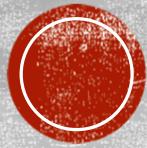




# VERBAL-S IN EX-SLAVE NARRATIVES



# VERBAL –S VARIATION

Standard American English

I run	We run
You run	You run
She runs	They run

Contemporary AAVE\*

I run	We run
You run	You run
She run	They run

\*Green 2002: 36

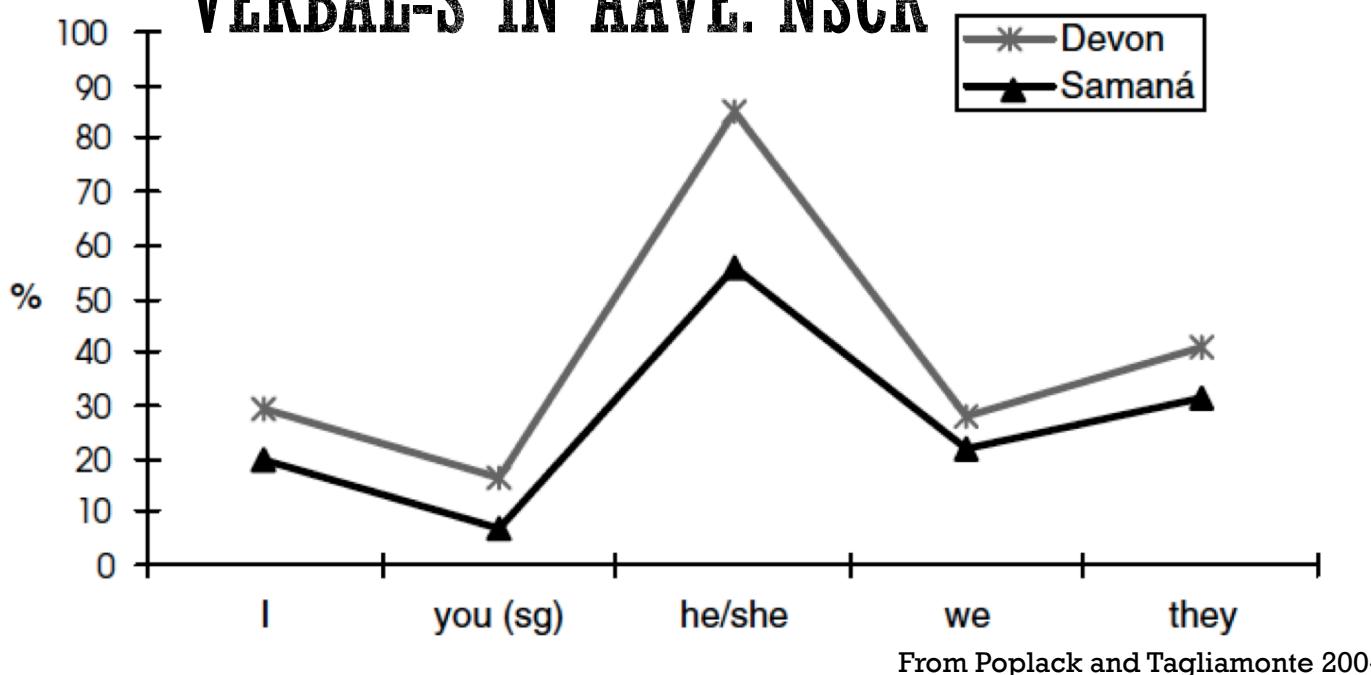


# VERBAL-S IN AAVE: NSCR

- Northern Subjects Concord Rule (NSCR)
- Poplack and Tagliamonte (2004)
  - Samaná English compared with Devon English
- Walker and van Herk (2002) & van Herk and Walker (2005)
  - Liberian ex-slave letters



## VERBAL-S IN AAVE: NSCR



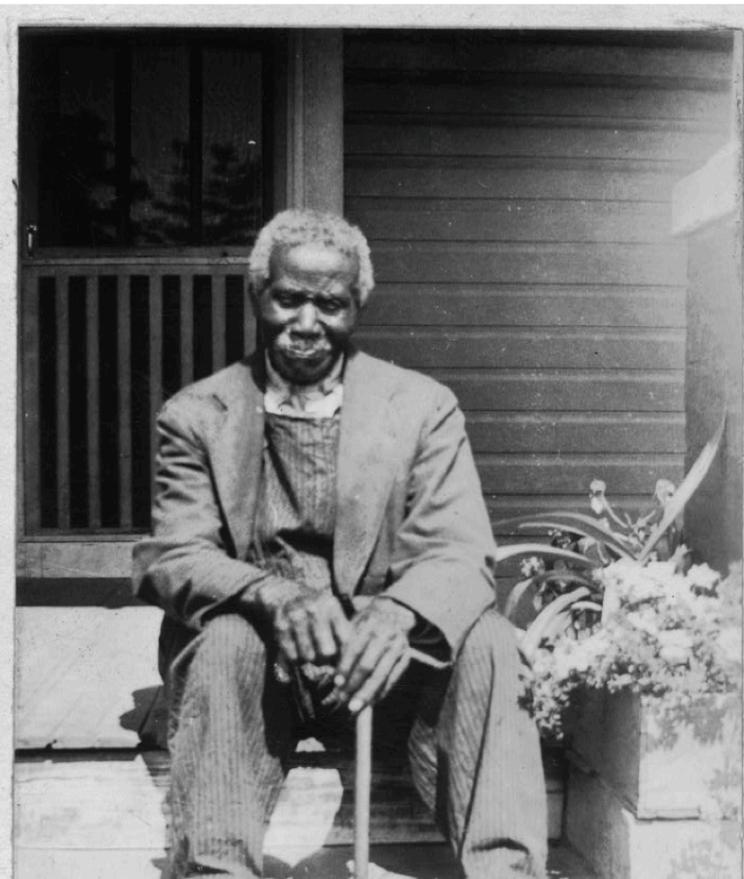
From Poplack and Tagliamonte 2004



# VERBAL-S IN AAVE: NSCR

- Northern Subjects Concord Rule (NSCR)
- Poplack and Tagliamonte (2004)
  - Samaná English compared with Devon English
  - Representative of 1830
- Walker and van Herk (2002) & van Herk and Walker (2005)
  - Liberian ex-slave letters





## Question 1:

Do the patterns of verbal-s in ex-slave narrative AAVE correlate with the predictions of the  
**Northern Subjects Concord Rule?**

"I **reckon** dat I wuz 'bout nine years old at de surrender"

- John Beckwith, NC



# NORTHERN SUBJECTS CONCORD RULE

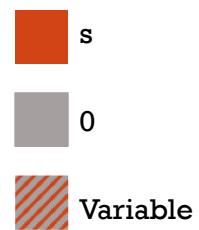
- All **third singular subjects** always take verbal -s

