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Investigating Language Variation and Change in Appalachian Dialects: The Case of the Perfective *Done*

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
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of Loyola Marymount University

by

Julia C. Horton

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ABSTRACT

The perfective *done* (“She done tended the garden”) is an often-overlooked grammatical feature specific to relatively few dialects of American English, most prominently seen in Appalachian dialects. While the perfective *done* has been described in detail by linguists since the 1970s, and there has been a demonstrated decline in the frequency of use of the perfective *done* among Appalachian dialect speakers in the past fifty years, there is very little existing scholarship that investigates an empirical basis for the claim that this long-term variation in the use of *done* can be considered a true language change-in-progress. The present research reviews all available literature from the past fifty years that provides a quantitative account of the frequency of occurrence of the perfective *done* among Appalachian dialect speakers to ultimately suggest that the observed long-term variation displays regular differences in usage frequencies of the form by speakers of successive generations but that there is not sufficient evidence to definitively conclude that this variation is statistically significant enough to be considered a change-in-progress in Appalachian dialects. However, these regular differences in use of *done* provide a degree of evidence that a language change could be occurring in West Virginian varieties.

Keywords: Appalachian English, English language dialects, morphosyntactic variation, language change, historical linguistics, sociolinguistics

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I. Introduction

It is widely accepted in the fields of historical and sociolinguistics that language variation and change do not occur at random. Aside from purely linguistic factors, myriad social factors, such as socioeconomic status, age, race, and gender, contribute to language variation. The linguistic environment in which variation occurs similarly impacts its expression. Far from incidental, only stable, long-term variation may result in language change that becomes universal within a given speech community, at which point the change can be said to have “gone to completion.” Further, a linguistic element undergoing long-term variation must display a “statistically significant shift in the distribution of [its] variants” and “regular differences in the usage frequencies of variants across ages” to be considered a true change-in-progress (Ringe and Eska 2013, 45-46). Language change, then, can be understood as systematic.

One particular grammatical structure that may be undergoing systematic change via long-term variation is the perfective *done* (as in, “She done tended the garden”) in certain non-standard dialects of English. In such sentences, *done* marks the grammatical aspect of the verb it modifies, defining the action as singular and complete rather than continuous, ongoing, or habitual—hence the classification of *done* as a perfective aspect marker. The non-standard dialects in question include those encompassed by Appalachian English and, to an extent, some dialects of Southern English and Black English.

The present research will focus on Appalachian dialects because to the best of my knowledge, the perfective *done* is best-documented within these varieties, although not much scholarship has been devoted to studying this grammatical feature beyond its description. Other grammatical features common to these dialects, such as *a*-prefixing, restructuring and infinitives,

verbal *-s*, and auxiliary contraction, have received more attention (José 2007; Anderson et al. 2014, Johnson 2014; Montgomery 2014; McQuaid 2017).

Recent documentation of Appalachian speakers' use of the perfective *done* has shown, however, that the frequency of its use has declined within the past fifty years among younger generations of speakers of Appalachian dialects, while other dialect-specific features remain intact (Wolfram and Christian 1975; Christian, Wolfram, and Dube 1988; Hazen 2006, 2008; Dannenberg 2010). Specifically, my research question is:

1. Can the observed long-term variation in use of the perfective *done* be considered a language change-in-progress?

I will answer this question by reviewing all available literature from the past fifty years that provides a quantitative account of the frequency of use of the perfective *done* among Appalachian dialect speakers.

II. Describing the perfective *done*

In the investigation of whether long-term variation in the use of the perfective *done* can be considered a change-in-progress, it is first necessary to describe this grammatical (or *morphosyntactic*) form in detail and explain its pragmatic function in Appalachian dialects. The most extensive documentation and description of the perfective *done* to this day was compiled by Walt Wolfram and Donna Christian in their 1975 report *Sociolinguistic Variables in Appalachian Dialects* (also referred to here as the 1975 study). To develop a formal description of the syntactic and semantic constraints on the perfective *done*, as well as its pragmatic function, Wolfram and Christian interviewed Appalachian dialect speakers and analyzed their speech to determine how they use the form—how does it fit into a sentence, what meaning does it create, and why does a speaker choose to use it? The 1975 study is also of great importance to the present research because it offers the first quantitative record of the prevalence of *done* in Appalachian dialects and serves as the first point of comparison in establishing a significant decrease in the usage frequency of the perfective *done* in successive generations of Appalachian speakers.

