say the following about the omnivorous third person pattern we find in Algonquian: in these languages, it's just an accident that there is no obviation contrast on first and second person, in a similar way to how some languages lack gender/noun class distinctions in the first and second person. Then, we could say that the surface appearance of omnivorous third person agreement is actually the confluence of two independent factors: (i) first and second person just happen to not have obviation features in these languages; and (ii) C is probing for obviation features.

However, the core issue here is Blackfoot. Blackfoot displays the omnivorous third person agreement pattern, as we've seen, yet Blackfoot is the clearest example we have of a language that contrasts obviation on first and second persons.[20] The relevant data are the independent pronouns, which show a contrast that uses the same suffixes found

[19] There is at least one other kind of analysis in the literature: obviation is contrastive only on third person, first person is always proximate, and second person is always obviative (Bliss and Jesney 2005). I set this view aside here.

[20] The only other potential example I know of is the language isolate Ktunaxa (also known as Kutenai), but there the picture is even muddier than in Blackfoot; see Hammerly (2020) for discussion.

elsewhere as proximate (*-wa*) and obviative (*-yi*) markers:[21]

(31) Blackfoot independent pronouns (Wiltschko et al. 2015:266)

	PROX?	OBV?
1	*n-iistó-wa*	*n-iistó-yi*
2	*k-iistó-wa*	*k-iistó-yi*
3	*o-(ii)stó-wa*	*o-(ii)stóa-yi*
1EX	*n-iistó-nnaan-wa*	*n-iistó-nnaan-yi*
1INC	*k-iistó-nnoon-wa*	*k-iistó-nnoon-yi*
2PL	*k-iistó-waaw-wa*	*k-iistó-waaw-yi*
3PL	*o-(ii)stó-waawa-wa*	*o-(ii)stó-waawa-yi*

I hedge here because it's not actually obvious that *-wa* and *-yi* really mark obviation on the independent pronouns, as their syntactic distribution doesn't seem to obviously mirror the syntactic distribution of obviation on third persons. As Bliss (2013) puts it, "it is yet unclear what determines whether a local independent pronoun is marked as proximate or obviative" (Bliss 2013:253); see also the discussion by Wiltschko et al. (2015).

Setting all that aside, let's accept for the purposes of argument that Blackfoot distinguishes between proximate and obviative on first and second person. Thus, first and second person need to have obviation features (or at least, the overt pronouns need to be specified for obviation features). The problem: if you have a sentence with a first or second person overt pronoun and a third person noun phrase, the peripheral suffix will still always agree with the third person noun phrase in obviation in number:

(32) a. *N-iistó-wa* *nit-ákomimm-a-**yini*** *an-i* *ninää-yi.* PART>3
1-PRN-PROX? 1-love-DIR-**OBV.SG** DEM-OBV man-OBV
'$I_{PROX?}$ love that man_{OBV}.'

b. *Om-a* *ninää-wa* *nit-ákomimm-ok-**wa*** *n-iistó-yi.* 3>PART
DEM-PROX man-PROX 1-love-INV-**PROX.SG** 1-PRN-OBV?
'That man_{PROX} loves $me_{OBV?}$.' Blackfoot (Wiltschko et al. 2015:276)

Thus, even though we could say the Plains Cree (and all the other Algonquian languages with the same peripheral suffix pattern) only "accidentally" shows omnivorous third person agreement, Contrast Everywhere forces us into saying that the Blackfoot peripheral suffix must be a true instance of omnivorous third person. Thus, if you accept Contrast Everywhere, you must also accept 3yesP.

[21] There's a clear diachronic explanation for this fact: the pronominal stem *iistó* is cognate to *(o)isto* 'body', and the independent pronouns originated as possessed forms of the word for 'body'. Thus, historically, these pronouns were just third person noun phrases, and would participate in the proximate-obviative contrast just like other third person noun phrases in any other Algonquian language.

4.2.2 3 Only

However, let's say that you dispute that Blackfoot poses a real counterexample to the idea that the proximate-obviative distinction is limited to third persons only—thus, you accept 3 Only. If you follow Bruening (2001), Lochbihler (2012), Oxford (2019) (among others) in saying that first and second person are always proximate, then the argument against obviation agreement is even stronger. This is because in PART>3 contexts in which the third person object is proximate, both arguments would thus be proximate, and yet C still indexes the more distant third person object (12-13, repeated below):

