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**Tracking down old relatives:  
Zero relatives in subject and non-subject function  
in Early African American English**

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# Tracking down old relatives: Zero relatives in Early African American English

## Abstract

Relativization has been overlooked in the African American Vernacular English (AAVE) origins debate, perhaps because its variants are neither particularly stigmatized nor associated with AAVE. This thesis, a contribution to the origins debate and the understanding of relativization in English, examines relativization in Early African American English (AAE) by extending an analysis of the Ex-Slave Recordings to African Nova Scotian English and Samaná English. Examination of syntactic, grammatical, discourse-contextual and semantic factors demonstrates interaction between factors and the necessity of separating subject and non-subject relatives. Nevertheless, these varieties of Early AAE appear to share a common relativization system. The sparse, contradictory evidence on relativization in AAVE and creoles precludes strong conclusions about their relation to Early AAE, but its similarities to other English varieties support an English, not creole, origin and parallel accumulating evidence for its resemblance to colonial white varieties with which it was in contact.

**For my parents**

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## 1. Introduction

Relativization is an area of grammar that has received little attention in the debate over the origins of African American Vernacular English (or AAVE). Perhaps because its variants — the most robust of which are illustrated in (1)-(3) with data from Early African American English (Early AAE) — are neither particularly stigmatized, nor stereotypically associated with AAVE, it has not become a centre of controversy as have other more salient variables, such as the copula (Baugh, 1980; Holm, 1984; Labov, 1969; Rickford, 1996; Rickford et al., 1991), negation (DeBose, 1994; Labov, 1972a; Winford, 1983), and verbal -s (Clarke, 1997; Cukor-Avila, 1997; Montgomery and Fuller, 1996; Montgomery et al., 1993; Myhill and Harris, 1986; Schneider, 1983).

- (1) That's the only one **that** I got learning from. (ANSE/038/150)<sup>1</sup>
- (2) Now that's two thing **Ø** I done told you. (ANSE/030/57t)
- (3) She want to do things **what** her age don't give to do, you-know.  
(SE/003/288)

In this thesis, I replicate Tottie and Rey's (1997) analysis of relativization in the Ex-Slave Recordings (ESR, Bailey et al., 1991) on two other varieties of Early AAE: African Nova Scotian English (ANSE, Poplack and Tagliamonte, 1991a) and Samaná English (SE, Poplack and Sankoff, 1987).<sup>2</sup> This exercise revealed that the original analysis (which will be discussed briefly in Section 4.1) is marred by two methodological shortcomings: interaction

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<sup>1</sup> Examples are identified by corpus (ANSE: African Nova Scotian English (Poplack & Tagliamonte, 1991a); SE: Samaná English (Poplack & Sankoff, 1987); ESR: Ex-slave Recordings (Bailey, Maynor & Cukor-Avila, 1991)), speaker number, and transcript line number of utterance.

<sup>2</sup> There are at least three known diaspora varieties of African American English (African Nova Scotian English, Samaná English and Liberian Settler English) that originated in the United States. If the Ex-slave Recordings represent a prototype variety of AAE because it is data from speakers who never left the southern states in which they were born, then ANSE, SE and Liberian Settler English are the diaspora varieties — those varieties that were dispersed from the United States.

(see Section 4.1.3) between factor groups which raises the question of whether they represent independent hypotheses about the linguistic constraints on relativization, and the inclusion of both relatives in subject function and object function. To correct this problem, I carry out a second analysis (detailed in Section 4.2) yielding an improved fit between the analysis and the facts. This examination of the system of relativization, particularly zero relatives, in Early AAE, contributes both to the debate about the origins of AAVE and, more generally, to the understanding of the system of relativization in English.

### *1.1. The origins of AAVE*

The origins controversy, which can be characterized as the oldest (and as yet still unresolved) debate in contemporary sociolinguistics (Bailey and Maynor, 1989; Butters, 1989; Labov, 1982; Poplack and Tagliamonte, 1991a; Rickford, 1977; Winford, 1997, 1998), has arisen from various attempts to explain certain structural differences between AAVE and other varieties of English. In particular, these differences can be attributed to one of the following sources: 1) underlying grammatical structures which derive either from the original languages spoken by the African slaves or from an earlier wide spread plantation creole (the *creole origins hypothesis*); or 2) variable non-standard features acquired from the English varieties to which they were originally exposed (the *English origins hypothesis*); or 3) to some combination of the two.

The *creole origins hypothesis* holds that contemporary AAVE is a distinct language variety whose underlying grammar is distinct from Standard English (StdE) and derives from an earlier stage in its history when it was a creole. This hypothesis developed from studies suggesting similarities between English-based creoles (EBCs) (Jamaican Creole and Gullah, for example) and contemporary AAVE (Bailey, 1965 1966; Dillard, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975; Stewart, 1966, 1967, 1968; Turner, 1949). It assumes that African slaves with varying first languages working on plantations in the American South developed a pidgin English in order to

communicate with each other which subsequently creolized when the children of slaves began speaking it as their mother tongue. After the dissolution of the plantation system, and increased educational opportunities for African Americans in the 19th century, this language would have begun to decreolize, becoming more like the English of the whites with whom the African Americans came into contact. Despite the process of decreolization, there remain distinct features characteristic of creoles which have been the target of much linguistic attention for over three decades.

In contrast, the *English origins hypothesis* holds that contemporary AAVE and StDE share the same underlying grammar, with only superficial differences. This idea was first promulgated by dialectologists (Krapp, 1924; Kurath, 1949) who claimed that African American English was the same as early varieties of (white) vernacular English spoken in the United States. This hypothesis assumes that African slaves acquired dialectal varieties of English and that within a few generations the underlying grammar of the language spoken by African Americans was the same as that of the English spoken by those whites most closely in contact with them. These whites included illiterate or semi-illiterate overseers from various locations in the British Isles (Eliason, 1956). For proponents of the *English origins hypothesis* AAVE therefore resembles an earlier version of English.

Some scholars have argued that neither the *creole origins hypothesis* nor the *English origins hypothesis* can adequately account for the linguistic facts of AAVE and instead argue for a combination of the two (Mufwene, 1996, 1997; Winford, 1997) or for some other process, such as imperfect second language acquisition (Winford, 1998).

The variationist method (described in Section 3.2) adopted in this thesis can help address these issues. Firstly, what is important for my purposes is a crosslinguistic comparison of the patterning of relative markers in the speakers' vernacular English. Many of the features of the vernacular discussed as support for any one of the hypotheses, discussed here, regarding the origins debate can be found in all the varieties discussed in this thesis. For example, zero relatives (as we will see in Section 2) are found in AAVE, EBCs, both historical

and contemporary varieties of English, and Early AAE. Thus, we cannot claim that Early AAE stems from either a creole or a historical variety of English on the basis of the mere existence of zero relatives. Rather, we must make a systematic comparison of the constraints on zero relative across all varieties. If the detailed conditioning of the variability is parallel to that reported or attested for earlier, non-standard or regional varieties of English, we conclude that the variability was inherited from English. If, on the other hand, the conditioning of the variability is consistent with that reported or attested for creoles, then we conclude that the variability stems from its existence as a prior creole.

Although relativization may be expressed by either *that*, *what*, *which*, *who*, or zero, this thesis (following Tottie and Rey, 1997) will focus only on zero relatives. I compare the use of zero relatives in Early AAE with what is known of zero relatives in EBCs on the one hand, and throughout the history of English and in contemporary varieties of English on the other. This will allow me to assess whether the observed patterns of zero relatives most closely resemble EBCs or dialects of English.

This comparison is made difficult by the fact that there is a great deal of variation among forms (*that*, *what*, *which*, *who*, and zero) in the system of relativization in English. Despite the apparent randomness of this variability, many studies (Guy and Bayley, 1995; Olofsson, 1981; Quirk, 1957; Tottie, 1995) have demonstrated that the choice of relative marker<sup>3</sup> is indeed constrained by a variety of factors. Although there are many studies on StdE and non-standard English (non-StdE), to date, there is only one that specifically investigates relativization in at least one variety of Early AAE (Tottie and Rey, 1997) and it is this one I replicate here.