I run	We run
You run	You run
She runs	They run

Pietsch 2005



# 3RD SINGULAR



# NORTHERN SUBJECTS CONCORD RULE

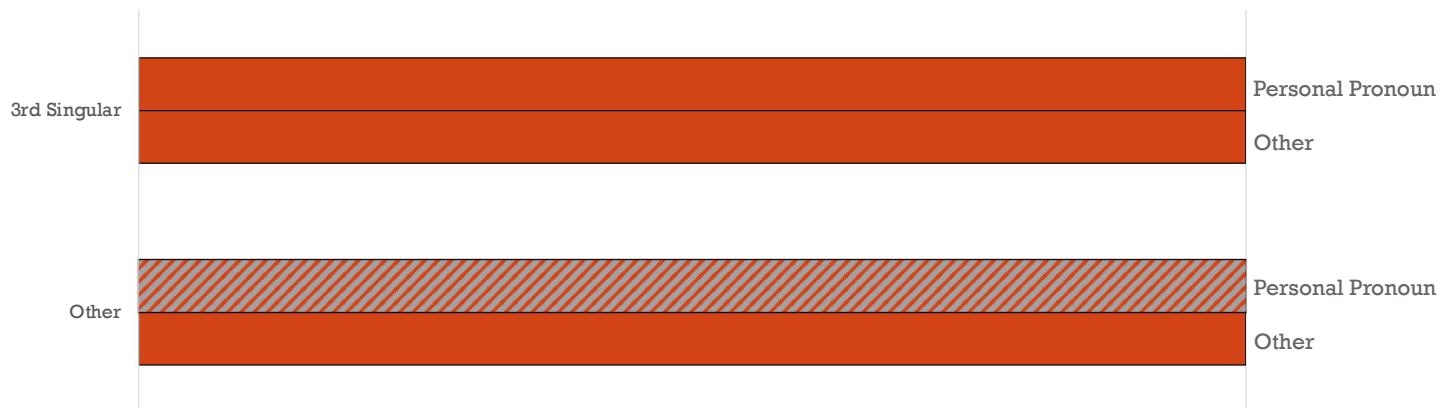
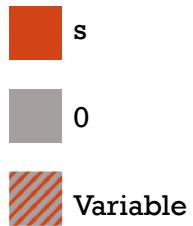
- All **third singular subjects** always take verbal -s
- **The Type-of-Subject Constraint:** All other subjects take verbal-s variably except the personal pronouns *I, we, you they*

I run	We run <b>The dog and I runs</b>
You run	You run
She runs The dog runs	They run <b>The dogs runs</b>

Pietsch 2005



# TYPE-OF-SUBJECT



# NORTHERN SUBJECTS CONCORD RULE

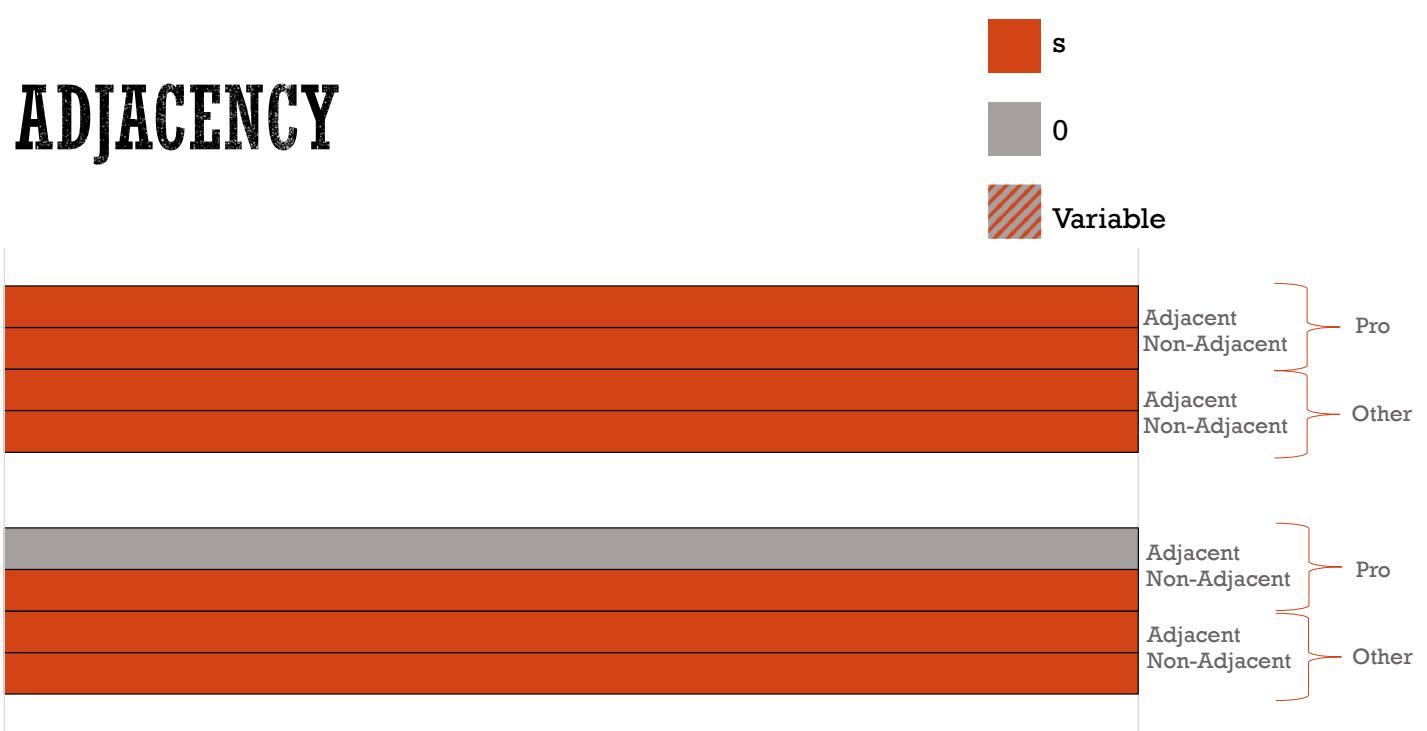
- All **third singular subjects** always take verbal -s
- **The Type-of-Subject Constraint:** All other subjects take verbal-s variably except the personal pronouns *I, we, you they*
- **The Adjacency Constraint:** Non-adjacency of subject and verb favors verbal -s

I run and <b>jumps</b>	We run and <b>jumps</b> <b>The dog and I runs and jumps</b>
You run and <b>jumps</b>	You run and <b>jumps</b>
She runs and jumps The dog runs and jumps	They run and <b>jumps</b> <b>The dogs runs and jumps</b>



# ADJACENCY

3rd Singular



Other



# **AAVE DIALECTS VS. WHITE ENGLISH DIALECTS**

- Wolfram (1974), (2004)
  - Similarities between white English varieties and Black English varieties within communities
  
- Schneider (1983, 1989)
  - Variation between states for all features of AAVE, including verbal -s