The linguistic sample on which the 1975 study is based consists of 129 tape-recorded interviews of speakers from Monroe and Mercer Counties of West Virginia collected in 1974 and 1975. Wolfram and Christian, like many researchers of Appalachian dialects, selected West Virginia as the site of their study because it is fully contained within the Appalachian region and situated between the Northern and Southern regions of Appalachia; for this reason, it is particularly valuable in the study of language variation within these dialects. Of the 129 interviews collected in the 1975 study, 52 were included in the analytic sample based on the

amount of speech obtained from the subject, the quality of the recording, and representation of each age group.

In the 1975 study, interviewees' ages range from seven to ninety-three years old. In the selection of interviewees from Monroe and Mercer Counties, lifetime residents received priority, as lifetime residents of any given speech community tend to most accurately represent the language as it is used in the community. Wolfram and Christian also prioritized subjects of low socioeconomic status and educational attainment, stating that their decision to focus on these individuals was "motivated by the fact that we are primarily concerned with the language variety which might be considered most divergent from some of the more mainstream varieties of English" (1975, 13), presuming that individuals in this category have the least access or exposure to Standard English, or are the most resistant to adopting its features in their speech.

Syntactic and semantic constraints

The interviews collected in the 1975 study feature many uses of the perfective *done* and demonstrate the variety of linguistic constraints (the conditions *done* must satisfy) on its use. In terms of syntactic constraints, the perfective *done* cannot be separated from the verb phrase. It must accompany a past tense main verb, whether the main verb is in preterit or past participle form. *Done* itself is not conjugated to reflect verb tense or agreement and it must immediately precede the main verb of the sentence. Further, it cannot appear in a reduced clause—that is, an adjective or adverb clause that has been shortened by removing its subject and/or *be*-verb. The following examples of the use of the perfective *done*, drawn from the 1975 study, illustrate these constraints:

- (1) a. I *done* forgot when it opened. (124)

- b. ... because the one that was in there had *done* rotted. (124)
- c. ... and then she *done taken* two courses again. (125)
- d. ... she *done took* the baby away from her. (125)

Examples (1a, c, d) also show *done* occurring alone with the main verb while example (1b) shows it in a complex verb phrase (a verb phrase containing a form of *to be* or *to have* along with the main verb) with an auxiliary (in this case, *had*). Modal verbs (ex: *can, should, must*) may also accompany *done* in complex verb phrases.

In terms of semantic constraints, *done* may only appear in sentences that can be interpreted completely, meaning that the verb's action is finished rather than continuous, ongoing, or habitual. For this reason, a verb phrase that includes the perfective *done* cannot be modified by an adverb that denotes continuous, ongoing, or habitual actions, such as *normally, occasionally, often, etc.* *Done* also cannot be followed by a verb or verb tense (such as the progressive) that implies non-completion. Examples of such sentences in which *done* cannot appear, as enumerated in the 1975 study, include:

- (2) a. They had *generally (*done)* paid their bills on time. (127)
- b. She (**done*) *was* happy to hear the news. (127)
- c. They had (**done*) *seemed* upset. (127)

The 1975 study also claims that the perfective *done* does not semantically replace the preterite or perfect tenses, nor is it governed by their co-occurrence restrictions (the linguistic conditions under which the preterite or perfect tenses cannot appear). Rather, the perfective *done* is an additional construction in Appalachian dialects for which there is no equivalent in Standard English.

Pragmatic function

At the time of its description by Wolfram and Christian, one of the principal pragmatic roles of the perfective *done* was to express certainty. This idea is supported by the fact that a great number of the 1975 study's interviewees used *done* when making clear-cut assertions in clauses that are non-interrogative, non-negative, and non-embedded, as in examples (3a, b) below. *Done* also appears in assertive embedded clauses, though not as often.

(3) a. . . . and when she come home the next day, she *done* had the fever. (1975, 331)

b. I reckon she's *done* sold it. (1975, 334)

Not a single one of the interviewees used the perfective *done* in questions or negative statements, which offers additional evidence that *done* often expresses certainty.¹

The 1975 study also reports several occurrences of the perfective *done* in non-assertive subordinate (dependent) clauses, which indicates that expressing certainty cannot be *done*'s only pragmatic function. The perfective *done* can also be used to add emphasis, whether or not the speaker is making an assertion. However, *done* does not always serve an emphatic purpose—whether it is used emphatically or not is up to the speaker. The function of emphasis is most prominent in narrative contexts, as in example (4a), but it appears in non-narrative contexts, as well (4b):

(4) a. She opened the oven door to put her bread in to bake it and there set the cat. Hide

done busted off his skull and fell down and his meat just come off'n his bones.