In this thesis, I contribute to the literature on relativization by determining the constraints that condition the choice of relative in three diaspora varieties of Early AAE and whether these varieties (ANSE, SE, ESR) behave in parallel fashion with regard to relative marking, as has been found for other phenomena as described above. The results of my study

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<sup>3</sup> The term relative marker is used to indicate that not only relative pronouns are included.

indicate that the three varieties share a grammar of relativization. This adds to the accumulating evidence (Poplack, forthcoming; Poplack and Tagliamonte, forthcoming) confirming that we are justified in referring to the three varieties as Early AAE. Moreover, that grammar of relativization is similar, in many respects, to what is known about relativization in English. On the other hand, it is not consistent with the little we know of relativization strategies in EBCs. Thus, my conclusion is that zero relativization in Early AAE has its origins in English.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Historical data

#### 2.1.1. Zero relative marker in older varieties of white English

Many studies confirm that although overt relatives were by far the most frequent, zero relativization has existed since the very earliest attestation of English (cf. Mitchell, 1985: vol. 2, 186 ff.; and Traugott, 1992: f). In Old English (OE), zero relatives in subject function were the norm, but zero relatives also occurred in object function, as examples (4) and (5) demonstrate:

- (4) se faeder hyre sealde ane þeowene, Ø Bala hatte (Mitchell, 1985: vol. 2, 186)  
'and her father gave her a (maid)servant, (*who*) was called Bala'
- (5) buton anre hide Ø ic gean into þære cyrcean þam preoste þe þar gode þeowaþ (Mitchell, 1985: vol. 2, 188)  
'except for one hide (*that*) I give to the church, to the priest who serves God there'

In Middle English (ME), zero relatives in subject function were still the predominant type, but zero relatives in object function were becoming more frequent (cf. Fischer, 1992: 306 ff.). Illustrative examples from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* are (6) and (7).

- (6) Withinne our yeerd, wheer as I saugh a beest  
 Ø Was lyk an hound...  
 'in our yard, where I saw a beast (*that*) was like a dog...'  
 (Chaucer, *Nun's Priest's Tale*, c. 1400: line 4089)
- (7) Greet was the wo Ø the knyght hadde in this thought...  
 'Great was the woe Ø the knight had in his mind...'  
 (Chaucer, *Wife of Bath's Tale*, c. 1400: line 1083)

In Early Modern English (Early ModE), zero relativization increased overall, mostly in object relatives and relativizers functioning as prepositional complements, while zero relatives in subject function fell into disuse in StdE (Dekeyser, 1984: 65). That they survived in the spoken language in the Early ModE period is clear from plays, as illustrated in (8) and (9):

- (8) 'I have a neece Ø is a merchants wife' (Ben Jonson, *Every Man out of His Humour*, A.D. 1600: I, II)
- (9) 'I bring him news Ø will raise his drooping spirits' (Dryden, *All for Love*, A.D. 1678: I, 113)

Very few quantitative studies consider the use of zero relative in any detail. Rydén (1966) studies Early 17th century English, Rissanen (1981) looks at 17th century American English texts, Romaine (1982) studies Middle Scots, and Dekeyser (1986) studies "contact clauses" in ME to Early ModE.

Table 1 illustrates that zero relatives in subject function were more frequent than zero relatives in non-subject function up until around the 16th century, after which they declined in frequency.

**Table 1: Zero relatives in subject function (or subject contact clauses) versus zero relatives in non-subject function (or non-subject contact clauses) (Information extracted from Dekeyser, 1986: 110)**

		Zero relatives in subject function	Zero relatives in non-subject function
Roberts	ME	N/A <sup>4</sup>	1/3 of data
Caldwell	Scots 1375-1500	N/A	1/3 of data
Rydén	16th c	33%	66%
Dekeyser	17th c	25%	N/A

Dekeyser (1986: 110) observes that the Late ME period saw the real emergence of cleft and existential zero relatives in subject function, although *there/it is* zero relatives in subject function first appeared around the late 14th to early 15th century (Erdmann, 1980; Visser, 1970). In Rydén's (1966) 16th century data, *there is* accounts for 87.5% (118/136) of all the zero relatives in subject function with the antecedent most usually being a (pro)noun. In zero relatives in object functions, Rydén notes that the relative clause often has a personal pronoun in subject position, and that it is rare with non-personal antecedents (Rydén, 1966: 271). Zero relatives in object function with a non-personal noun antecedent are the most frequent type of zero relative in his data (Rydén, 1966: 272). Dekeyser notes that of the two constraints on zero relatives in subject function in present-day English, one is its tendency to occur with either a focusing or an existential sentence. The other constraint is its confinement to "very colloquial and/or slightly sub-standard varieties of English" (Dekeyser, 1986: 111).

Table 2 from Rissanen (1984: 427), shows that, although present in all types of written documents from the 17th century, zero relatives were the most common form in personal letters. He observes that there are only 5 instances of zero relatives in subject function, but that the total number of zero relatives is 19% of all restrictive relative clauses in his data. Rissanen (1984) notes that zero relative is found with a pronominal subject and a noun antecedent.

<sup>4</sup> The figure was not given in Dekeyser's paper, but I make the assumption that it is 2/3 of data for zero relatives in subject function in ME and Scots and 75% for zero relatives in non-subject function in the 17th century data.

Table 2. Distribution of [restrictive] relative pronouns in late 17th century texts (from Rissanen, 1984: 427)

	<i>that</i>		<i>which</i>		<i>who</i>		zero		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
CM, JH, MR <sup>a</sup>	45	72	6	10	8	13	3	5	62	100
Letters, formal	22	54	3	7	4	10	12	29	41	100
Letters, personal	15	31	9	19	1	2	23	48	48	100
Appeals	10	38	8	31	-	-	8	31	26	100
Depositions	20	62	6	19	-	-	6	19	32	100
Total	112	54	32	15	13	6	52	25	209	100

<sup>a</sup>Cotton Mather, John Hale, Mary Rowlandson

Zero relative markers constitute 12% of Romaine's (1982: 140) Middle Scots data for restrictive relative clauses. Zero occurs more often with inanimate antecedents than animate (20% vs. 5%), and with antecedents that are superlatives over indefinites, determiners and definite quantifiers in Middle Scots. Of the syntactic positions that Romaine studied, zero appears most frequently with indirect objects (although there is only one token of this type) and direct objects.

Zero has also attracted the attention of prescriptivists. According to Jespersen (1965: Section 7.1.6, p. 136), Samuel Johnson called zero relatives "a colloquial barbarism", although examples of this form can be found in his own letters. Early grammarians, among them Bishop Lowth, noted the existence of zero relativization: "The Relative is often understood, or omitted: as, 'The man I love,' that is, 'whom I love'." Lowth does not mention zero relatives in subject function but criticizes zero relatives in object function, saying: "The construction is hazardous, and hardly justifiable, even in Poetry" (Lowth, 1762/1775: 175, fn. 2). However, in this area, prescriptive judgments had no effect, as zero relatives in object function continued to increase in the standard language as well as in non-standard varieties, and zero relatives in subject function, although less frequent, are still found in many varieties. The question of whether zero relatives in subject function declined in the standard language because of the ambiguity of structures such as *The girl knew the man became sick*, as Bever and

Langendoen (1971) argue, remains controversial. Romaine (1982: 78) argues that this ambiguity is only a problem in the written language and that "[i]n the spoken language tonic placement would probably disambiguate most doubtful cases." The difficulty of using them in writing may well have played a part in their disappearance.

### 2.1.2. Zero relative marker in the Ex-slave Narratives

Schneider's (1989: 213) study of relativization in 786 relative clauses from the Ex-slave narratives represents the only other study of an earlier form of AAVE. It reveals the use of following relative markers: *wh*-forms, *that*, zero (in both subject and non-subject function), *what*, and personal or possessive pronouns. The most frequent relative markers in the Ex-slave Narratives are *that*, *what* and zero, all of which also occurred in the dialects of white southerners in the ante-bellum period. Schneider's results presented in Table 3 parallel results that have been found in other varieties of English (see Section 3.3.3).