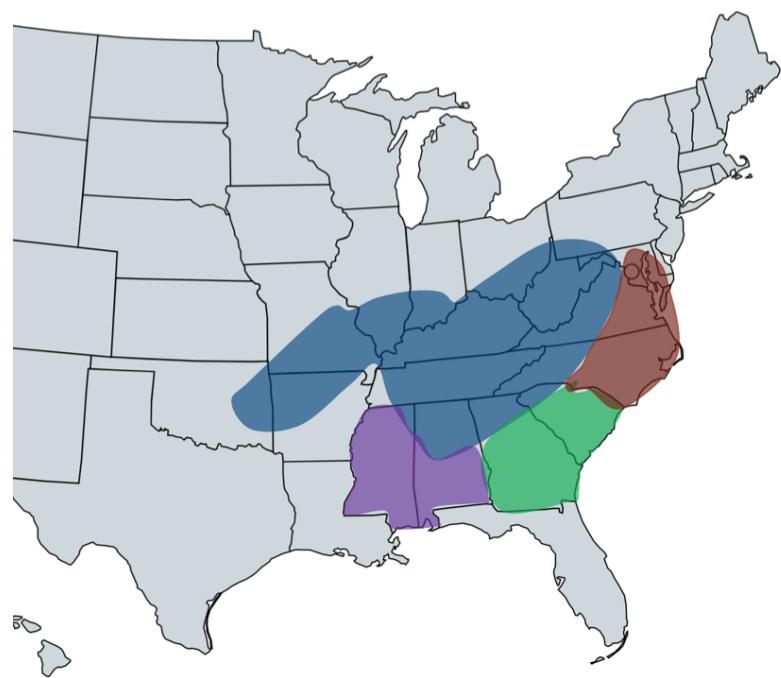


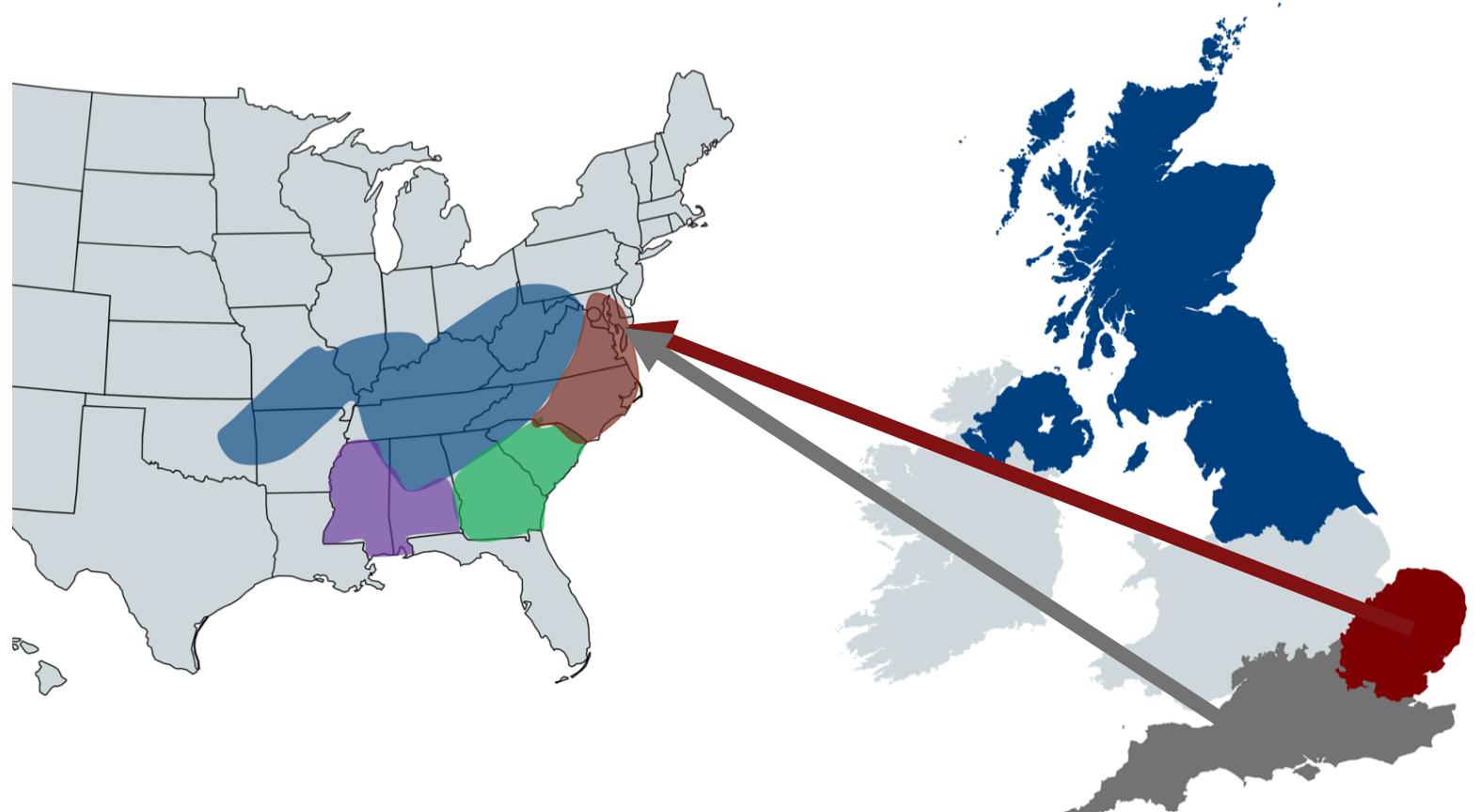
## Question 2:

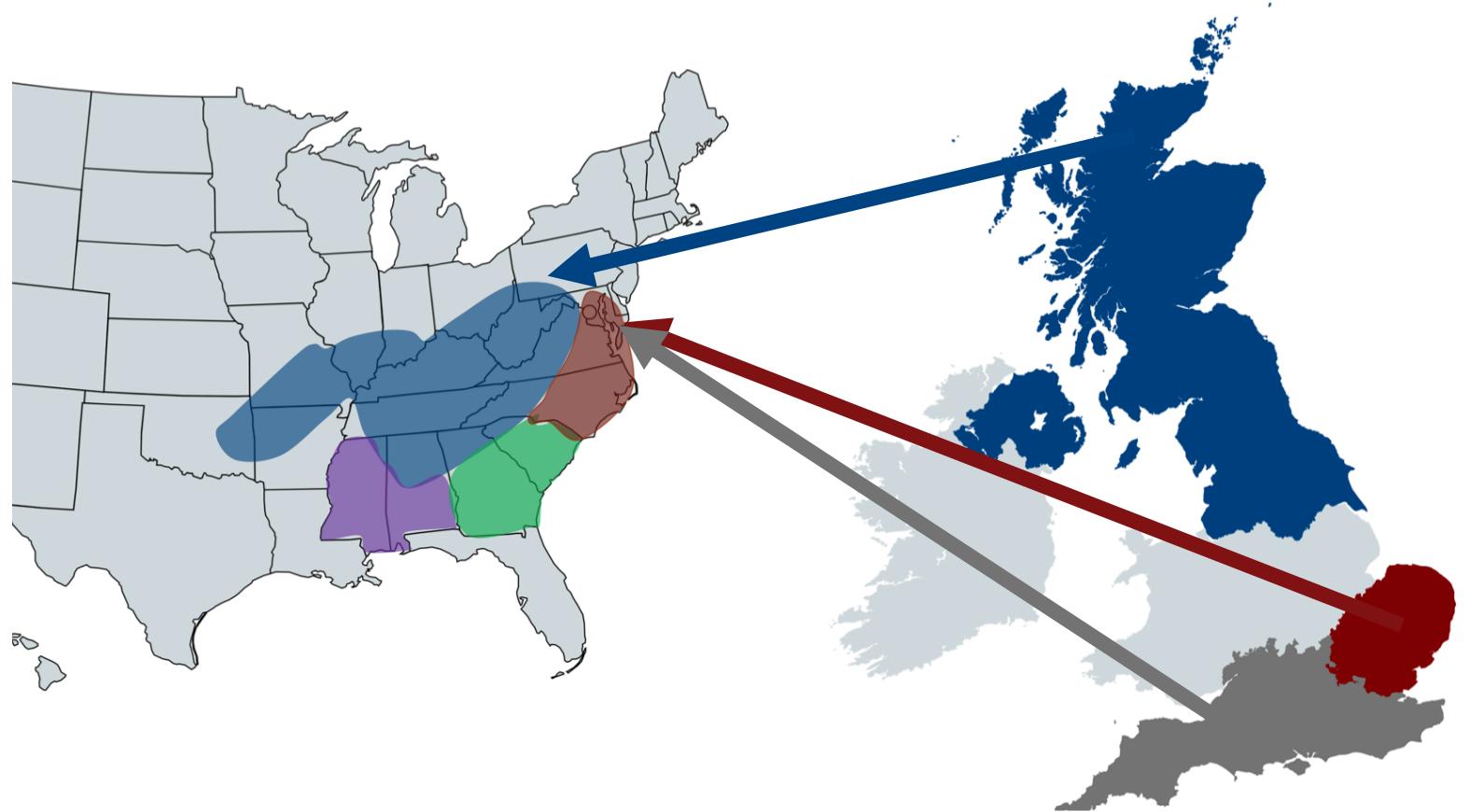
### How does **region** affect the verbal —s patterns in these narratives?

