

British Creole

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1 Introduction

British Creole (BrC) is spoken by British-born people of Caribbean background whose parents, grandparents or great-grandparents migrated to Britain since 1948. It is an ethnic variety, rather than a regional or local one. BrC is the product of dialect contact between West Indian migrants, the largest group of whom during the period of critical formation (1950-1970) were Jamaican, and vernacular varieties of urban English English (EngE). I use *dialect contact* advisedly in view of the relative structural similarity between Caribbean English-lexicon Creoles (CECs) and EngE, especially at the phonological level; the alternative, *language contact*, suggests the non-genetic relation between these varieties that most creolists assert, primarily on the basis of contrasts in morphology and syntax.

Because of the Jamaican input -- most apparent at the lexical and grammatical level -- BrC has been described as “a collection of local British varieties of J[amaican] C[reole]” (Sebba 1993: 139). This verdict derives from grammar-focused descriptions, however, which privilege the range of varieties most divergent from BrE, and may not reflect the complexities of phonological variation and assimilation to British models, especially for UK-born speakers. Grammar-focused investigations of BrC (as most of them are) insist that “intermediate forms... [a]re sufficiently few in number to be excluded” from analysis (Edwards 1986: 50). This is not true of phonology. Moreover, as phonological markers of BrC are often the easiest to acquire, and present the weakest claim to British Black identity, the range of speech including them is much wider than the range including only core grammatical features. Accordingly this chapter casts a wide net.

Languages brought by immigrant minorities to a new urban environment typically suffer one of two fates. They may die out as and when the immigrants or their descendants assimilate fully into the target society, and become native speakers of one of its existing varieties (often contributing a few loanwords, a grammatical construction or phonological pattern or two). They may be maintained as minority languages, serving the needs of an in-group which remains culturally distinct. This is the stance from which existing treatments of BrC are written: they emphasize its retention of Jamaican features, its systematic nature and distinctive properties.

There are good social and pragmatic reasons for doing so in the case of discriminated languages and groups, quite apart from linguistic-theoretical imperatives.

Much more rarely, a deeper fusion of incoming and target languages occurs, wherein significant elements of language structure are retained, serving the social purposes of a group which becomes established on the local scene but never fully assimilates, often for reasons of oppression and discrimination. African American Vernacular English (AAVE), assuming its input languages included a (Caribbean or American) plantation Creole as well as African ancestral varieties, is a very relevant example. In such cases, analysis that focuses purely on retention of conservative features and systemic distinctness would miss much of what is most important. The description below presumes that such an outcome is possible for BrC, and deserves attention.

1.1 Input and diffusion

Linguistic variety among receiving communities in Britain, especially on the phonological level, is responsible for considerable diffuseness -- so much so that it is incorrect to describe BrC as comprising a single accent. Indeed, BrC is found both north and south of England's principal dialect boundaries, and in all three dialect areas of the South of England. BrC speakers in Ipswich or Reading, with strong Barbadian input, or Dominican-ancestry speakers in Bradford, may differ systematically from London Jamaicans, whose speech contrasts with Dudley's Jamaican-derived population due to the West Midlands input. Since Afro-Caribbeans, over time, moved beyond the initial entry points of migration to a range of urban areas (including Birmingham, Leicester, Manchester, Nottingham, Sheffield) -- and their children and descendants have become well-integrated into these speech communities (whose English dialect is their primary vernacular) -- such diffuseness in phonology may have increased rather than abated. Some authors (e.g. Sutcliffe 1992) describe BrC as a stable variety, meaning that it shows considerable continuity with JamC -- as indeed it does -- but it is not known how far into the future this can be projected. Linguists can hardly focus only on how thoroughly Caribbean characteristics are retained, given the primacy of BrE for most UK-born speakers; investigation of a possibly-emerging, ethnically-distinctive dialect is an important research target.