(1975, 128)

b. When I was a boy, if you seen a woman's knee, you had *done* seen something and

now you can just see anything they've got. (1975, 128)

¹ Although the interviewees did not have as many opportunities to pose questions as they may outside the context of an interview, their use of negative constructions would not have changed dependent on this method of data collection.

It must be stated that the constraints and pragmatic functions listed here are based solely on the data from the 1975 study and may not necessarily represent how the perfective *done* is used by present day Appalachian dialect speakers.

III. Frequency of occurrence of the perfective *done* in the speech of older generations

In establishing an empirical basis for a statement about language change, Labov (1982) suggests that, “for the section of speech being examined all occurrences of a given variant [be] noted, and where it has been possible to define the variables as a closed set of variants, all non-occurrences in the relevant environments [be noted]” in order to tabulate frequency levels of the given variant at any one point in time (30). Regarding the variation in occurrence of the perfective *done*, it is not possible to tabulate frequency levels based on any of the studies included in the present research because it is unknown the number of instances in which *done* could have been used by speakers but was not. Further, *done* is not in direct competition with any other morphosyntactic variants.

Instead, the present analysis is based on the total number of occurrences of the form within the interviews that provide the foundational data for this study. *Table 1* is drawn from Wolfram and Christian’s 1975 report and shows the number of occurrences broken down by age and sex of interviewees. Of the 52 interviewees in their analytic sample, 13 used the perfective *done*, though the ages of these 13 speakers are unclear. *Table 1* demonstrates an overall positive correlation between the frequency of the use of *done* and the speaker’s age.

Table 1

Number of occurrences of perfective *done* by sex and age group

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
8-11	3	3	6
12-14	5	2	7
15-18	4	1	5
20-40	5	9	14
40+	26	7	33
TOTAL	43	22	65

It is important to the present research to note that Wolfram and Christian recorded this generational difference in use as early as the 1970s and suggested that the trend may be an indication that the perfective *done* is dying out in the area studied (Monroe and Mercer counties, West Virginia). This suggestion is formed on the basis of the apparent-time hypothesis, which attempts to establish patterns of language change by comparing the speech of individuals of various ages at any one point in time in the absence of data collected from the speech community over a span of years or decades. Older speakers' use of language is taken to represent older language varieties while younger speakers' use of language is taken to represent younger language varieties. Therefore, according to the apparent-time hypothesis, if older Appalachian dialect speakers use the perfective *done* more often than younger Appalachian dialect speakers, it

can be asserted that the form is more prevalent in older varieties of the dialects than younger varieties, thus establishing the direction of a potential language change. In contrast to apparent-time studies, real-time longitudinal studies compare similar data sets from multiple points in time to observe language changes directly and often provide more reliable empirical evidence in determining if observed variation can be considered a change-in-progress. All of the studies analyzed in the present research evaluate language variation patterns based on the apparent-time hypothesis except for one real-time longitudinal study (Dannenberg 2010), which will be examined in Section IV.

The positive correlation between a speaker's age and their number of uses of the perfective *done* found in the 1975 study is not reflected in all other research on the form. In a 1988 follow-up study (also referred to as the 1988 study), Christian, Wolfram, and Dube reinterpreted data from the 1975 study and collected additional interviews in 1982 and 1983. These interviews came from residents of Mercer County, West Virginia. In all, 15 additional interviews from Mercer County were conducted "to fill out the older age groups" in the sample so that each group had roughly the same number of interviewees (1988, 5). Of these 144 interviews that comprise the full data set, 62 were included in the 1988 analytic sample—47 from the 1975 study's analytic sample and all 15 new interviews from 1982 and 1983. Unlike the 1975 study, the 1988 study does not state the number of interviewees in the analytic sample who used the perfective *done*.

The 1988 study also redistributed the age groups, noting that the categorization is somewhat arbitrary, but that it is designed to group speakers generationally and based on their broader roles within the speech community based on the framework of apparent time. The 10-15 age group represents "the post-acquisitional period of the emerging generation of speakers," the

16-30 age group represents “those speakers who are establishing their roles within the community,” the 31-50 age group “has already settled into its role with respect to language usage,” and the 51-70 and 70+ age groups represent older generations with their own established roles in the speech community (5). All age groups include 10-12 speakers with the exception of the 10-15 age group, which includes 19 speakers.