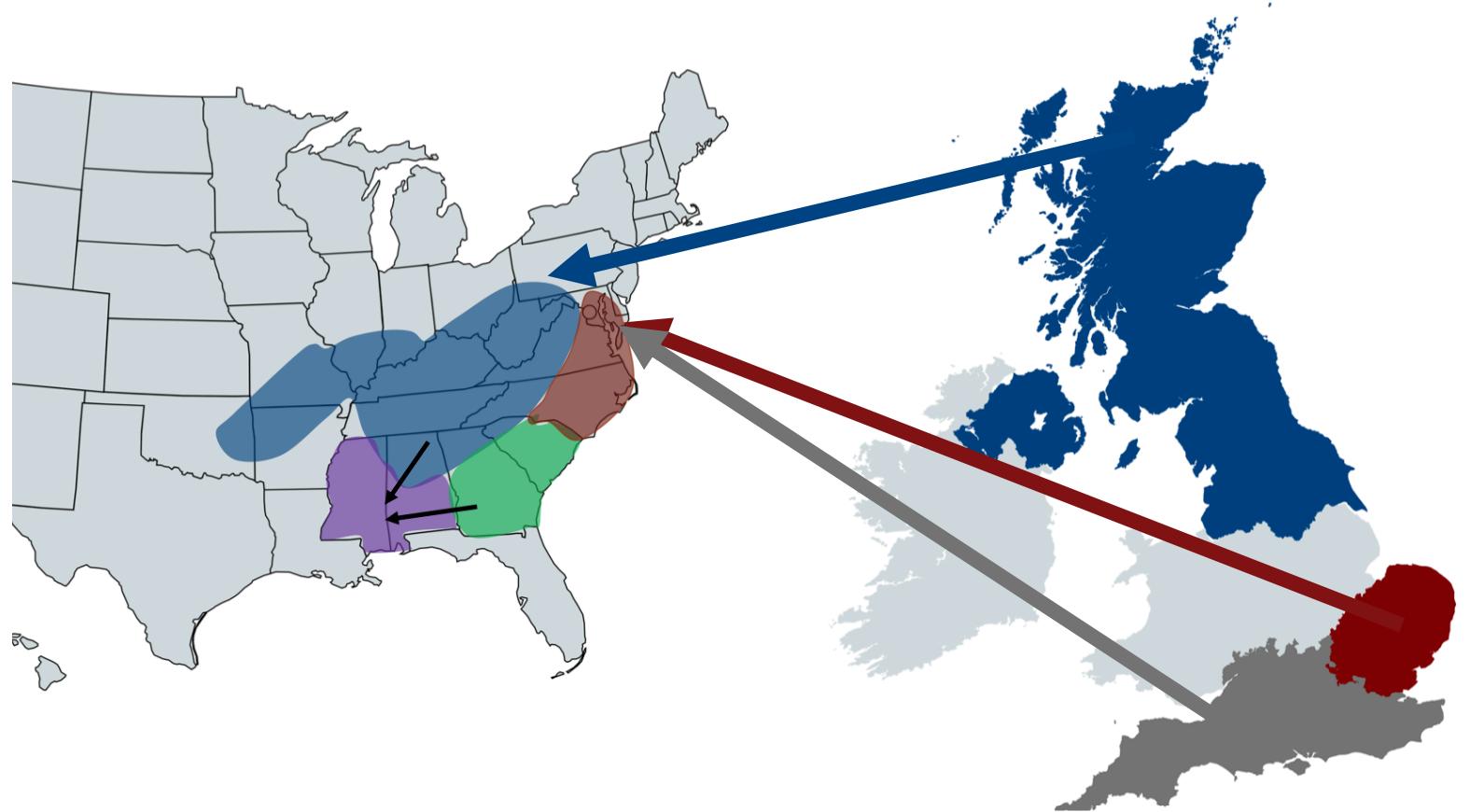
"I ‘members a storm us had. I calls it a  
harricane." – Cornelia Robinson, AL