With respect to ancestral Island Creoles (IslCs) -- source varieties of English-lexicon Creole spoken natively in the West Indies, and by Caribbean-born migrants overseas -- BrC may be called a *post-native* variety. For its canonical speakers today it is a second or later variety, and

their (other) first variety is not an Island Creole. It may occasionally be spoken indistinguishably from an Island Creole: Sutcliffe (1982: 132) notes that some British-born speakers in Bedford had essentially full native command of Jamaican Creole (JamC), while Tate (1984) describes Rastafarians of Dominican descent in Bradford whose accent passed for Jamaican among Jamaicans. BrC may also be acquired in childhood within the critical period -- Sebba (1993: 37-40) reports that the age of acquisition varies (though studies of Afro-Caribbean child language socialisation into BrC are needed). Yet it seems clear that most speakers of BrC do not acquire it as a primary vernacular, and do not use it in preference to EngE, in a sustained fashion, across a wide range of domains. It is thus characteristic of BrC that, in any given community of speakers, a range of competence exists from token to full.

However, IslC input persists, via both earlier and current immigrants and family visits, as well as mass media (again largely Jamaica-focused). The presence of IslC speakers in British Afro-Caribbean communities ensures that adaptation, accommodation and acquisition remain a two-way street, with IslC speakers targeting EngE (and perhaps BrC) norms while BrC speakers are influenced by IslC norms. Although local British icons and exemplars have also arisen, BrC thus cannot be called normatively autonomous. As BrC serves different social purposes, Island JamC (Patrick, [this/other volume](#)) cannot reasonably be the touchstone for full competence. Given this, and the present focus on phonology (which shows perhaps greater assimilation to BrE norms than grammar), the description below attempts not to idealise BrC at its Creole extremity - - not to police the distance between it and EngE -- but to explore the linguistic space between that Creole pole and the possibly-now-emerging new dialect of BrE spoken by Caribbean-origin Britons.

BrC arose via the development of a generalised 'Black British' identity, partly externally imposed, as Caribbean people of many colors, ethnicities and class backgrounds found themselves viewed in Britain as *black*, *West Indian* and *working-class* (Gilroy 1987). Caribbean English (Island) Creoles are uniformly languages of ethnic and/or national identification; not so, BrC. Elements of BrC are used both between whites and blacks, as well as among white working-class (Rosen & Burgess 1980, Hewitt 1986) and Asian youth (Rampton 1995). Such 'crossing' indexes complex social meanings (like outgroup use of AAVE in the US), but appears both socially limited and grammatically restricted by comparison to British Afro-Caribbean community speech.

Little research exists on BrC; no sociolinguistic speech community survey has been performed in twenty years. The summary below, which follows earlier work by Sutcliffe (1982 in

Bedford, 1992 in Dudley), Edwards (1986 in Dudley), and Sebba (1993 in London) must be considered tentative pending further investigation. However, it is not only lack of research that makes the picture more complex than most immigrant varieties. The principal causes can be identified, if their workings are not fully understood: (1) the structural relation between input varieties -- CECs and vernacular EngE -- is closer than for most genetically unrelated languages, yet further than that of many dialects; (2) the tangled history of language subordination, ideology and attitudes held by Caribbean peoples towards British English, and all it represents, as well as vice versa (Mühleisen 2002); and (3) the social and demographic factors relating to acquisition.

1.2 Forms of speech, and social demographic factors

The forms of speech created by this contact situation are multiple, as are their labels, including: Black London English, British Black English, London Jamaican, London/Jamaican, British/Jamaican Creole, and such less-discriminating terms as Patwa (~Patois), Creole, 'dialect', West Indian English, Afro-Lingua, and Nation Language (which specify no particular source or British community). Such names for language varieties and people, though worthy of sociolinguistic study, cannot be explored here. An important research problem, only partially attempted to date (Sebba 1993: 10), is to identify, constrain and describe the major modes of BrC.

One might not wish to call all the forms of speech described below by the label BrC, but they exemplify the variety of language within the community:

- (1 a) Use of partly-assimilated vernacular elements of British English into Island Creole (e.g. accent, lexicon);
- b) IslC that has undergone long-term accommodation to BrE, in face-to-face interactions by adult Caribbean immigrants (Wells 1973);
- c) use of IslC in code-switching with BrE by people who natively speak both;
- d) Creole-like speech learned young from native IslC-speaking family, by Afro-Caribbean native speakers of BrE;
- e) Creole-like speech learned later from IslC-speaking peers, by Afro-Caribbean native speakers of BrE;
- f) Creole-like speech learned late from non-native-IslC-speaking sources, and incorporated

into BrE;

- g) token elements of Creole speech, not sustained or sustainable, acquired unsystematically by Afro-Caribbean native speakers of BrE, or
- h) ...by non-Afro-Caribbean native speakers of BrE, and
- i) emerging ethnically-distinctive varieties of BrE spoken primarily by Caribbean-origin Britons, incorporating various elements from Creole-like speech.