Table 2 presents the 1988 study’s results, adapted from the table as it appears in *Variation and Change in Geographically Isolated Communities: Appalachian English and Ozark English* (49).

Table 2

Number of instances of perfective *done* in
Appalachian English by age and sex

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
10-15	10	5	15
16-30	5	10	15
31-50	10	2	12
51-70	16	2	18
70+	4	4	8
TOTAL	45	23	68

The 1988 data shows that males had a greater tendency to use *done* than females and that age has little bearing on speakers' use of the form, but the results of this study can be called into question for several reasons. First, the 15 additional interviews that were automatically incorporated in the analytic sample were not subjected to the same selection criteria as the 47 original interviews. Additionally, the disproportionate number of speakers in the 10-15 age group could have inflated the number of occurrences of the perfective *done* recorded in the speech of this age group, which would have interfered with the study's ability to determine whether younger speakers use the form less frequently than their older counterparts. These factors aside, the collection of the additional interviews took place between seven and nine years after those reported in the 1975 study. Because the additional interview data from 1982 and 1983 was combined with the data from 1975, the 1988 study cannot adhere to either an apparent-time or real-time framework, though it claims to examine language variation and change based on the apparent-time hypothesis. For this reason, its contributions are limited in determining whether the observed variation in use of the perfective *done* can be considered a language change-in-progress.

In the interpretation of this data, Christian, Wolfram, and Dube assert that age is not a motivating factor in speakers' use of the perfective *done* and that the sex of the speaker plays a greater role. Ultimately, the 1988 study reaches the same conclusion as the 1975 study—that *done* may be falling out of use—but it does so on the basis of sex differences rather than age differences, “since changes toward the standard (eliminating stigmatized features) typically are more advanced among females” (1988, 50). The 1975 and 1988 data sets show that the male/female split in the use of *done* is roughly the same between studies. Therefore, both studies

can generally support the idea that *done* is dying out as a dialect feature based on these sex differences, but only the 1975 study offers evidence based on speakers' age.

A thorough search of existing literature yielded only one other semi-quantitative record of occurrences of the perfective *done* in speakers of previous generations. The West Virginia Corpus of English in Appalachia (WVCEA), compiled by the West Virginia Dialect Project, includes interviews of 67 speakers. Analysis of WVCEA data by Hazen, Butcher, and King (2010) shows that only four speakers within the corpus used the perfective *done* in their interviews: two speakers born before 1918, one speaker born between 1922 and 1947, and one speaker born between 1950 and 1979. None of the speakers born after 1980 used the perfective *done*. The study does not indicate the sex, socioeconomic status, educational attainment, or race of these interviewees nor the number of times each interviewee used *done*. Its claim that the grammatical form is falling out of use is based solely on the observed generational differences.

Viewed together, these three studies indicate that the use of the perfective *done* is generally declining in Appalachian dialects and has been since the late twentieth century. However, they do not definitively indicate whether the observed decline is statistically significant or regular enough to be considered a change-in-progress. Nevertheless, they offer points of comparison against which later studies can evaluate the likelihood of a language change-in-progress based on this decline in use of *done*.

IV. Frequency of occurrence of the perfective *done* in the speech of younger generations

Following the 1975 and 1988 studies, few researchers have examined how younger speakers, especially those born in or after the 1990s, use the perfective *done*. Dannenberg's 2010 study (also referred to here as the 2010 study) is the only real-time longitudinal study that builds

on the data collected by Wolfram and Christian in 1975. In 2000, Dannenberg returned to Mercer and Monroe counties of West Virginia to interview life-long residents and collected 80 additional interviews from European American speakers². The analytic sample used in the 2010 study consists of eight interviews from the 1975 study and ten of the interviews from Dannenberg's 2000 data set. The 2010 sample was restricted to this size because Dannenberg selected interviewees from the same cities, towns, and communities for comparison and controlled for the length of interview as well as the educational attainment and socioeconomic statuses of the interviewees. The 1975 data set includes speakers from ages 11-50 and the 2000 data set includes speakers from ages 11-51+.