**Table 3: Frequency of relative pronoun forms (from Schneider, 1989: 214, 216)**

<b>Category</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>+ human</b>	<b>- human</b>
wh-pronouns	45	5.7	33 (73.3%)	12 (26.7%)
that	207	<b>26.3</b>	90 (43.5%)	117 (56.6%)
zero [-subject]	286	<b>36.4</b>	40 (14.0%)	246 (86%)
what	218	<b>27.7</b>	117 (53.7%)	101 (46.3%)
zero [+subject]	17	2.2	15 (88.2%)	2 (11.8%)
pers., poss. pr.	13	1.7	13 (100%)	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>786</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>308 (39.2%)</b>	<b>478 (60.8%)</b>

## 2.2. Contemporary Varieties of English

### 2.2.1. Zero relative marker in contemporary white English

Zero relatives are among the most frequent relative markers in contemporary English. In object function they are quite common in StdE, but zero relatives in subject function are also attested in most present-day non-standard and regional dialects of English (Beal, 1993; Cheshire, 1982; Edwards, 1993; Harris, 1993; Hughes and Trudgill, 1979; Ihalainen, 1980; Macaulay, 1991; Miller, 1993; Wolfram and Christian, 1976). Dialect maps of England show that in data elicited in the frame *I know a man ... will do it for you*, the overall majority of respondents all over England supplied a zero relative in subject function in preference to all other alternatives (cf. Orton et al., 1978: Map S5; and the discussion in Poussa, 1985: 99ff). Zero relatives in subject function were especially frequent in the South-West and the North-East of England, but were also recorded in most other areas. Studies of specific dialects give support for this usage in different dialects. Thus, for instance, van den Eynden (1993) records a total of 129/480 (27%) zero relatives in her Dorset corpus. Of these, 29% have subject function, and of all subjects, 14% are zero forms. Macaulay (1991) observes an interesting social class difference in the use of zero relative in subject function in the dialect of Ayr in Scotland. In his middle class sample, 5/180 (<3%) of all restrictive relative clauses made use of zero relative in subject function, but in the lower class sample, as many as 53/221 (24%) did. Similarly, Hackenberg's data (1972) show that lower class speakers of Appalachian English had more zero relatives in subject function (35% with both personal and non-personal antecedents) than higher class speakers, who had 11–13% respectively (see Ball, 1996: 242).

### 2.2.2. Zero relative marker in contemporary AAVE

Almost no work has been done on relativization in contemporary AAVE. Dillard (1972), one of the few who mentions relativization in AAVE, describes the zero relative markers in subject function in his example below, as “the typical zero (‘understood’) relative pronoun of Black English and related varieties” (Dillard, 1972: 59).

- (10) Ray sister Ø seven year old Ø go to school at Adams she got a new doll baby.

Dillard (1972: 60) reports that there are zero relatives in both object and subject function in AAVE (see (11) and (12) below for actual examples of relatives in subject function). Dillard (1972: 68) states that “the relative clause patterns [in Black English] are also a great deal different [from StdE].” He notes that the construction of the type in the examples below is also found in Jamaican Creole and other African American dialects although he fails to mention that this construction is also found in a number of non-standard varieties of English.

- (11) That’s the chick Ø I keep tellin’ you about Ø got all that money.<sup>5</sup>

(Dillard, 1972: 60)

- (12) He got a gun Ø sound like a bee. (Dillard, 1972: 68)

Dillard observes that if there is an overt relative pronoun in Black English it is *what*, noting that it too is found in a creole (Gullah), but he fails to mention that it is found (as we shall see in Section 2.4) in many non-standard varieties of English.

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<sup>5</sup> This example was overheard by Dillard in Greenwich Village, New York, while example (12) is from a Washington, D.C. informant.

### 2.2.3. Zero relative marker in English-based creoles

Based on “the fact that in a number of creoles [Guyanese Creole, Seychelles Creole, some Portuguese creoles] there still exist conservative dialects or restricted sentence types in which relative pronouns are deletable in subject position — or rather, more probably, were never inserted,” Bickerton (1981: 63) speculates that creoles may have been “born without surface relativizers” and that speakers subsequently introduced surface relativizers as a means of avoiding ambiguity. (This development would then parallel that sketched for Standard English by Bever and Langendoen (1971) as regards zero relatives in subject function.)

According to Aitchison (1992: 305), who holds a position on zero relativization similar to Bickerton’s, “the ‘basic’ relative clause structures [for Tok Pisin] are the zero-marked type on the one hand, and those marked by pronouns or *we* on the other. These turn out to be variants of one another with the *we*-type being the newest and least common.” Romaine (1992) also espouses this viewpoint in her study of Tok Pisin. Bruyn (1995) reports that zero relative markers have occurred in Sranan since the 18th century.

However, zero relatives are reported to exist in only six of the thirty-three EBCs surveyed by Hancock (1987) (viz. Bahamian, Belizean, Guyanese, Hawaiian Creole, Liberian English and Providencian), while the other twenty-six are said to have only overt relativizers. In addition, three others of these thirty-three EBCs are reported to have zero relative marker: Saramaccan, Sranan and Jamaican. Some authors acknowledge variability: Bruyn (1995: 153) reports that Sranan has the “option” of forming relative clauses by zero marking suggesting the possibility of variation with an overt marker and Byrne (1988: 349) observes that the Saramaccan overt relativizers, *dí* and *dée*, alternate with zero. Christie (1996a; 1996b) reports variability of an overt relative marker with zero for Jamaican English. She finds zero relative is the preferred marker: 1) when the antecedent is an indefinite noun complement and 2) in relatives in subject function in existential sentences, and in sentences with the equivalent of *have* as the main verb or a cognitive verb.

Bickerton (1981: 14) reports that among speakers of Hawaiian Pidgin English who arrived before 1920, relative clauses are almost non-existent and that “on the rare occasion when such features do appear, they often do so in forms modeled directly on the speaker’s native language.” Bickerton also reports that for Hawaiian Creole English speakers, relative clauses are common and yet different from English relative clauses in that “they contain no surface marker of relativization even where English demands one, i.e., in sentences where the syntactic function of the relative marker in the relative clause is subject, and either subject (13) or object (14) (from Bickerton, 1981: 35) of the matrix clause. Peet (1974) observes that zero relatives in subject function are grammatical for some Hawaiian English speakers in the following environments: 1) where the antecedent is subject in the matrix clause, 2) where the antecedent is object in the matrix clause, and 3) where the antecedent is in a cleft or existential sentence. He (1974: 255) reports that in casual recordings overt relative markers in subject position represent only 60% of the cases in the third environment and 38% in all three environments together. This is true for StdE as well, but considering there are a limited number of syntactic categories which can be relativized, the main ones being subject and object, this fact is not elucidatory.

(13) da gai Ø gon lei da vainil fo mi bin kwot mi prais

'The guy WHO is going to lay the vinyl for me had quoted me a price'

(14) yu si di ailan Ø get koknat

'You see the island THAT has coconut palms on it'

Bickerton (1981: 62) further reports that Guyanese Creole can have a zero relative in subject function when the antecedent is object in the main clause and the main verb of the sentence is the equivalent of *have* or *be*. Come (1977: 38) also reports zero relative in subject function for a main clause antecedent that is object for Seychelles Creole.

Holm et al. (1994: 71) note, contrary to Bickerton (1981), that in relatives in subject function, the structure is “the same in most of the Atlantic creoles as it is in their superstrate languages: the relativized NP is replaced by a relative pronoun and the entire clause follows the NP to which it refers.” This is also true for relatives in object function: “the relativized NP is replaced by a relative pronoun and fronted to the beginning of the clauses, which follows the NP to which it refers” (Holm, 1994: 75). They note that, for Tok Pisin, the relative marker is always optional. In Jamaican, and Sranan, but not Krio, zero relatives in subject function are permitted (Holm, 1994: 82-83). Zero, in both object and subject function, is reported by Mufwene (1986) for Gullah. Nigerian Pidgin English and Kanuri do not have a zero relative marker (Mufwene, 1986).

What emerges from this brief review is that there is no single creole relativization strategy distinct from English. It would be useful to have a comprehensive view of relativization strategies in EBCs, but I have as yet been unable to locate any fully accountable quantitative studies. A good qualitative survey is provided by Mufwene (1986), who gives an account of relativization in Gullah, listing the variants *wat*, *wuh*, *weh*, *who* and zero as relatives in subject function (plus *fuh* in non-finite constructions), and the same variants, except *wuh*, as object relatives. (For other NP positions, or functions of the relativizer, see further Mufwene, 1986: 4f.)