A range of factors combine in three major dimensions to shape these speech-forms: Caribbean family input (i.e., Jamaican/other English Creole/other Caribbean/none); community-type in Britain (i.e., urban SE England/other urban/rural, varying in degree of contact with London); and nativeness/degree of acquisition (i.e., acquisition from birth/before circa 12 years/afterwards; plus, generational status relative to immigration). While distinguishable in the abstract, these necessarily overlap in practice to produce the major modes of BrC, and are not exhaustive.

Little is known of linguistic variation according to classic sociolinguistic factors such as age, sex, and class, though it is clear that the great majority of BrC speakers are working-class, and that age has no simple relationship to generation of immigration. The complex role of ethnicity in acquisition has been explored mainly in terms of individual agency via “acts of identity” (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985), especially regarding assimilation into British nationhood and preservation of distinctive minority status. People of Caribbean heritage are of mixed background by definition, and mixing continues to occur in England across regional, social and racial lines. To the extent that “mixed-race” children represent linguistically heterogeneous family backgrounds, they will influence the development of BrC.

1.3 Linguistic convergence

Insofar as BrC possesses a stable phonological structure, it is the result of linguistic convergence between (i) JamC, as speakers perceive it; (ii) local vernacular BrE; and possibly (iii) another Caribbean English variety (though few traces of this type surface). The best-known variety, treated below, takes London Vernacular English (LonVE) as input (ii); other varieties are subject to some London influence as well. At the level of the phonological inventory, BrC as expected has the more numerous phonemic contrasts of LonVE, plus some phonetic realizations

typical of JamC. Social pressures may also influence speakers to converge with “proper English” (as likely to be vernacular BrE as RP) in formal settings, producing a more British-sounding result than conversational speech, as in the word-lists recorded.

2 Vowels and diphthongs

Nearly a dozen analyses of JamC vowel and diphthong systems exist, positing inventories from 8-17, and variously motivated by historical transparency (Cassidy 1961), symmetry (Devonish, [this volume](#)), or phonetic accuracy (Beckford Wassink 1999). The latter, the most detailed empirical analysis, describes JamC as a V-shaped, peripheral, symmetrical system with five front and five back vowels and two at the low apex, and demonstrates that contrasts often attributed to length alone -- an important distinctive feature of JamC -- are supported by systematic quality distinctions as well. BrC however relies primarily on vowel quality, and vowel length generally patterns with LonVE. Variants which might be contrastively associated with Standard Jamaican English ([StJamE](#)) are rare in BrC, where vernacular structures (both British and Jamaican) predominate, and are more often encountered in the speech of Caribbean-born migrants than later generations.

(2) Jamaican Creole vowel inventory (based on Beckford Wassink 1999)

| | | |
|-------|--|----|
| i: | | u: |
| ɪ | | ʊ |
| e: | | o: |
| ɛ | | ʌ |
| aɪ | | ɔ |
| a, a: | | |

The inventory in (2) is fairly typical, except that it explicitly recognises quality distinctions as well as length in every sub-system. Analyses with fewer members inevitably dephonemicise some regular and salient distinctions; those with more typically admit debatable separate subclasses, such as rhotic vowels (Veatch 1991). Beckford Wassink concludes that /ɔ/ is

not phonetically distinguishable for most speakers from /a/, as suggested in Patrick (1995), thus giving only five short vowels and six long ones or diphthongs.