(33) Blackfoot

a. *nits-ikákomimm-a-nnaan-**a***
1-love$_{TA}$-DIR-1EXC-**SG**
'we$_{EXC}$ love <u>her</u>'

b. *nits-ikákomimm-a-nnaan-**i***
1-love$_{TA}$-DIR-1EXC-**PL**
'we$_{EXC}$ love <u>them</u>'

c. *nits-ííkoon-ii-hp-innaan-**a***
1-take.down$_{TA}$-IN.OBJ-P-1EXC-**SG**
'we$_{EXC}$ took <u>it</u> down'

d. *nits-ííkoon-ii-hp-innaan-**i***
1-take.down$_{TA}$-IN.OBJ-P-1EXC-**PL**
'we$_{EXC}$ took <u>them$_{IN}$</u> down'

(Frantz 2017:46-47, 56-57)

(34) Plains Cree

a. *ni-mow-â-nân-**Ø***
1-eat$_{TA}$-DIR-1EXC-**PROX.SG**
'we$_{EXC}$ eat <u>it$_{AN.PROX}$</u>'

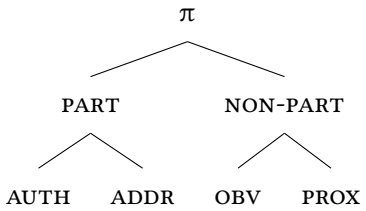
b. *ni-mow-â-nân-**ak***
1-eat$_{TA}$-DIR-1EXC-**PROX.PL**
'we$_{EXC}$ eat <u>them$_{AN.PROX}$</u>'

(Okimāsis 2018:145-146)

In these forms, if the first person subject were proximate, there's no reason why C shouldn't stop probing at the subject. Thus, in order to get C to ignore the first person subject and instead agree with the third person object, you'd have to say that C isn't probing for proximate/obviative features, but rather third person. Under this version of 3 Only, the obviation agreement analysis simply fails to account for the data.

However, there's another version of 3 Only out there: we could say that first and second person are just not specified for proximate or obviative, following Bondarenko (2020). She provides the following feature geometry for person:[22]

(35)



[22] Again, I've relabeled SPKR (speaker) to AUTH.

And then in order to get C to probe for obviation features specifically, we would need to specify it as probing for NON-PART…but isn't that just restating the third person agreement analysis? This is the crucial conceptual issue with the obviative agreement analysis under this version of 3 Only: how is it distinct from a third person probe? Bondarenko (2020) understands that NON-PART is just a third person feature, and follows Nevins (2007) in accepting 3yesP: for her, obviative and proximate are subnodes under third person.

To summarize the discussion about agreement for obviation: I've outlined three kinds of views on the featural representation of obviation. Contrast Everywhere states that person and obviation are orthogonal, just like person and gender, and that obviation could in principle be contrastive on all persons. If we accept this, then Blackfoot can only be analyzed as showing agreement for third person specifically, and not obviation, as Blackfoot independent first and second person pronouns show an (apparent) obviation contrast—yet the peripheral suffix still skips over them in preference for third persons. Alternatively, we could adopt 3 Only, which states that obviation is only contrastive in third persons. If we think that first and second person are always proximate, then first and second person should be visible to an obviation probe, and thus the fact that C can skip over PART subjects to agree with third person objects could only be explained under a third person agreement analysis. Alternatively, if we believe that first and second person are universally not featurally specified for obviation, then it's unclear in what sense an obviation probe would be distinct from a third person probe, as Bondarenko (2020) notes.

4.3 Agreement for D?

So, I've argued that we can't reanalyze the agreement pattern discussed here as an animacy or obviation probe. There is one last option to consider, which is suggested by Oxford (2014) and Xu (2021): agreement for the categorial feature D.

Oxford (2014), in solving a problem related to his featural representations for various kinds of DPs in (Proto-)Algonquian, proposes that third person nominals are DPs, whereas first and second person nominals are ϕPs.[23] Xu (2021) then capitalizes on this idea in accounting for the peripheral agreement pattern in Menominee (another language with the same peripheral agreement pattern as Blackfoot and Plains Cree). Oxford's idea is inspired by van Gelderen (2013), who argues that English third person nominals are DPs, and first and second person nominals are ϕPs. Note that this is in stark contrast to Déchaine and Wiltschko (2002), who argue for the exact *opposite* conclusion in English: third person pronouns are ϕPs, and first and second person pronouns are DPs.

[23]The issue for him is getting the representation of the indefinite agent in the Algonquian "unspecified agent" construction to be distinct from proximate third, obviative third, and inanimate third person—they pattern differently in agreement, and indefinite agents seem to (at least descriptively) rank below first and second person but above third person. He ends up proposing that indefinite agents are ϕPs, like first and second person pronouns, but lack (privative) [PART], like third persons. This idea is similar to Legate's (2014) proposal for the syntax of the Icelandic "grammatical object passive" construction, also known as the "new passive" or "new impersonal", which involves an expletive subject, a passive nonagreeing verb form, and an accusative-marked internal argument—she also proposes that the expression of the agent in this kind of impersonal construction is a ϕP.