### 2.3. *A brief overview of what as a relative marker*

*What* has also existed as a relative marker for several centuries. Curme (1977: Vol. II, 215) observes that the use of *what* coincides with a general or indefinite antecedent and states that “[t]his employment of indefinite *what* as a relative, pointing backward to an antecedent, though not widespread or common, is old, for it is found in late OE [...] In popular speech, however, *what* may point back to a definite antecedent, even to one representing a person or persons” as in the examples below:

- (15) I can't see that the man *what's* willing to remain poor all his life has any pride at all But, Lord! (George Moore, *Esther Waters*, Ch. VI)
- (16) This is them two sisters *what* tied themselves together with a handkercher (Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, c. 1812-1870: Book I, Ch. III)
- (17) 'Til she had herd all *what* the frere sayde' (Chaucer, *The Somnours Tale*, c. 1400: 493)
- (18) Every lover thoughte, That all was well *what* so he seyde and wroughte (Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, c. 1400: III, 1799)
- (19) anything *what* thou wilt (Ben Jonson, *Every Man out of His Humour*, A.D. 1600: V, III)
- (20) That *what* we falsely call a religious cry is easily raised by men who have no religion (Dickens, c. 1812-1870, *Barnaby Rudge*, Preface)

In present-day English, *what* as a relative marker meaning 'who, which, that' in headed relative constructions is stigmatized as "now *dial.* or *vulgar*" by the OED (2nd ed., s.v. C I 7a). However, it is documented in a large number of non-standard British dialects. The dialect survey maps (Orton et al., 1978; and Viereck and Ramisch, 1991) do not do justice to the widespread use of *what* as a relativizer. It is well documented in a large number of specialized dialect studies, such as Ihalainen (1980), and van den Eynden (1993), though *what* is a minor variant. Thus, for instance, the rural Dorset dialect described by van den Eynden (1993) has 27% zero, 39% *that* and 7% *what* (n=480). *What* also occurs in the English spoken by Reading teenagers (Cheshire, 1982) and in present-day Yorkshire English (Tagliamonte, personal communication). In American white non-standard dialects, its occurrence is reported by Wolfram and Christian (1976: 121) in Appalachian English, although it is not reported to be

a frequent variant either in that variety or in other white non-standard dialects. (Cf. Ball, 1996: 241 and 253, fn 11 and 12).

However, there are also careful dialect studies that report *what* to be a major variant in the relative marker paradigm in the Eastern parts of England. Poussa (1993) shows, on the basis of extensive elicited material, that *what* is the preferred relative marker in Norfolk, and she cites similar findings by Ojanen (1982) for Cambridgeshire. Kekäläinen (1985) also demonstrates that in Suffolk, *what* is the most frequently used relative marker. Extremely interesting in this context is also Forby (1830/1970). Forby reports the frequent use of *what* as a relative pronoun equivalent to *who* and *which*. He (1830/1970: 138) states: "*What* is very often used for the relatives *who* or *which*. Ex. 'The woman *what* came yesterday.' 'The pigs *what* I bought last Tuesday.'"<sup>6</sup> As it is difficult to find historical data on non-standard and dialectal forms that have never been part of the standard language, this is particularly valuable evidence for the availability of *what* in varieties of English that may have served as input to Early AAE<sup>7</sup>.

As is clear from this and the previous section, both *what* and zero relative markers in subject function are well-established variants in the relative marker paradigm in non-standard British and American dialects.

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<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, Forby (1830/1970) also mentions left dislocation as characteristic of Norfolk and Suffolk dialects. Both of these features, the use of *what* and left dislocation, are also typical of AAVE.

<sup>7</sup> Poussa postulates a different origin of *what* in East Anglia, resulting from *that* by way of a bilabial fricative. Whether this is correct or not is immaterial for the argument of this thesis.

### **3. Data and Method**

#### **3.1. Data**

##### **3.1.1. The communities**

###### **3.1.1.1. Samaná**

The Samaná community, an enclave of native speakers of English in a Spanish-speaking country, comprises the descendants of former slaves who immigrated to the Dominican Republic from the United States circa 1824. Although it is difficult to reconstruct the precise origins of their ancestors, there is reason to believe that they represented the major population elements whose speech gave rise to contemporary AAVE (Poplack and Sankoff, 1987). The Samaná informants used English in basically every area within their community and Samaná English (SE) seems not to have been influenced by Spanish, the *patois* or Haitian Creole of the Dominican Republic, or by StdE (Poplack and Sankoff, 1987). This is important because the language should be representative of the English spoken when the informants' ancestors first settled in the Dominican Republic (i.e. it did not change after settlement due to contact with Spanish). (For a more detailed description of the community, see Poplack and Sankoff, 1987.)

### 3.1.1.2. *North Preston*

North Preston, located just outside of Halifax-Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, was settled in 1815 by Refugee Slaves from the United States, mainly unskilled field workers<sup>8</sup>. Their origins can be traced to Maryland, Virginia, Louisiana and Georgia. They have lived their lives very separate from the whites in the area, largely due to social and psychological isolation from the surrounding populations. (For a more detailed description of the community, see Poplack and Tagliamonte, 1991a.)

### 3.1.1.3. *The Ex-slave Recordings*

Strictly speaking, the *Ex-slave Recordings* is not a community. It is rather a collection of a few hours of mechanically recorded interviews with American ex-slaves collected in the 1930s and 40s and stored in the Library of Congress. The informants, with the exception of Charlie Smith, who immigrated from Liberia, were all born and raised in the United States. The ESR is the only collection of tape-recorded interviews with black speakers born in the 1800s who never left the states in which they were born<sup>9</sup> and, as such, may be viewed as a prototype variety of Early AAE. (For a more detailed description, see Bailey et al., 1991.)

### 3.1.2. *The data*

The data used in this study were extracted from the African Nova Scotian English Corpus (ANSE, Poplack and Tagliamonte, 1991a) and the Samaná English Corpus (SE,

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<sup>8</sup> This was actually the third group of freed African Americans to immigrate to the area, although they were the only group to settle there. There were 2 groups prior to this one that relocated elsewhere. In 1784 a group of White and Black Loyalists settled in this area, but by 1792, most of the Black Loyalists moved on to Sierra Leone. A second group, Jamaican Maroons, arrived in 1796, but they too relocated to Sierra Leone within a few years. See Poplack and Tagliamonte (1991) for further details.

<sup>9</sup> With the exception of Fountain Hughes who was born in Virginia and at the time of the recording, at least, lived in Maryland.

Poplack and Sankoff, 1987), both housed at the Sociolinguistics Laboratory at the University of Ottawa. As mentioned previously, these corpora consist of interviews with descendants of former slaves and other African Americans who were input settlers to remote areas of Nova Scotia and the Dominican Republic in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Because these speakers and their forebears have lived in enclave situations since the original settlement of these locations<sup>10</sup>, their speech quite faithfully reflects the state of the English language at the time their ancestors were acquiring it (Poplack and Sankoff, 1987; Poplack and Tagliamonte, 1991a). Moreover they have developed independently of both modern AAVE and any creole influence<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, the analysis of the speech of these communities provides us with an opportunity to examine varieties that most likely gave rise to contemporary AAVE.

The ANSE and SE interviews were carried out in an effort to obtain the vernacular<sup>12</sup> of the informants. This is important for two main reasons. Firstly, it is the speech to which minimum attention is paid and thus provides the most systematic data for analysis. Secondly, because it is the most systematic form of speech, as opposed to more formal styles of speech to which much more attention is paid, it is also that which demonstrates *regular* rules for the variation inherent in it.

The need to get a large amount of data that is clearly audible, coupled with the need for vernacular data results in what is known as the “observer’s paradox”. The observer’s paradox, as described by Labov (1972b), is that: “the aim of linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed; yet we can only obtain these data by systematic observation.” Systematic observation or an interview situation, then, is defined as a formal context for a speaker, therefore more attention is paid to speech. To overcome this problem in the best possible way, interviews must be conducted

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<sup>10</sup> In the case of both ANSE and SE, the communities were isolated from the majority population not only geographically but also socially.

<sup>11</sup> Most particularly in the case of ANSE as the Canadian environment featured no creole influence. In the case of Samaná, Poplack and Sankoff (1987) argue that the influence of *patois* (the term used by the Samanese for Haitian Creole) extended only as far as a few lexical items.