Table 1: Variants in British Creole (SE England variety)

| | | | | | |
|-------|----------------------------|---------|------------------------------|--------|-------------------------|
| KIT | i ~ I | FLEECE | i: ~ Ii | NEAR | ier ~ iɛr > Iə ~ I: |
| DRESS | ë ~ ɛ | FACE | ie ~ iɛ ~ e: ~ ɛI | SQUARE | ier ~ iɛr ~ e: ~ ɛ: |
| TRAP | a ~ æ | PALM | a: ~ a: | START | a: ~ a: > a:(r) |
| LOT | a ~ ɒ ~ ɔ | THOUGHT | a: ~ ɔ: ~ o: | NORTH | a: ~ a:(r) ~ ɔ: ~ ö: |
| STRUT | ɔ ~ ɔ̃ ~ ɐ ~ ʌ | GOAT | uo ~ ʊo ~ ʊə ~ o: ~ əö | FORCE | uo ~ ʊo~ ö:(r) ~ ɔ+: |
| FOOT | u ~ ʊ | GOOSE | u: ~ ü: ~ ʌ: | CURE | ju: ~ jo:(r) |
| BATH | a: ~ ä: ~ a: | PRICE | ai ~ aI ~ aɛ, ae | happY | I ~ i |
| CLOTH | a: ~ a ~ ɒ | CHOICE | ai ~ ɔI ~ ɔɛ | lettER | a ~ ɐ |
| NURSE | ör ~ ɐʀ ~ ʌə ~ ɜ: ~ ɜʀ: | MOUTH | ɔʊ ~ aʊ ~ æə | horsES | I |
| | | | | commA | a ~ ɐ |

Table 1 summarises the principal vowel variants; the general effect is a London-like system with a variably Jamaican-like sound. It is difficult, in the present state of knowledge, to make quantitative statements about preference, and it cannot be asserted (without premature idealisation) that all variants even belong to the same system, given such factors as variable rhoticity, vowel quality dispersion and overlap, alternation of centring glides with monophthongs

with upglides in the same word-class, etc. Nevertheless, all variants may be encountered in the speech of Caribbean-origin Britons who claim to be using ‘Patwa’ or ‘Creole’.

There are often differences however between speakers who were born and spent at least early childhood years in the Caribbean, and those born in Britain like Sally, the twenty-something speaker of the word-list sample. Though both Sally’s parents are from Kingston, she identifies herself during the recording saying, “Yeah but I’m Cockney!” Her mother and another Jamaican-born woman a generation older tease her saying “You fly the flag”, and “You Londoner... Cockney”. Sally’s assimilated speech may represent the future of London Jamaican pronunciation, though the chart captures a range of variants (hers are generally rightmost).

KIT, DRESS, FOOT, STRUT

For short non-low vowels, BrC realisations are often more peripheral and tenser than the London norm, accurately reflecting JamC. Most authors typically phonemicise the STRUT items as /o/ although they never reach [o]; however, they are relatively back and often rounded to [ɔ].

TRAP, LOT, BATH, PALM

Southern BrC is a “broad-BATH” dialect like its input varieties. Short-O (ME *ō*) and short-A (ME *ǣ*) merged in the formation of JamC, as the latter never raised from [a] to [æ] according to Cassidy and Le Page (1980: xlix), so pronunciations with [æ] represent StJamE or, more probably, BrE influence. Again targeting basilectal JamC as reference variety, BrC dramatically reduces vowel-quality contrasts among low vowels (Patrick 1999). Though their ranges do not entirely overlap, all four word-classes share front, open variants, sometimes centralised (e.g. Sally); for some speakers TRAP and LOT may be merged, though others retain rounding on the latter. However, length distinctions are robust and may even be exaggerated relative to London English (Beckford Wassink 1999: 186 finds a 1:6 ratio for long-to-short in JamC, typical of languages where quantity is the primary distinction). Some Jamaican-born speakers alternate [a:] and [ɑ:] in succession, both long.

The possibly greater salience of quantity contrasts may account for the lengthening tendency observed in CLOTH words (normally short in SE England, Wells 1982) pronounced with front vowels; UK-born assimilated speakers tend to have short, backer vowels.

FLEECE, GOOSE

BrC long vowels appear to be only sporadically and lightly affected by the London Diphthong Shift, for UK-born speakers only (e.g. Sally has slightly centralised monophthongs such as [ü:] for GOOSE); Jamaican-born ones generally follow both JamC and StJamE in having tense monophthongs. The fully centralised variants of /i:/ [əi] and /u:/ [əu] do not seem to co-occur with BrC grammar and lexis, even in code-switching. One wonders whether BrC, like AAVE, might provide a locus for non-participation in predominant vowel-shifts.