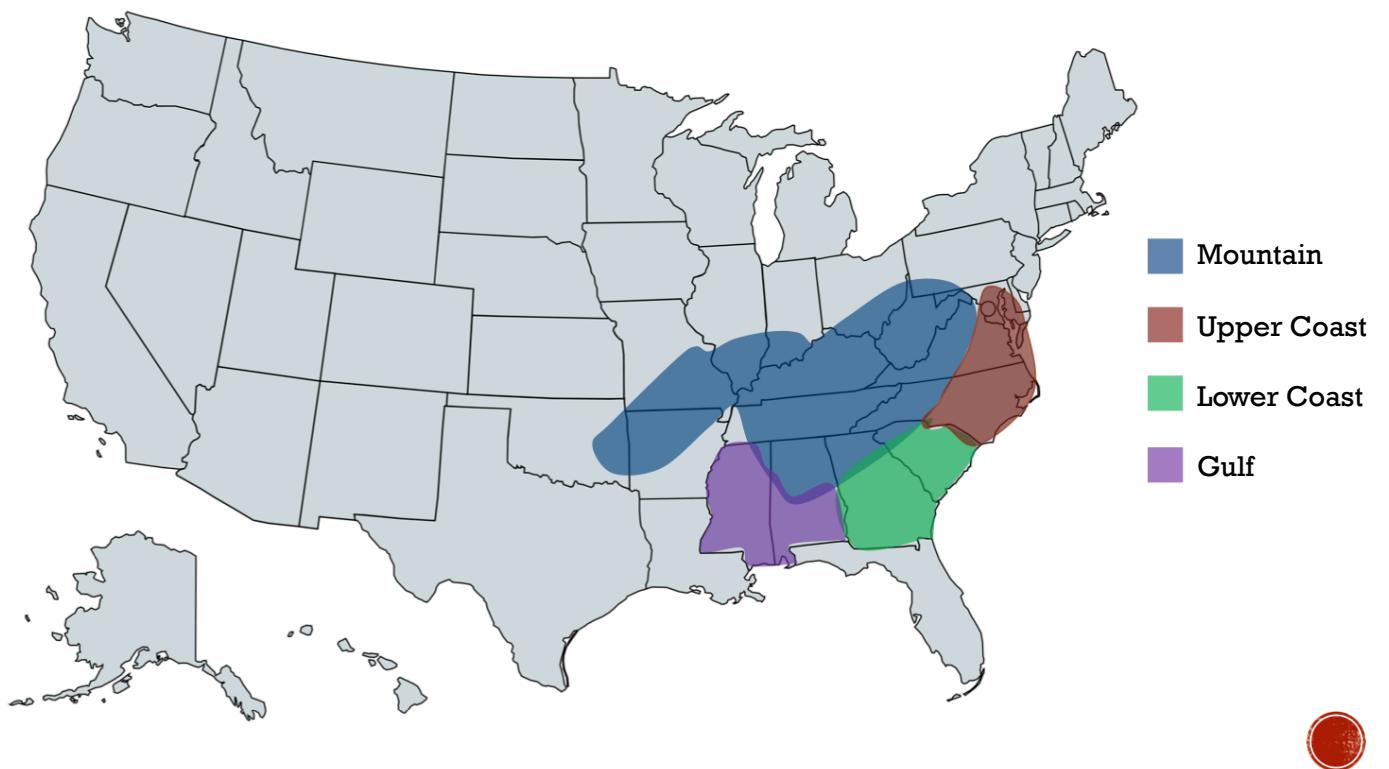


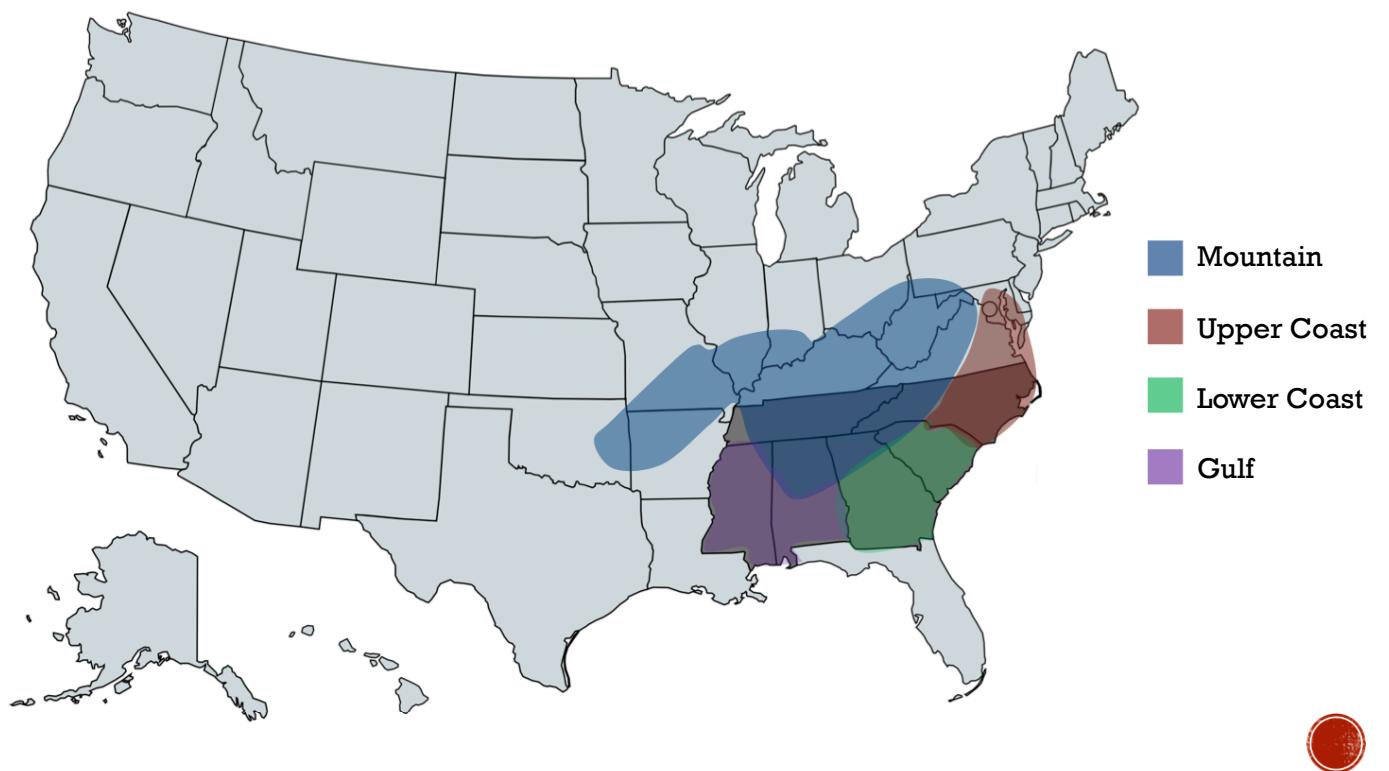












# FEDERAL WRITERS PROJECT EX- SLAVE NARRATIVES (1936-1938)

"I **believes** to my soul dey ain' never seed no chicken 'tweel dey **come** down here."

- Tempie Herndon Durham, NC



"Oh, nawsah, I ain't neber done nothin' to nobody no time. But I sho' don't know what dia new generation of nigguh's comin' to. Hit war bad 'nough when dey couldn't git nothin' but bootleg cawnlicker; now dey kin buy all de gin dey wants right here in Bummin'ham, an' dem rapscallions git out on Sat'd'y night, fill up on gin an' git all lit up lak a mettin' house. Den de fust thing dey know dey gits tangled up wid somebody wid a razor or a meat axe or somp'n an' long come de law, locks 'em up an' de debil's to pay."



But

I sho' don't know what dia new generation of nigguh's comin' to.

now dey kin buy all de gin dey wants right here in Bummin'ham, an' dem rapscallions git out on Sat'd'y night, fill up on gin an' git all lit up lak a mettin' house. Den de fust thing dey know dey gits tangled up wid somebody wid a razor or a meat axe or somp'n an' 'long come de law, locks 'em up an' de debil's to pay."

But

I sho' **don't** know what **dis** new generation of nigguh's comin' to.

now dey kin buy all de gin dey **wants** right here in Bummin'ham, an'  
dem rapscallions **git** out on Sat'd'y night, **fill up** on gin an' **git**  
all lit up lak a mettin' house. Den de fust thing dey **know** dey **gits**  
tangled up wid somebody wid a razor or a meat axe or somp'n an'  
'long **come** de law, **locks** 'em up an' de debil's to pay."



But

I sho' **don't** know what **diā** new generation of nigguh's comin' to.

s

now dey kin buy all de gin dey **wants** right here in Bummin'ham, an'  
dem rapscallions **git** out on Sat'd'y night, **fill up** on gin an' **git**  
all lit up lak a mettin' house. Den de fust thing dey **know** dey **gits**  
tangled up wid somebody wid a razor or a meat axe or somp'n an'  
'long **come** de law, **locks** 'em up an' de debil's to pay."