Oxford (2014) provides the following independent argument for this conclusion: first and second person do not participate in obviation and absentative marking, unlike third person, and he proposes that we can understand these facts if those features must be located in D, and first and second person lack D. However, he doesn't provide evidence that obviation and absentative features must be found in D, so this argument loses some bite. There's also a very reasonable independent semantic explanation for why absentative marking—which indicates that the referent of a third person nominal is absent from the discourse context— cannot appear on first and second person: the speaker and addressee are obligatorily part of the discourse context.

While this proposal technically works, it comes at the cost of a distinct syntax for first and second person versus third person that struggles to find independent evidence. For the languages we've focused on here, Blackfoot and Plains Cree, there are other analyses of the syntactic structure of (independent) pronouns in the literature, following diagnostics from Déchaine and Wiltschko (2002). Wiltschko et al. (2015) argue that Blackfoot independent pronouns are ϕPs, and Déchaine et al. (2015) argue that Plains Cree independent pronouns are DPs—neither conclusion is what the D agreement analysis would want. So I hesitate to adopt the D agreement account of the peripheral agreement pattern in Blackfoot and Plains Cree: the syntax it requires is not well supported by the data.

So: the alternative analyses of the omnivorous third person pattern do not work, reduce to third person agreement, or fail to find independent support. We must thus accept 3yesP, even in the syntax.

5 Conclusion

A classic argument for 3noP found in the literature is Invisibility: the idea that no morphosyntactic process can explicitly target third person to the exclusion of first and second. There have been arguments that morphological Invisibility is wrong (Nevins 2007, Trommer 2008)—there are morphological processes (like Impoverishment) that need to have access to a distinct third person featural representation. This has led some to propose a revised view of 3noP—syntactic 3noP—which states that third person is underspecified specifically *in the syntax* (Preminger 2019). Here, I've presented a counterexample to syntactic Invisibility—the omnivorous third person agreement pattern found in Blackfoot and Plains Cree (among other Algonquian languages). I then showed that various alternative analyses that could save syntactic 3noP—agreement for animacy, obviation, or D features—failed in various ways. Animacy agreement is straightforwardly falsified by the behavior of finals, obviation agreement fails under various analyses of the representation of obviation—either it fails to predict the data (Contrast Everywhere and one kind of 3 Only), or it reduces to third person agreement (the other kind of 3 Only)—and D agreement fails to find independent support. I conclude that we really do have omnivorous third person agreement in Blackfoot and Plains Cree (and Menominee, Meskwaki, Miami-Illinois, and Innu-aimûn). Syntactic 3noP cannot be upheld: we must accept 3yesP. There is a third person feature.

To end the discussion, I would like to briefly address another kind of argument for 3noP: Defaultness, the idea that third person is somehow the "default person":

(36) *Defaultness*

In contexts that don't seem to involve any person features at all, like expletives and the realization of failed agreement ("default agreement"), we invariably get third person forms in language after language.

3noP, the idea that third person is underspecified, offers a natural account of Defaultness: in contexts that lack person features, we can only insert underspecified exponents, and underspecified exponents are (definitionally) third person.

While underspecification is a compelling and intuitive way to analyze Defaultness, it's not the only formal tool we can use to analyze default effects—a conclusion that has been richly explored in the phonological literature on markedness (e.g. Calabrese 1995, de Lacy 2006, a.m.o.)—see also the discussion by Nevins (2007) in the domain of person features. In that sense, Defaultness is not as compelling an argument for 3noP as it might seem. One very basic option to capture Defaultness in a privative 3yesP system is to say that in contexts that truly lack person features, like expletives and default/failed agreement, you insert negative values of binary features as a default. This kind of rule would have to simply be stipulated in the system, and perhaps one might worry about its explanatory adequacy, but it would work to capture the fact that expletives and default agreement are invariably third person. Note that Preminger (2019) also stipulates this kind of rule in order to convert underspecified, privative syntactic representations of person to binary representations in the morphology. Another alternative, proposed by Ackema and Neeleman (2013, 2018, 2019), is to appeal to semantics, noting that the semantics of first and second person would be incompatible in default contexts which lack referents.[24] I don't take a strong stance here on what the right analysis of Defaultness should be—I just want to note that underspecification doesn't have a monopoly on Defaultness. The real prediction of 3noP is Invisibility, and I hope to have shown that that Invisibility is wrong even in the syntax, as omnivorous third person probes do exist.

[24]This idea would require that person features on probes be interpreted, contrary to popular intuition. In order to flesh this idea out, we would also need to say something about how to compose the person features on a probe with the referent they are copied from, in particular to account for cases where the same agreement slot can agree with multiple different syntactic positions, i.e agreement displacement, to use Béjar's (2003) term.

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