PRICE, CHOICE, MOUTH

The *line/loin* merger, very general in JamC but carefully distinguished by StJamE speakers, does not hold for BrC, where some back round diphthongs occur in CHOICE words. Use of /w/ to distinguish these (/bwai/ ‘boy’, as in JamC) from PRICE words is a salient marker of BrC, and may occur even where vowel quality makes it redundant. Both diphthongs contain strong glides; they may be more peripheral before unvoiced consonants (Thomas 2001: 163 for JamC). For UK-born speakers, both onset and target may be slightly retracted or lowered. However, Sutcliffe (1992: 98) observes a fronting and raising of the onset in Rastafarian-identified speakers in Dudley.

MOUTH generally does not show the [o] or [ʊ] starting point common in JamC but is lowered and/or fronted, converging with London realizations; the glide may be abbreviated to a centring one, targeting [ə]. Exceptions to this are lexicalized pronunciations of common words ending in a velar nasal, realised /ʌŋ/ in BrC, where LonVE has the MOUTH diphthong followed by /n/ or /nd/, as in *down, town, round*.

FACE, GOAT

These word-classes, among the most various and stigmatized in JamC, lend themselves to a host of realisations in BrC. They occur as down- or, more commonly, in-gliding diphthongs, mid monophthongs, or even London-like up-gliding diphthongs (rarely as the high monophthongs occasionally found in Jamaica). They do not seem to participate in the London

Diphthong Shift, which lowers the starting point for both right down to [a], since they rarely dip below [ɛ]. While Sally's FACE is London-like, her GOAT is a classic BrC hybrid: it has a central starting-point like many London speakers, but the [o] target is typical of JamC, with none of the fronting to [ɪ], [ʏ] found in recent years (Altendorf and Watt, [this volume](#)). Despite some L-vocalization, the vowel quality in GOAT~GOAL is similar.

Beckford Wassink (1999: 161) notes that [iɛ] is more prevalent and less stigmatised for FACE in urban Jamaican than [uɔ] is for GOAT; it is expected that frequency would be reversed in BrC, since what is not prestigious in Kingston may be a source of covert prestige or basilectal focussing in Britain. Lexical exceptions *mek* [mɛk] 'make, let' and *tek* [tɛk] 'take' are common markers of BrC, but do not vary as often with [miek] and [tiek] as in JamC.

HAPPY, LETTER, COMMA

The reduction vowel for weak syllables in JamC is generally closer to [ɐ] or even [a] in JamC than to schwa; /a/ is a plausible phoneme assignment. This has led some analysts to mistakenly posit /a/ as the target of all in-gliding and down-gliding diphthongs, as well, though there is no evidence that such glides ever terminate in [a]. It is common for native speakers of both JamC and StJamE to produce full, unreduced vowels in non-final environments where BrE varieties reduce them, but this is less true of BrC. HAPPY is occasionally lax for Jamaican-born speakers, whose open syllables regularly end in short lax vowels.

NEAR, SQUARE

JamC is variably (semi-)rhotic but BrC is less so. This may be due to the sociolinguistic confusion of values attached to rhoticity, which is more often present in StJamE than basilectal JamC, but less often present in both standard and vernacular varieties of SE England. Rhotic pronunciations may be interpreted as either basilectal or acrolectal in Jamaican contexts, depending on linguistic environment, but non-local in London -- thus not especially likely to surface in BrC, on either count. These two word-classes are salient environments for post-vocalic /r/ appearance in BrC, as it may coincide with basilectal in-glides [iɛr, iɛr], which are less

stigmatised in this environment. However, both in BrC and basilectal JamC, non-pre-vocalic /r/ is generally limited to morpheme-final position (Wells 1973, describing JamC adults undergoing long-term accommodation to BrE, gives frequencies of appearance before a variety of final consonants).