<sup>12</sup> The vernacular is considered to be the speech acquired prior to adolescence (Labov, 1984).

such that the most vernacular speech possible is obtained. This is done through participant observation<sup>13</sup> (Gumperz, 1964; Labov, 1984) using the “sociolinguistic interview” outlined in Labov (1984).

The ANSE interviews were conducted by a central community member trained in the technique of the sociolinguistic interview (Labov, 1984). The SE interviews were done by interviewers highly trained in the technique of the sociolinguistic interview and who had established a high degree of rapport with community members through their participation in local activities, assistance with errands, continued contact with the informants, as well as the assistance of a core community member and his daughter in a number of interviews (Poplack and Sankoff, 1987). The ESR interviews, on the other hand, were collected as part of what is known as the Federal Writers’ Project and while some of the interviewers were expert at their job, several others were not. Most were recorded between 1935 and 1944, with the exception of Cilia Black and Charlie Smith, whose recordings took place in 1974. For all three communities, ANSE, SE, and ESR, the interviews contained stories of personal experience, childhood experiences and community.

### *3.1.3. The informants*

For this study, I have selected 12 of 38 speakers of ANSE from North Preston and 12 of 21 speakers of Samaná English. Their characteristics are detailed in Tables 4 and 5, respectively. I have included information on the speakers from the Ex-slave Recordings in Table 6 for comparison purposes and because, although the data for ESR were extracted by Tottie and Rey (1997), as part of my thesis, I reanalyzed the data for the analysis detailed in Section 4.2.

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<sup>13</sup> Participant observation is just that, becoming a participant in conversation as opposed to being “the interviewer.”

I selected the 12 most vernacular interviews (p.c. Sali Tagliamonte and James Walker) from both ANSE and SE. I selected 12 to match the 11 speakers constituting the ESR sample and also because the interviews provided sufficient data for analysis.

The SE speakers included in this thesis are aged between 58 and 90, as is true of the whole SE sample. Two thirds have some schooling and one third are additionally affiliated with the church which has been shown (Poplack and Tagliamonte, 1989) to be explanatory of some of the linguistic variation in the community. All of them were born and raised in Samaná.

Table 4: Characteristics of Samaná English speakers examined in this thesis

Speaker #	Sex	Age	Schooling	Church Affiliation
001	M	78	no	no
002	F	79	yes	no
003	F	83	yes	yes
004	M	88	no	no
005	F	58	no	no
008	F	90	no	no
014	F	82	yes	no
015	F	72	yes	no
016	M	79	yes	yes
017	F	79	yes	no
018	F	79	yes	yes
019	M	71	yes	yes

The ANSE speakers are slightly younger, ranging in age from 46 to 87. Most of them have had at least a few years of schooling, while others have as many as eight or nine years of school. Most of them have worked or are working in jobs such as house cleaner or odd jobs person, while two of them work as teachers. All of them were born and raised in North Preston.

Table 5: Characteristics of African Nova Scotian English (North Preston) speakers examined in this thesis

Speaker #	Sex	Age	Years of school	Present Job
002	F	46	6	unemployed (house cleaner)
009	F	72	2	housework, teacher
012	F	59	9	housewife
014	F	70	2	house cleaner
015	F	65	8	teacher
016	F	71-72	6	retired (nurse's aide)
030	M	84-87	6	retired (odd jobs, railroad)
031	M	74-79	3-4	unknown
032	M	74-87	9	unknown
033	M	84	4	unknown
038	M	53	3	farmer
039	M	62	unknown	unknown

The ESR group comprises speakers aged between 79 and 130<sup>14</sup>. About 40% worked as field hands, and four others, as house servants. The ESR speakers were born in the southern states, with the exception of Charlie Smith who was born in Liberia.

Table 6: Characteristics of Ex-slave speakers examined in this thesis

Name	Speaker #	Sex	Birth Date	Age at time of interview	Place of Origin	Occupation as Slave
Bob Ledbetter	001	M	1861	79	Louisiana	field hand?
Wallace Quarterman	002	M	1844	91	Georgia	house servant
Alice Gaston	003	F	1853	88	Alabama	unknown
Laura Smalley	004	F	unknown	unknown	Texas	field hand
Billy McCrea	005	M	unknown	unknown	Texas	field hand?
Joe McDonald	006	M	unknown	unknown	Alabama	house servant
Fountain Hughes	008	M	1848	96	Virginia	field hand
Harriet Smith	009	F	1851	90	Texas	field hand
Isom Mosely	010	M	1856	85	Alabama	house servant
Celia Black	011	F	1854	120	Texas	house servant
Charlie Smith	012	M	1844	130	Liberia	cowboy

<sup>14</sup> Dates of birth may not be entirely accurate as there are often no records.

Although the speakers, amount of data, and collection methods all differ from community to community, I compare the variability in relativization strategies in their speech, and in particular, the factors operating to constrain it.

### 3.2. Method

#### 3.2.1. The linguistic variable

The linguistic variable is basically alternative ways of saying "the same thing". This, of course, implies that there must be at least two variants. In order for a linguistic variable to be amenable to study, it must be both frequent and consistently distinguishable within its context(s) of occurrence. Relativization, although relatively infrequent<sup>15</sup> like most syntactic variables, is both robust and distinct enough to permit quantitative study.

#### 3.2.2. Variationist approach

The theoretical approach adopted in this thesis falls within the framework of sociolinguistic "variation theory" (e.g. Labov et al., 1968; Sankoff, 1982, 1988a, 1988b). Variability is an inherent part of language; it is rule governed and can therefore be explained using linguistic and extra-linguistic facts. The variationist method requires large volumes of vernacular speech data. The use of the most vernacular speech possible is essential because it not only includes inherent variability, but "the rules governing that variation appear to be more regular than those operating in more formal 'super-posed' styles that are acquired later in life"

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<sup>15</sup> Relative markers are a fairly infrequent phenomenon: Based on Bailey et al (1991), I calculate that the ESR consist of about 37,000 words. The frequency of relatives here would be 116/37,000 or three per one thousand words. The interviews with the 12 ANSE speakers included in this study consist of a total of approximately 239,000 words; the frequency here is 245/239,000 or one per thousand words. The interviews with the 12 SE speakers consist of a total of approximately 151,000 words, yielding a frequency of 406/151,000 or 2.5 per thousand words.

(Labov, 1984: 29). Under the assumption that the choices the speaker makes are not free, but rather conditioned by linguistic or extra-linguistic factors, the variationist framework allows the researcher to pinpoint the conditions under which one variant is chosen over another.

I use this framework to examine speakers' choice of variant of relative marker (i.e. *that*, *what*, *which*, *who*, *whom*, and zero). I do this by testing the contribution of a number of explanatory variables or "factors" to this choice. I consider only factors pertaining to the linguistic environment in which the relative markers occur because the social background of the informants is relatively similar in terms of age, socioeconomic standing and level of education. This, coupled with the relative sparseness of the data (in quantitative terms, see Section 3.4) and few speakers means that no strong conclusions can be drawn in terms of extra-linguistic factors. The data are, however, sufficient to study internal or linguistic constraints on the choice of relative marker which constitutes the focus of this thesis.

### 3.2.3. Hypothesis

Since zero relatives are attested in both EBCs and throughout the history of English, the mere existence of this form in Early AAE can tell us nothing about its origins. For this we must appeal to the hierarchy of constraints conditioning its occurrence, as I do in Section 4. If it is parallel to those attested for English while at the same time differing from those cited for EBCs, then we may conclude that these forms originated from English.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The obverse of this hypothesis (i.e. if the constraints are parallel to those attested for EBCs, while at the same time differing from those cited for English, then we may conclude that these forms originated in a prior wide-spread plantation creole) cannot be tested at present since no information is available on the constraints conditioning variability in relatives in EBCs.

### 3.3. Coding

From the tape recorded interviews with the ANSE and SE informants, I extracted every unambiguous relative clause. For the purposes of this thesis, I consider only restrictive, non-adverbial relative clauses, henceforth referred to as “relative clauses”. I do this for two reasons: firstly, most of the variability occurs in this context and, secondly, this is the preferred site for zero, the focus of my thesis.