0



But

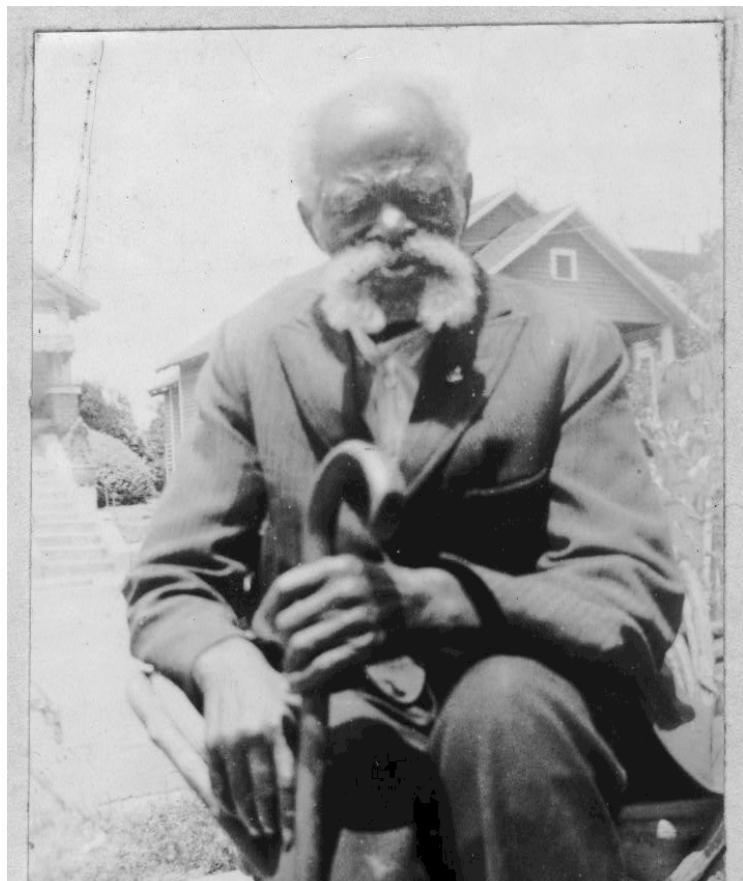
I sho' [redacted] know what dia new generation of nigguh's comin' to.

s

now dey kin buy all de gin dey [redacted] wants right here in Bummin'ham, an' dem rapscallions [redacted] git out on Sat'd'y night, [redacted] fill up on gin an' [redacted] git all lit up lak a mettin' house. Den de fust thing dey [redacted] know dey [redacted] gits tangled up wid somebody wid a razor or a meat axe or somp'n an' 'long [redacted] come de law, [redacted] locks 'em up an' de debil's to pay."

0





# RESULTS

134 Informants

1140 Tokens

Variables:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Singular
- Type of Subject
- Adjacency
- Region
- Preceding Segment
- Following Segment

I wucks fer de city fer nigh on fifty years, I  
**reckon**, an' jis' lately I retired.

- Clay Bobbit NC



# **ANALYSIS**

- Mixed Effects Linear Regression in R
- Stepped-up to figure out which variables significantly improved the model
  - Region by Type of Subject
- Verbs with 1 token = “Infrequent”



# RESULTS: NSCR

- Do the patterns of verbal-s in ex-slave narrative AAVE correlate with the predictions of the Northern Subjects Concord Rule?



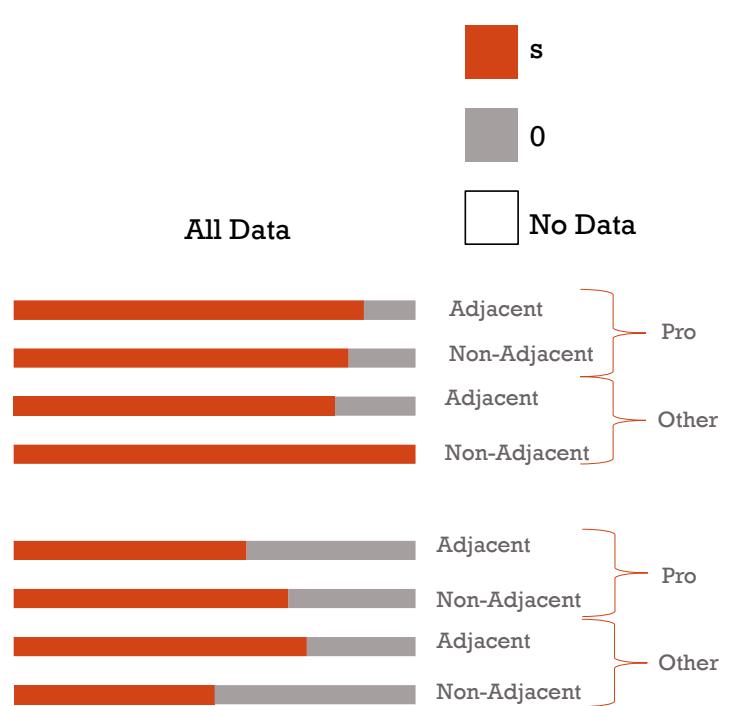
# RESULTS: NSCR

Predictions

3rd Singular

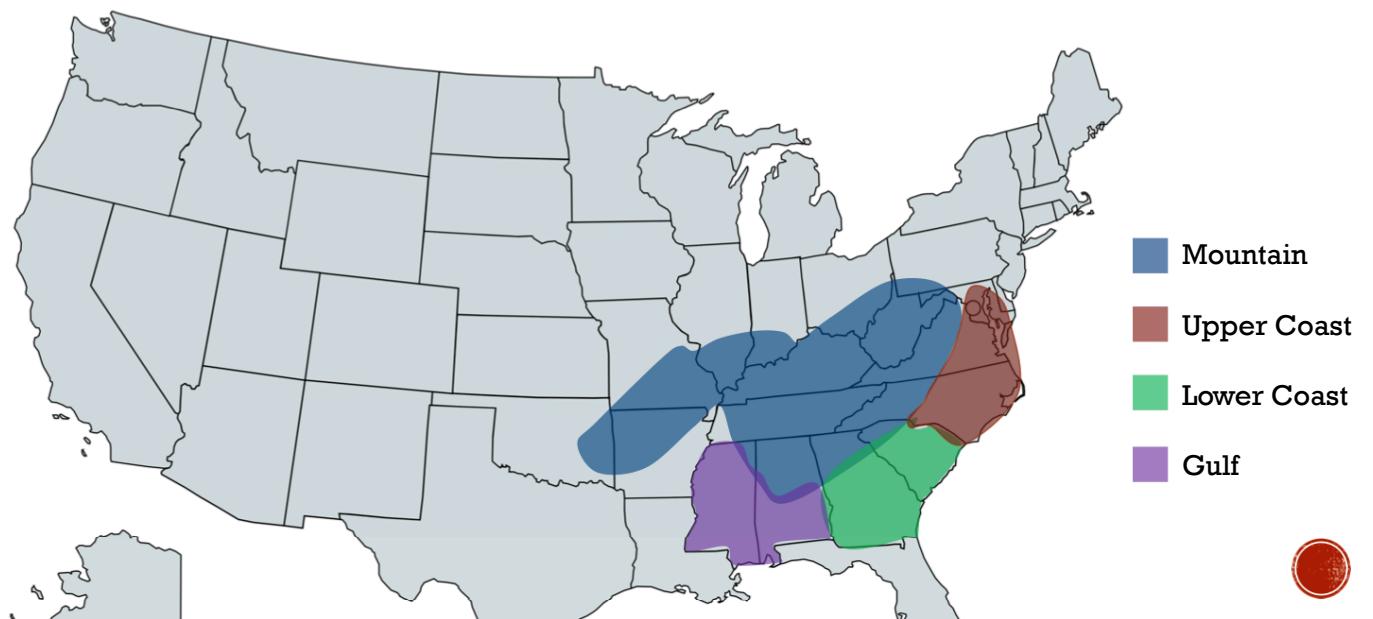


All Data



# RESULTS: REGION

How does region affect the verbal -s patterns in these narratives?