In BrC focused on basilectal JamC, the two word-classes may merge in NEAR with an in-glide, thus contrasting strongly with LonVE. For British-born speakers, the occasional acrolectal StJamE merging in SQUARE (in which *cheers* may be pronounced with a mid monophthong, as though it were *chairs*) is not typical of BrC, since the two word-classes may be distinguished on height, [ɪ:] ~ [ɛ:], with or without a centring glide.

NURSE

This vowel is not normally a distinct one in JamC, being simply the STRUT vowel plus /r/. In BrC a range of somewhat higher, mid-central pronunciations also occur. In both varieties, rounding is common. R-coloration is most frequent morpheme-finally, but may occur before /rC/ combinations, especially /rt, rd/. With mid-central pronunciations it is less common, unlike the StJamE long monophthong, but does occur in BrC. Sutcliffe (1992: 103) records for Dudley a close central onset /ʌə/, “a new sound... not noted for JC formerly” in *wok* ‘work’, *tod* ‘third’, *choch* ‘church’, etc.

START, NORTH, FORCE

As with TRAP etc., the START and NORTH vowels in BrC often merge in a front open vowel for JamC-focussed speakers -- typically long and with no r-coloration [a:] -- though much backer and rounded pronunciations of NORTH words commonly occur for UK-born speakers (Sally has [ö:]). FORCE is merged with NORTH in many dialects, including SE English, but not in JamC or the Caribbean generally, which Thomas (2001: 47) calls “[p]erhaps the last stronghold of the /ɔr/ - /or/ distinction”. Sutcliffe (1992: 102) hypothesises that this merger is underway in BrC, but in the London area they may still be distinguished, even in the most British-assimilated pronunciations, despite being frequently merged in RP and SE England: for Sally, FORCE remains /ɔ:/ but NORTH is /o:/.

3 Consonants

T, K, G

In many BrE dialects including LonVE, syllable-final and word-medial /t/ are often subject to glottal substitution, glottal reinforcement, and other forms of glottalisation. This highly salient and stigmatised vernacular feature is not noticeable in JamC, but crops up regularly in BrC, and is assimilated even by Caribbean-born adult migrants.

Straw (2001) examines glottal features in the Suffolk town of Ipswich, in the English of Caribbean-born speakers from Jamaica, Nevis and Barbados (it occurs natively in the last, uniquely in the West Indies, Roberts 1988; but in a pattern different from EngE), finding different frequencies and environmental constraints among them, and between Caribbean and white Ipswich residents. Analysing spectrograms, Straw and Patrick (2002) find that the Barbadians partly resemble general configurations allegedly diffusing across England; partly resemble white Ipswich speakers -- in a departure from known patterns of glottalisation elsewhere -- and partly show distinctive features which may reflect IslC usage. Only the youngest Barbadian immigrants may have acquired local Ipswich patterns. T-glottalling is thus a candidate not only for incorporation into BrC, but also for phonological diversity within its varieties, and possibly for helping to distinguish a new ethnic dialect of BrE.

Palatalization of JamC /k, g/ and insertion of /j/ glides is studied in Patrick (1995) and Beckford Wassink (1999); no departures are visible in BrC. Initial consonant clusters, especially /sCC/, are more likely in BrC than JamC.

TH-stopping

The most salient contrasts with standard Englishes are in TH-stopping, which uses alveolar stops [t, d] to correspond to dental fricatives [θ, ð]. This describes JamC and BrC; the stops themselves are sometimes fronted. This contrasts straightforwardly with LonVE, which instead substitutes [f, v], though only non-initially for the voiced case. (Word-initial [ð]-stopping also occurs sometimes in LonVE; this environment is discounted below.) The [f] variant is more common; it is regularly assimilated by older Caribbean-born speakers, and crops up unadapted, or

misadapted (Sebba 1993: 53-6), in the BrC of the UK-born younger generation, in words such as *both*, *mouth*, *north*, and *Samantha*.