#### 3.3.1. Circumscribing the variable context

Relative clauses can basically be found following, either adjacent to or not adjacent to, an NP. Restrictive relative clauses restrict the referent of the antecedent. The relative clause in (21) confines the potential reference of ‘*the same thing*’; the relative clause provides the hearer with more information by which to identify ‘*the same thing*’. On the other hand, the relative clause in (22) only gives additional information as it is assumed that the hearer knows which house ‘*this house*’ refers to.

(21) And I wanted to do the same thing Ø she was doing.

(ANSE/002/15t)

(22) And there 's no room and I 'm still trying- like I still have to get this house, **which** I will not give up, because anything possible with God. (ANSE/002/216)

#### 3.3.2. Exclusions

Among the constructions not considered in the quantitative analyses presented in this study are non-restrictive relative clauses, where the antecedent was already a fully determined

NP Head, as in (23). Similarly, adverbial relative constructions, where the relativizer was *where*, *when*, or *why*, or an alternate of these relativizers were not considered because not only is there less variability in the choice of relative, but the antecedents are most often restricted to the words *time*, *the reason*, and *the place*.

- (23) Anderson **who** was then, you know, (inc) a old president they call  
Lilis he- that's where you-see Peter-van-- married his sister.  
(SE/001/50)

I excluded instances of “*whiz*-deletion”, such as (24) and (25), where both the relative marker and the auxiliary *be* are deleted. These constructions, although found in StdE, are not normally classified as relative clauses because the interests of grammarians have usually focused on overt markers, and because of the lack of variability in these constructions. *Whiz*-deletion also involves issues of aux-deletion (Van Herk, 1998) which involve considerations beyond the scope of this thesis.

- (24) And there's alot of people  $\emptyset$  [who are] gonna be hungry this winter.  
(ANSE/030/2620lt)
- (25) It's girls today  $\emptyset$  [that are] having babies at 12 years old, 13.  
(ANSE/016/500t)

There were many instances of ambiguity, such as (26) and (27) where the clause is ambiguous between a relative clause and a subordinate clause introduced by the complementizer *that*. For example, the utterance in (27) could be paraphrased as: “I don’t want no crow *who/that/* $\emptyset$  comes around and tells me ...” or “I don’t want no crow to come around and tell me ...”. I also excluded constructions that were ambiguous between restrictive and non-restrictive relativization.

- (26) Well, we had to do that because there wasn't nothing much to eat. I saw one time **that** we were so hungry, off the potato skins, all the pota-- all the potato skins off potato and we used to take them  
(ANSE/016/90)
- (27) I don't want no crow  $\emptyset$  come around telling me (incomprehensible)  
... (ANSE/039/1175c)

Utterances such as (28) were excluded because it is impossible to tell, even with more context, exactly what is meant, and in (29), hesitation makes it difficult to determine whether there is a relative clause.

- (28) Whatever was home **what** had anything drinking.  
(ANSE/030/1512)
- (29) And so different things [ $\emptyset$  relative marker or not?] do we- one has and you take that pee and you drinks that with- let it be whatever- some other medicine whatever it is according to the m-- according to whatever it is you know. (SE/002/863)

I also excluded non-headed relatives, such as (30), because, again, there is not as much variability.

- (30) That's **who** brought me up. (ANSE/016/893)
- (31) That's for cold, or anything  $\emptyset$  you have around your body.  
(ANSE/031/156t)

### 3.3.3. *Factor groups*

Once extracted, each and every relative clause was coded for the seven factor groups listed in (32) below.

#### (32) **FACTOR GROUPS**

##### **Factor Groups pertaining to the matrix clause:**

- Adjacency of the antecedent NP head and relative marker
- Premodification of the antecedent NP head
- Grammatical category of the antecedent NP head
- Syntactic function of the antecedent NP head in matrix clause
- Humanness of the antecedent NP head

##### **Factor groups pertaining to the relative clause:**

- Category membership of the subject of the relative clause
- Syntactic function of the relative marker in the relative clause

Previous work on relative constructions in English is extremely heterogeneous. Material, methods of data collection and classification, as well as explanatory factors chosen for study, show a rich and sometimes bewildering array of varieties and factors. Thus, to name but a few of them, Quirk (1957) studied educated spoken British English, Huddleston (1971) written scientific British English, Taglicht (1973) written British non-fiction, Olofsson (1981) written American English, fiction as well as non-fiction, Romaine (1982) Scots and Middle Scots, Guy and Bayley (1995) spoken and written American English, Tottie (1995) written British and American English, and Ball (1996) compared spoken British and American English (in addition to reanalyzing many other types of data). Olofsson (1981) looked only at relative constructions with non-personal (i.e. non-human) antecedents, and Ball (1996) at personal and

non-personal relative markers but only in subject function. Some writers included relative markers in adverbial function or in some adverbial functions (e.g. Olofsson, 1981; Quirk, 1957; Romaine, 1982), but others excluded them (e.g. Macaulay, 1991). Spoken material was either broadcast or surreptitiously recorded (Quirk, 1957), recorded with the knowledge of at least some of the participants (Guy and Bayley, 1995), or collected in sociolinguistic interviews (Macaulay, 1991). Most writers chose, as I do, to examine only restrictive relative clauses because this is where the majority of the variability occurs.

Among the variables examined for possible effects on the choice of relative marker are humanness of the antecedent (and thus of the referent of the relative marker as well), grammatical function of the relative marker in the relative clause, various properties of the antecedent such as definiteness, quantification, or superlative premodifiers, length of the relative clause, adjacency of antecedent and relative marker, position of relative clause (final or medial), and subject of the relative clause. Extralinguistic factors such as class or gender have also been included (Adamson, 1992; Cheshire, 1982; Macaulay, 1991; Tottie and Rey, 1997). Variable rule methodology was used by Adamson (1992), Guy and Bayley (1995), Tottie (1995) and Tottie and Rey (1997) to assess the contribution of these and other factors. For the present study, I coded the material for those factors that seemed most revealing based on earlier studies and for which the data were sufficient to permit investigation according to the methods described below. Each example was coded for the relative marker, speaker, and function of the relative marker, as well as those factor groups listed in (32).

### *3.3.3.1. Adjacency of the antecedent NP head and relative marker*

The adjacency of the relative to its antecedent has been accorded some attention by English grammars. Quirk et al. (1985) and Jespersen (1965) note that zero relatives must be adjacent to their antecedent, and this has been empirically confirmed for educated spoken British English (Quirk, 1957), standard American English (Guy and Bayley, 1995; Olofsson,

1981), early 16th century English (Rydén, 1966) and 17th century American English (Rissanen, 1984). The factors in this factor group are simply adjacent, as in (33), and non-adjacent, as in (34).

(33) I have a granddaughter  $\emptyset$  wrote to me from New York.

(SE/003/1162)

(34) They had a fella here  $\emptyset$  had a property. (SE/019/375)

### 3.3.3.2. *Premodification of the antecedent NP head*

The type of modification of the antecedent NP head has also been found to have an effect on the choice of relative. Premodification of the antecedent NP head is broken down into: premodified, as in (35), not premodified, as in (36), and not premodifiable, as in (37). Non-premodifiable antecedents include personal pronouns and words such as *everything* and *anybody* (Tottie and Rey, 1997: 234). There is a tendency for zero relative to occur when the antecedent is premodified (Olofsson, 1981; Tottie and Rey, 1997). Several studies have made claims regarding the tendency of superlatives to collocate with zero relatives (Tottie and Rey, 1997: 234), but this is a matter for future research.

(35) That the bad thing  $\emptyset$  I could ever do. (ANSE/032/280t)

(36) Then we went up on that barren here, because it was man  $\emptyset$  worked  
up here to- MacKeen mill up here a dollar. (ANSE/032/120c)

(37) This is something  $\emptyset$  I'm gonna say. (ANSE 038/216t)

### 3.3.3.3. *Grammatical category of the antecedent NP head*

The grammatical category of the antecedent NP head has been found to play an important role in the choice of relative marker in studies of written British and American English (Tottie, 1995), for written British scientific texts (Huddleston, 1971), for written American English (Olofsson, 1981), and for 17th century American texts (Rissanen, 1984). In two of these studies (Huddleston, 1971; Olofsson, 1981), definite NP heads tend to favor zero relative, while in others it has been shown that pronouns (Tottie, 1995; Tottie and Rey, 1997), or nouns (Rissanen, 1984) favor zero.