One noteworthy difference in methodology between these two studies is the manner in which interviews were conducted, specifically with regard to the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. Wolfram and Christian's (1975) six interviewers were locals of Monroe and Mercer Counties, non-linguists who received training prior to conducting the interviews. They were personally acquainted with their subjects and "utilized their indigenous status through their previous knowledge of interests of the informant" to elicit as much informal speech as possible (1975, 14). Informal speech is crucial in the study of nonstandard dialects because it encourages speakers' use of nonstandard variants that may otherwise be obscured if the speaker used a formal register. Dannenberg's (2010) interviewers were all students who were also inexperienced at interviewing prior to the study. However, the majority of these interviewers were not residents of Monroe and Mercer Counties and were not acquainted with their subjects. As a result, the speech they elicited was not as informal in nature. Dannenberg maintains that the

² Wolfram and Christian (1975) do not specify the racial demographics of their interviewees, but given the nature of the distinctions drawn between Black English and Appalachian English varieties in the report's introduction, it is likely that very few, if any, African American subjects were included in the study.

comparative lack of familiarity between interviewers and interviewees did not impact interviewees' use of nonstandard language features, though she does not offer sufficient justification for this claim.

The 2010 study's treatment of the perfective *done* is cursory but relevant because of its status as the only longitudinal study regarding this grammatical form in Appalachian dialects. Its analysis is focused on fronted /o/, monophthong /ay/, *a*-prefixing, and copula deletion, but Dannenberg concludes that many nonstandard dialect features appear to be fading, among them [ɪz] plural following consonant clusters, *r*-lessness and *r* intrusion, [ɸ] for [ow], and *H*-retention. The perfective *done* is not included as a feature that is declining in use, which I argue is due to a misrepresentation of data regarding this grammatical form.

Based on the table listed on (9), the 2010 study indicates that the perfective *done* was “widely used” in the data from the 1975 study, which is problematic because it has already been established that only 13 out of 52 of interviewees in the 1975 analytic sample used *done* in their interviews. If the data in Dannenberg's analytic sample was the basis for the claim that *done* was widely used in Monroe and Mercer counties in the 1970s, it does not reflect the broader pattern that was established in Wolfram and Christian's full analytic sample. Conversely, if Dannenberg's analytic sample were consistent with this broader pattern—if two of eight of her 1970s interviewees used the perfective *done*—can it be reasonably asserted that the feature is “widely used” in the area? Dannenberg does not specify the meaning of this term in the context of the study.

The table listed on (9) also claims that the perfective *done* is still in wide use based on the data collected in 2000, but this claim is of limited value because of the uncertain metrics of Dannenberg's evaluation. No quantitative or qualitative analysis regarding *done*'s frequency of

occurrence in this data set is offered—the study does not detail which speakers used *done* or how many times it was used by those speakers. Therefore, although this longitudinal study is the only study that adds a real-time element to research that was previously bound to an apparent-time framework, it does not offer compelling evidence in determining whether the perfective *done* is dying out in Appalachian dialects, much less whether the decrease in usage frequency can be considered a change-in-progress.

However, the findings of several other apparent-time studies, when compared to the findings of the 1975 and 1988 studies, provide a degree of empirical support for the claim that long-term variation in the use of the perfective *done* could indeed be indicative of a language change-in-progress. In Kirk Hazen's 2006 study, "The Final Days of Appalachian Heritage Language," associates of the West Virginia Dialect Project conducted 67 sociolinguistic interviews, 21 of which were selected for the analytic sample. The selection criteria for the analytic sample are not detailed, but Hazen states that these 21 interviews were chosen "in order to illustrate the diversity of language found with Appalachian natives" (2006, 130). The study does not specify the level of informality achieved in the interviews or the familiarity between interviewers and interviewees.

All speakers who participated in this study were Appalachian natives and life-long residents of south-central Appalachia, and many were from West Virginia. Interviewees' ages range from 15 to 90+. Additionally, Hazen's subject pool includes both European American and African American speakers, whereas the previous research that does specify the racial demographics of interviewees only included European Americans.

In contrast with the previously analyzed studies, eleven of the speakers in Hazen's analytic sample had received some college education, and four speakers had completed Masters

degrees. As formerly indicated, the interviewees prioritized in the 1975, 1988, and 2010 studies were selected for their low levels of educational attainment in part because it was believed that the “purest” use of non-standard dialects would come from subjects whose speech had not been standardized by post-secondary education. However, Hazen argues that “though the ability to style shift may be tested in a college setting, there is no evidence that education alone eradicates home-raised language variation patterns” (2006, 130). In other words, college-educated speakers’ use of Appalachian dialect, though it may be less frequent than their use of Standard English in some settings, is still demonstrative of the variation taking place within the dialect. Further, since the number of Appalachians over the age of 25 who hold a bachelor’s degree or higher has more than tripled from 7.4% in 1970 to 24.2% in 2018 (Appalachian Regional Commission 2020), entirely excluding these subjects from study could make such research less reflective of dialect variation and changes-in-progress within the entire population. For this reason, Hazen’s study is perhaps the most authoritative of recent literature in establishing larger patterns of language variation in Appalachian dialects in the context of the present research.