# RESULTS: TOKENS BY REGION

	Total	Pro	Non-Pro	Adjacent	Non-Adjacent
<b>Gulf</b>	348	318	28	317	31
<b>Lower Coast</b>	347	309	36	312	35
<b>Mountain</b>	208	182	21	189	19
<b>Upper Coast</b>	237	217	17	222	15

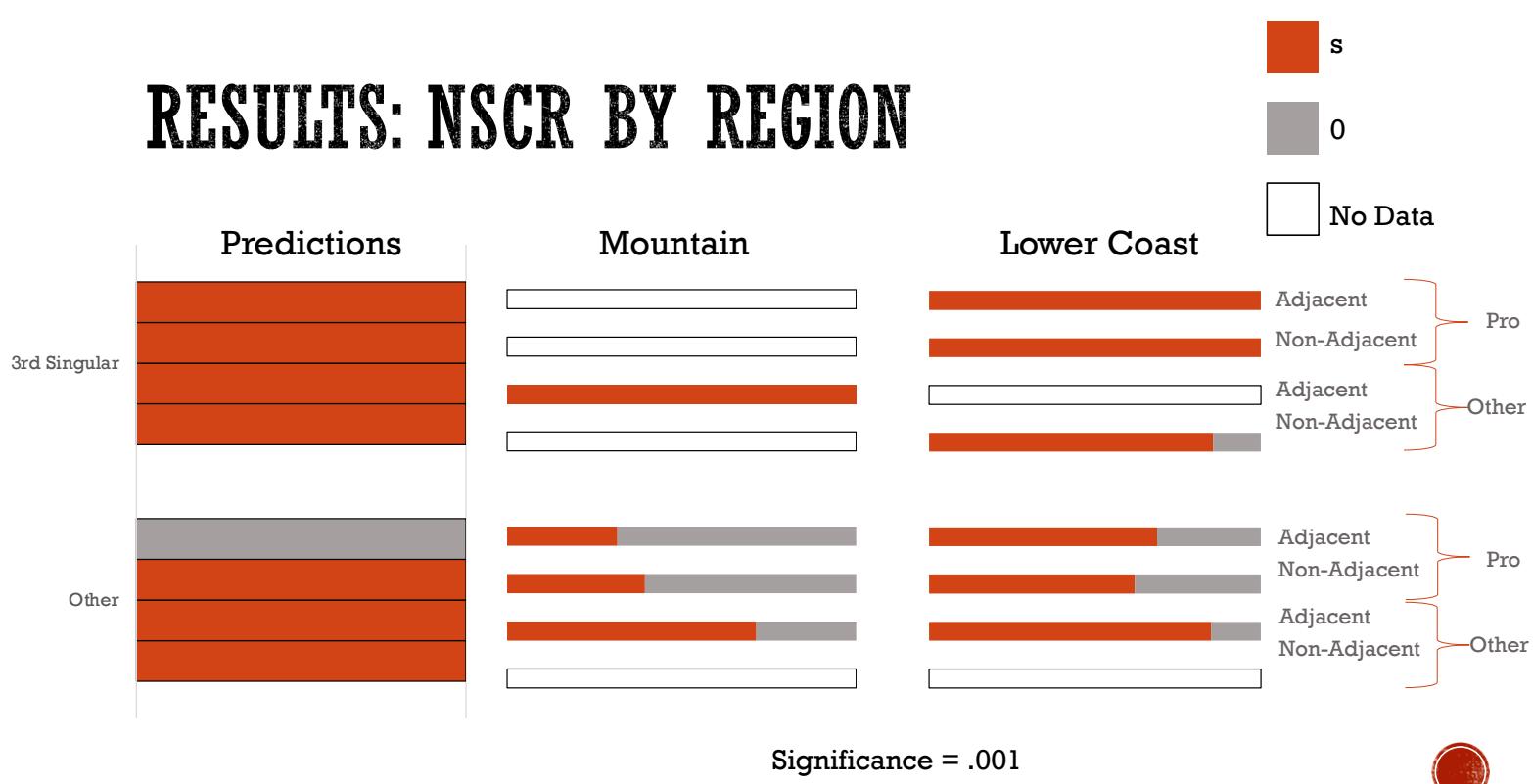


# RESULTS: REGION

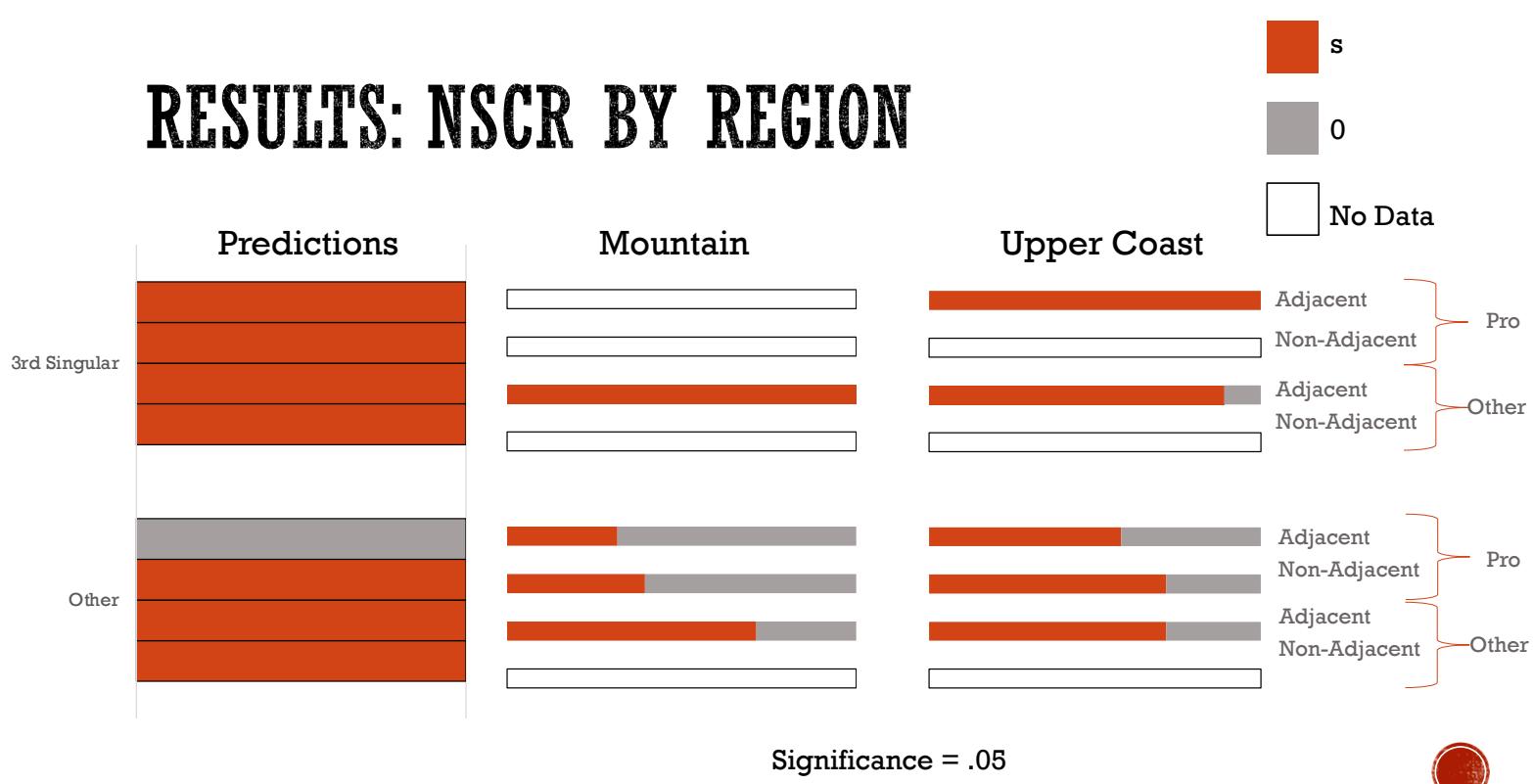
- Significant difference in the amount of -s in non 3<sup>rd</sup> singular.
  - Mountain VS Coasts
  - Less -s in mountains than on the coasts
- No significant difference in the amount of -s between Mountain and Gulf