Christie (1996b) observes for Jamaican Creole English that zero relative can occur with indefinite NPs (when the indefinite NP represents a nominal complement and the relative functions as the subject of the relative clause — existentials most especially, according to Christie). An example from Christie (1996b: 5) is in (38). Christie (1996a: 10) cites Bailey (1966) as observing instances of zero relative in tokens which have a definite NP antecedent and 1) functions as the object in the relative clause (as in 39, from Christie, 1996a: 10), or 2) functions as the subject and is a non-definite nominal or a corresponding plural (as in 40, also from Christie, 1996a: 10). This observation, however, includes overlap of factor groups, most specifically, grammatical category of head (definite/indefinite), syntactic function of the antecedent in the matrix clause (nominal complement) and syntactic function of the relative marker in the relative clause (subject/object). Unfortunately, I cannot draw any conclusions regarding Jamaican Creole English as compared to what is found for Early AAE because it is impossible to tell if these factor groups exert an independent effect on the choice of relative or if they interact (in which case they cannot be separated at all) without a quantitative analysis of the data.

- (38) Dier woz a liedi Ø liv wid tuu children  
 ‘There was a lady (who) lived with two children.’  
 (Christie, 1996b: 5)
- (39) di uman (we) mi en si gaan a maakit  
 ‘the woman I saw has gone to the market.’  
 (Christie, 1996a: 10)
- (40) enibadi/dem smadi (we) nuo mi wi help yu  
 ‘anybody/those people who knows/know me will help you.’  
 (Christie, 1996a: 10)

The factors in this group include pronoun, as in (41), indefinite NP (both singular, as ‘a cold’ and plural, as ‘Jewish folks’), as in (42), definite NP, as in (43), noun, as in (44), numeral, as in (45), and proper noun, as in (46).

- (41) Ain't doing nothing Ø God want to do. (ANSE/016/240t)
- (42) The doctor told me I got something in the head but I do say 'twas a cold Ø I caught in that head, you-know. (SE/003/592)
- (43) The clothes, I mean nothing like the clothes Ø you wear today.  
 (ANSE/002/22t)
- (44) But you-know they had people **what** had the title Spanish, you see, but they's English. (SE/015/72)
- (45) Forty-two thousand **what** come right on Santo-Domingo there.  
 (SE/004/370)
- (46) I ain't talking 'bout the young Phil-Cain **that** was in Montreal  
 (ANSE/031/92)

### 3.3.3.4. Syntactic function of the antecedent NP head in matrix clause

Tottie and Rey (1997) found the syntactic function of the antecedent in the matrix clause to be significant to the choice of relative marker in the Ex-Slave Recordings. Peet (1974) reports that zero relative is possible in Hawaiian English if it is subject or object of the matrix or the matrix is a cleft or existential.

The factors relevant to this study include subject complement, as in (47), subject, as in (48), direct object, as in (49), prepositional complement, as in (50), indirect object, as in (51), notional subject, as in (52), and no syntactic function, i.e. it is impossible to tell what the syntactic function of the head is, as in (53).

- (47) That was the first wedding  $\emptyset$  I was ever invited to.  
(ANSE/015/1098t)
- (48) The only one  $\emptyset$  could swim was Louis and- and- and-  
(ANSE/038/528t)
- (49) Look at this one  $\emptyset$  I have here. (SE/003/521)
- (50) I'm still in the same position **that** I was before. (ANSE/002/214)
- (51) ... and I used to sell it to the children **that** come over.  
(ANSE/012/895)
- (52) And there was a little gateway **that** you had to open up.  
(ANSE/012/936)
- (53) Old friend  $\emptyset$  I got there in town. (SE/001/782)

### 3.3.3.5. *Humanness of the antecedent NP head*

The humanness<sup>17</sup> of the antecedent has been a key factor in the choice of relative marker since the beginning of the Early ModE period. Quirk (1957) for educated spoken British English, de Haan (1989) for written British English and Biesenbach-Lucas (1987) for spoken and written American English, show that zero relatives have mostly non-human antecedents. On the other hand, Guy and Bayley (1995) for spoken and written American English and Cheshire (1982) for the spoken English of Reading teens, show that zero relatives co-occur with human antecedents.

Humanness is divided into non-human, (54), and human, (55).

(54) There wasn't nothing Ø she could let out of there 'cause it were cooked. (ANSE/030/2742lt)

(55) But she was the baddest woman- young woman Ø I ever seen, white and coloured. (ANSE/030/227t)

### 3.3.3.6. *Category membership of the subject of the relative clause*

The grammatical category of the subject of the relative clause is also important in the choice of relative. Most zero relatives have been claimed to occur with personal pronoun subjects in American (Olofsson, 1981; Tottie, 1995) and British English (Quirk, 1957; Taglicht, 1973; Tottie, 1995). Rissanen (1984) observes that for 17th century American English zero relative is mainly used with a pronominal subject, but he does not state whether these are personal pronouns or 'other' pronouns (indefinite pronouns or demonstrative

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<sup>17</sup> Other researchers have used the delineation animate/inanimate or personal/non-personal, but this is unlikely to affect the comparison a great deal.

pronouns other than *that*). Quirk (1985: section 17.16), too, states that zero is preferred when the subject of the relative clause is a personal pronoun.

This factor group was broken down into each of the personal pronouns, *I, you, he, she, it, we,* and *they*, as well as other pronouns, as in (56), definite NP, as in (57), relative marker, as in (58), indefinite NP, as in (59), proper name, as is (60).

- (56) Only one  $\emptyset$  they stayed with is Romana. (SE/001/520)
- (57) 'Cause I lived on that ox and that old horse  $\emptyset$  my father had.  
(ANSE/014/203t)
- (58) I used to look- look after the children for school teacher  $\emptyset$  used to  
teach school out to East-Preston. (ANSE/002/453c)
- (59) That's the first- the first education  $\emptyset$  any pers-- any person have.  
(SE/019/861)
- (60) I have the heart **what** God give me. (SE/014/323)

### 3.3.3.7. Syntactic function of the relative marker in the relative clause

Finally, the syntactic function of the relative marker in the relative clause has been considered by just about everyone, grammarian and linguist alike, who has made any mention of relative clauses. This factor concerns the grammatical role of the “gap” in the relative clause, and involves the important distinction between zero relatives in subject function, (62), and zero relatives in non-subject function, (61), (63) and (64). According to Dekeyser (1986: 112), zero relatives in OE are virtually restricted to subject position, as shown in example (4), Section 2.1.1. Roberts (1937) claims that, for Modern English, there are fewer zero relatives in non-subject function than in subject function, and Caldwell (1974) makes the same claim for Early Scots (1375-1500). Both Rydén (1966), for 16th century English, and Quirk (1957), for 20th century English, find more zero relatives in non-subject position than in subject position.

Quirk et al. (1985: 17.14) claim that, in StdE, zero relatives cannot function as the subject of a relative clause, but rather are more commonly the object of the verb. This assertion is bolstered by numerous empirical findings: Quirk (1957), Tottie and Rey (1997: 204), Guy and Bayley (1995), Adamson (1992) and Cheshire (1982: 73-74) all found zero relative to be associated with non-subject function. However, note that zero relative does indeed occur as subject, as in (62).

The relevant factors here included direct object, as in (61), subject, as in (62), prepositional complement, as in (63), and indirect object, as in (64).

- (61) And that was the example Ø she left for us, you see. (SE/017/254)
- (62) They had a fella here Ø had a property. (SE/019/375)
- (63) Yeah. Same thing Ø I was talking 'bout in church, he was talking.  
(ANSE/001/371t)
- (64) What do you mean a- a- a- Amos-Downey's wife? Old Amos-  
Downey Ø I'm talking 'bout. (ANSE/030/168t)

### 3.4. *Quantitative analysis*

The use of quantitative techniques and automated procedures is particularly effective in the study of non-standard dialects largely because the observer, suffering from “categorical perception,” tends to note a speaker’s use of non-standard features rather than the standard ones and thus perceives the speaker as *always* using the non-standard feature. Quantitative procedures avoid the subjectivity of “categorical perception” and allow us to see the patterns which are inaccessible to informal observation.