Hazen (2006) found that not a single interviewee in his analytic sample used the perfective *done*, which offers a degree of empirical support for the claim that this long-term variation can be considered a language change-in-progress when compared with the general trends established in the 1975 and 1988 studies. Viewed together, these three studies indicate that the decline in use of *done* is stable and that there are regular differences in usage frequency across ages, though their combined findings cannot determine whether these differences are statistically significant in the wider population of Appalachian dialect speakers.

It must also be noted that the fact that none of the older speakers in Hazen’s 2006 sample used *done* does not necessarily indicate that Hazen’s results are inconsistent with the findings of

the 1975 and 1988 studies. Since only a quarter of the 1975 interviewees used the perfective *done*, it is not alarming that none of Hazen's older interviewees (50+) used it, especially since they would have been placed in Wolfram and Christian's younger age groupings, which used *done* less frequently than their older counterparts.

Overall, Hazen's inclusion of African American and college-educated subjects, as well as subjects of higher socioeconomic status, offers a more accurate picture of how Appalachian dialects are used today by the area's whole population rather than a smaller subsection of it (European Americans of low socioeconomic status and educational attainment). Based on the methodologies of Wolfram and Christian (1975), Christian, Wolfram, and Dube (1988), and Dannenberg (2010), it is likely that they expected college-educated speakers or speakers of higher socioeconomic status to use the perfective *done* less often in the interviews, which may hold true if style shifting impacted these speakers' use of nonstandard dialect. However, even if a number of these speakers were present in the studies, and did use *done* less often or not at all, it remains the case that a portion of the total number of interviewees would have used it. This portion may be smaller in relation to the whole of the analytic sample than Wolfram's established 25%, for example, but considering that 0% of Hazen's interviewees used the grammatical form, the differences in number of people who used the perfective *done*, and the total number of occurrences, would almost certainly have declined, if not as significantly. As previously mentioned, neither the 1988 study nor the 2010 study provides the number of speakers from their analytic samples who used *done*, and of these two, only the 1988 study provides the number of occurrences, so their results are not applicable in this aspect.

The final quantitative record of the frequency of use of the perfective *done* yet to be examined is found in Hazen and Hamilton's 2008 research "A Dialect Turned Inside Out:

Migration and the Appalachian Diaspora,” which examines the relationship between migration and language variation patterns within a single nine-member Appalachian family of low socioeconomic status from southern West Virginia. Consequently, the study does not primarily concern itself with determining variation patterns that apply to the wider Appalachian population. Nevertheless, Hazen and Hamilton found that several morphosyntactic dialect features, including the perfective *done*, were absent in the speech of all subjects (male and female, migrants and non-migrants, college-educated and not college-educated, whose ages range from 34-80). Though limited in its contributions to the present research, Hazen and Hamilton’s study could indicate that the variation in use of the perfective *done* is stable when compared with the findings of Wolfram and Christian (1975), and Christian, Wolfram, and Dube (1988), and Hazen (2006).

V. Conclusion

Having reviewed all available literature from the past fifty years that provides a quantitative account of the frequency of use of the perfective *done* among Appalachian dialect speakers, the present research concludes that the long-term variation seen in the decreased frequency of use of the perfective *done* is stable and that there are regular differences in frequency of use across ages, but that existing scholarship is insufficient in determining whether these differences are statistically significant enough to indicate a language change-in-progress in Appalachian dialects on the whole. However, the stable and regular decrease in use of *done* provides a degree of evidence that a language change could be occurring in West Virginian varieties. Re-evaluation of all interview data collected in Dannenberg’s 2010 longitudinal study may be the most readily available means to clarify the nature of this variation. Further research

could also address why the perfective *done* is falling out of use faster than other morphosyntactic variables found in Appalachian dialects and whether the established variation in the use of the perfective *done* in Appalachian dialects is reflected in other dialect families (Southern English and Black English) in which the grammatical form appears. Additionally, current research on the grammatical form by and large neglects to consider the intersections of Black English dialects and Appalachian dialects or account for these intersections in its examinations of language variation and change in Appalachia, which must be remedied in future studies.

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