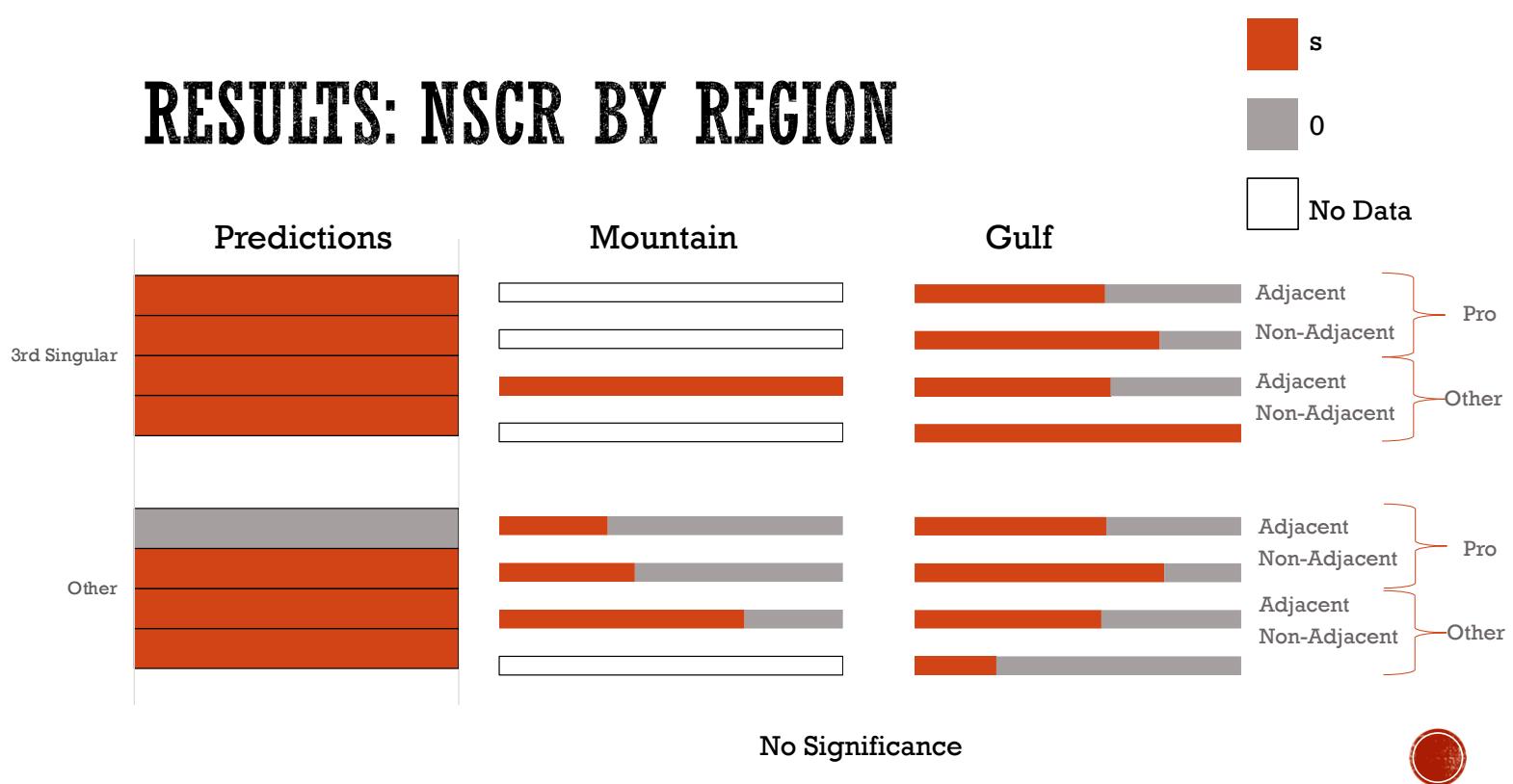
# RESULTS: NSCR BY REGION

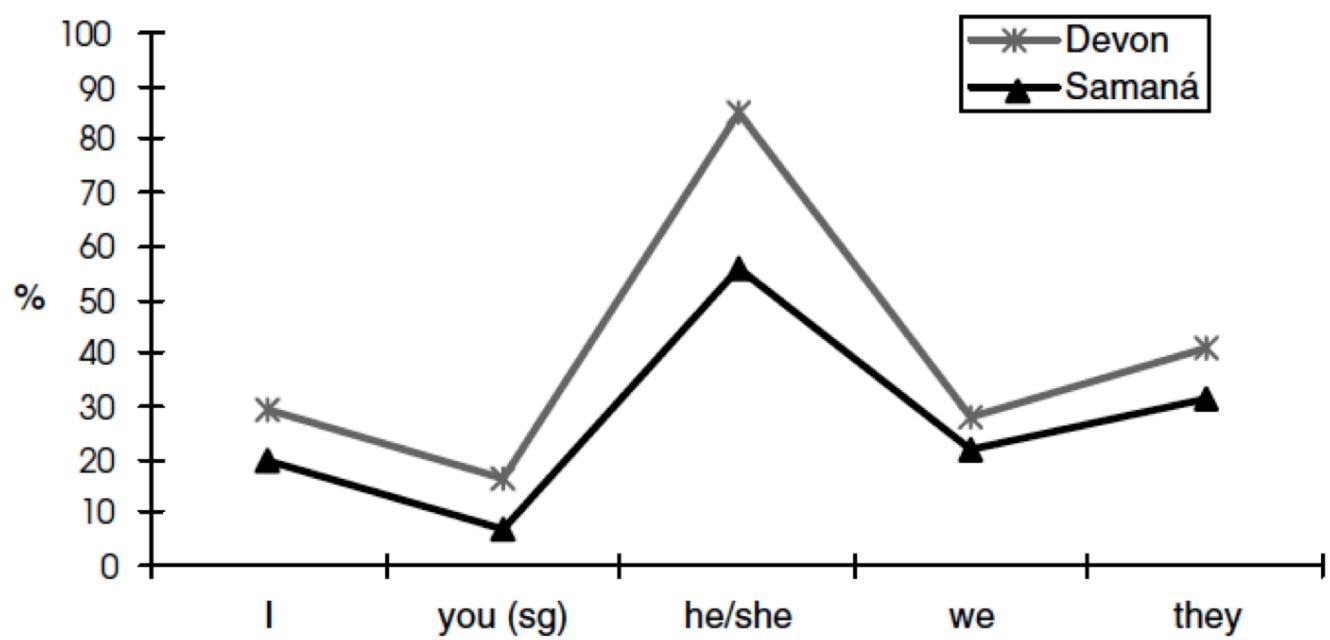


# RESULTS: NSCR BY REGION



# RESULTS: NSCR BY REGION





From Poplack and Tagliamonte 2004