In a study of two London-born brothers whose parents were Jamaican-born, Knight (2001) found that David and Gary both avoided standard variants entirely over several hours of speech (700 tokens). However, compared across three situations, David's use of the JamC/BrC variants ranged from 18% to 55%, while Gary's never surpassed 6%. The rest were all LonVE forms, so both were highly vernacular speakers, but one was much more Creole-focussed -- though even he used fewer such forms than the Dudley study found (Edwards 1986: 110 reports 41% to 100%). The pattern, confirmed with morphological data (plural-marking), suits their cultural styles: though close and involved in overlapping networks, the two contrast in their musical preferences, racial integration of football teams and school-friend networks, hair and clothing style, etc. In each case David's associations are more overtly Caribbean or Black British than Gary's. The family maintain strong contact with Jamaican culture, and neither boy is a 'lame': the language difference is down to individual agency, given joint exposure to varied resources.

As the likelihood of /v/ appearing intervocally is bolstered by the [ð]-to-[v] rule, the old-fashioned occurrence of /b/-for-/v/ in JamC is not salient in BrC, though it happens for frequent forms such as *neba* 'never, not', *beks* 'vexed'.

H-dropping

Except as a recessive feature in western dialects of the island, [h] is not contrastive in JamC but rather variably appears in syllable onsets, independent of historical or spelling patterns, to mark emphasis; it also signals social maneuvering in the style known as 'speaky-spoky' (Patrick 1997). In LonVE [h] also occurs noncontrastively to mark emphasis, a function it shares with glottal stops (Sivertsen 1960). Sebba (1993: 158) suggests that glottal stopping may be replacing H-dropping in this function for Creole-influenced LonVE. A possible motivation for this is that indiscriminate emphatic H-dropping invokes a "stereotype of rural, parental speech" for British-born black speakers (Sutcliffe 1992: 97), while glottal stopping retains local, covert prestige and is compatible with BrC norms. Regardless, Sutcliffe observes that younger British-born speakers seldom use emphatic H-dropping.

R, L

Rhoticity, described above, is slightly more frequent in JamC than LonVE, where it only occurs post-vocally in linking or intrusive mode. Wells (1982: 577) describes the variable occurrence of /r/ in historically R-ful words as semi-rhotic, noting that /r/ is lost more often before consonants in JC than syllable-finally. It undergoes further attrition in BrC. While /r/ is retained most often in JamC for NURSE, NORTH and START words, no pattern has emerged in BrC.

In both JamC and StJamE, all laterals are clear including syllabics. Consequently there is no L-vocalization. This feature was notoriously not assimilated to EngE by the adult immigrant generation of Jamaicans (Wells 1973). They did alter the JamC rule for velarizing alveolar stops before syllabic /l/, adapting /bɑkəl/ ‘bottle’, /ni:gl/ ‘needle’ to /batl/, /ni:dl/. Both pronunciations are found in the BrC of younger generations, who are not prestige-driven in the same way, and so produce basilect-focused tokens like *Ku kekl a kos pot* ‘Look at the kettle cursing the pot’ (Sutcliffe 1992: 83). There is some evidence for dark [ɫ] creeping into the speech of Jamaicans who came as children to London, where L-vocalization continues apace in LonVE: such speakers retain clear [l] in *chil(d)* but may have [ɫ] in *goal, ghoul*, and even vocalization in *old* and syllabic *fatal, beetle* (with /t/).

4 Prosody and Intonation

The BrC prosodic system’s interactive functions for turn-taking are studied by Local, Wells and Sebba (1985), who show that pitch characteristics of the final syllable of a syntactic unit help delimit turns in a way that contrasts with BrE.

Prosody and intonation are treated in depth for JamC and BrC by Sutcliffe (1992: 107-124), who regards them as syllable-timed tone languages with two contrastive tones, downstep and upstep, etc. English word stress is most often associated with low tone, rather than high, resulting in English monolinguals’ perception that stress is often oddly misplaced in BrC (they mistakenly interpret high pitch as stress). Sutcliffe records several cases where British-born speakers pointed explicitly to grammatical patterns differentiated by tone for his benefit. He outlines a number of patterns contrasting question types, consecutive verb constructions, relative clauses, conditionals and indicatives by consistent devices such as marked tones on subject pronoun and main verb. There is little doubt that such elements have carried over from JamC productively, and yet it is difficult to reconcile them with more assimilated aspects of BrC

phonology, suggesting that not only is further research required, but fundamental alterations in the sound system of BrC may take place in rising generations.

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[4890 words]

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