Variable rule analysis (VRA), using, for example, GoldVarb (Rand and Sankoff, 1990), a variable rule application for the Macintosh, is an important analytical tool in the study of the factors conditioning the choice of a variant. According to Guy (1993: 237), “[i]ts

purpose is to separate, quantify, and test the significance of the effects of environmental factors on a linguistic variable.” The hypotheses for the linguistic rules or constraints used in variationist studies come from observation of the data and linguistic knowledge. Constraints or factors that are in competition with one another are grouped into what is known as a factor group. VRA allows the analyst to determine which of the factor groups contribute a statistically significant effect to the choice of relative marker when all the factors are considered simultaneously. It also allows the analyst to determine which of all the significant factor groups is most important and what the hierarchy of constraints is within each factor group. However, not all data are equally amenable to VRA because of inherent interaction in the language (see Section 4.1.3). Thus, in this thesis, I rely on marginals to demonstrate the patterns of the language. Marginals indicate the overall distribution of forms within the variable context. However, they only account for the individual effect of each factor on the choice of variant and thus they cannot indicate the presence of interaction among the different factors. As we shall see in Section 4.1.3, marginals may mask effects that would be revealed by multivariate analysis.

## **4. Results**

### ***4.1. Results from replication of Tottie and Rey 1997***

I first report the results of the research I originally proposed to carry out, i.e. the replication of Tottie and Rey (1997). There are several problems inherent in this analysis and these will be discussed in Section 4.1.3. Section 4.2 reports on the findings of my reanalysis of the data in light of the results of the replication.

#### 4.1.1. Overall distribution of variants

Contrary to my expectations at the-outset of my work, each set of speakers — Nova Scotia, Samaná and Ex-slave — turns out to have different overall preferences for relative markers. We see (Table 7) that the three relative markers *that*, *what*, and zero predominate in each of the varieties of Early AAE, but that overall, a different one is favored by each: *that* in ANSE (43%), *what* in SE (53%), and zero in ESR (59%). In fact, these three markers accounted for 99% of the total in ANSE, 93% in SE, and were the only ones recorded in ESR. The StdE variants *which* and *who* are rare in both ANSE and SE and do not occur at all in ESR (cf. e.g. Ball, 1996). Although a different relative marker is favored by each variety, I will show in what follows that the constraints which condition the choice of zero relative marker are similar across varieties.

Table 7: Overall distribution of relative markers in non-adverbial restrictive relative clauses in ANSE, SE, and ESR

	ANSE	SE	ESR
<b>Zero</b>	37% 91	19% 78	<b>59%</b> 68
<b>That</b>	<b>43%</b> 105	21% 86	33% 38
<b>What</b>	19% 47	<b>53%</b> 214	9% 10
<b>Who</b>	0% 1	6% 24	— 0
<b>Which</b>	0% 1	1% 4	— 0
<b>Total</b>	245	406	116

#### 4.1.2. *Marginals for zero*

##### 4.1.2.1. *Adjacency of the antecedent NP head and relative marker*

As Table 8 shows, all three varieties of Early AAE favor zero relatives when they are adjacent to the antecedent NP head. This is what I expected as studies for British (Quirk, 1957) and American English (Guy and Bayley, 1995; Olofsson, 1981), and 16th (Rydén, 1966) and 17th century English (Rissanen, 1984) have demonstrated that zero relative is favored when the antecedent NP head and the relative marker are adjacent.

**Table 8: Distribution of ZERO according to adjacency of the antecedent NP head and the relative marker**

	<b>ANSE</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>ESR</b>
Total N	245	406	116
Total zero relatives	91	78	68
Adjacent	<b>39%</b> 89/227	<b>19%</b> 74/380	<b>65%</b> 65/100
Non-adjacent	11% 2/18	15% 4/26	19% 3/16

#### 4.1.2.2. Premodification of the antecedent NP head

In Table 9, we see that zero relative is preferred when the antecedent NP head is premodified. Few quantitative studies have produced results for this factor group. Olofsson (1981) demonstrated that antecedents with “special” modification (superlatives and universal quantifiers) co-occurred with zero relatives. Quirk (1985: section 17.16) states that *that* is preferred when the antecedent is “no more complex than determiner plus head” suggesting that zero might be found when the antecedent is premodified.

**Table 9: Distribution of ZERO according to premodification of the antecedent NP head**

	ANSE	SE	ESR
Total N	244 <sup>18</sup>	406	116
Total zero relatives	90	78	68
Premodified	<b>46%</b> 46/100	<b>22%</b> 29/134	<b>66%</b> 25/38
Not Premodifiable	40% 17/43	13% 4/31	59% 13/22
Not Premodified	27% 27/101	19% 45/241	54% 30/56

<sup>18</sup> The totals here are 244 and 90 rather than 245 and 91 respectively because one token was not coded for this factor group since I was unable to determine whether the antecedent was modified because, as you can see below, the antecedent is interrupted with an incomprehensible section on the tape. One could argue that it must be premodified, but I was unwilling to make such assumptions in my coding of the tokens.

That was the (incomprehensible) woman Ø I ever seen. (ANSE/030/513-t)

#### 4.1.2.3. Grammatical category of the antecedent NP head

Table 10 shows that there is little difference between pronoun and indefinite NP for any of the varieties. This is not surprising since there appears to be no consistent result for this factor group among the quantitative studies that I have consulted: Huddleston (1971) and Olofsson (1981) demonstrate that definite NP heads correlate with zero relative, de Hann (1989: 122 ff) shows abstract nouns in the singular show a preference for zero relatives, Rissanen (1984) shows a preference for noun antecedents, Tottie (1995) shows that pronoun co-occurs with zero and Christie (1996a, 1996b), for Jamaican Creole English, has observed that zero occurs with both definite NPs and indefinite NP antecedents.

**Table 10: Distribution of ZERO according to the grammatical category of the antecedent NP head**

	<b>ANSE</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>ESR</b>
Total N	245	406	116
Total zero relatives	91	78	68
Pronoun	43% 20/46	21% 16/77	63% 17/27
Indefinite NP <sup>19</sup>	36% 22/61	30% 41/136	65% 17/26
Definite NP	36% 49/138	11% 21/191	55% 34/62

#### 4.1.2.4. Syntactic function of the antecedent NP head in the matrix clause

Table 11 shows that, in ANSE and ESR, zero relative is correlated with subject complements, while in SE, it is correlated with objects. In her 1995 study of written American

<sup>19</sup> I collapsed the factors noun and indefinite NP because all instances of noun were considered to be indefinite and also proper noun and definite NP because proper nouns are considered to be definite. There were no zero relatives with numeral as an antecedent.

and British English, Tottie demonstrated that this factor group was significant to the choice of zero. However, a comparison of the marginals with the factor weights for that factor group (Table 15) show that there is perhaps some interaction, possibly because of the inclusion of adverbials together with the non-adverbial relative clauses or some interaction between this factor group and another. Here, I demonstrate that syntactic function of the antecedent does not contribute a consistent effect. I believe that this factor group warrants further investigation, though, on the basis of the fact that 64%, a fairly high percentage, of zero relatives occur with direct object for ESR, thus paralleling SE.

**Table 11: Distribution of ZERO according to the syntactic function of the antecedent NP head in the matrix clause**

	<b>ANSE</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>ESR</b>
Total N	245	406	116
Total zero relatives	91	78	68
Subject Complement	53% 24/45	17% 9/54	88% 22/25
Subject	47% 9/19	9% 5/58	22% 6/27
Notional Subject	35% 6/17	0% 0/3	67% 4/6
Direct Object	32% 23/72	27% 44/163	64% 27/42
Prepositional Complement	26% 6/23	16% 5/32	50% 5/10
Indirect Object	0% 0/1	0% 0/3	— 0/0
No syntactic function	34% 23/68	16% 15/93	67% 4/6

*4.1.2.5. Humanness of the antecedent NP head*

As Table 12 shows, all three varieties of Early AAE clearly agree in favoring zero as a relative marker with non-human antecedents, as other studies (Cheshire, 1982; Guy and Bayley, 1995) have found.

	<b>ANSE</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>ESR</b>
Total N	245	406	116
Total zero relatives	91	78	68
Non-human	<b>41%</b> 60/146	<b>25%</b> 35/140	<b>79%</b> 34/43
Human	31% 31/99	16% 43/266	47% 34/73

4.1.2.6. *Category membership of the subject of the relative clause*

Table 13 reveals that, as with American (Olofsson, 1981; Tottie, 1995) and British English (Quirk, 1957; Taglicht, 1973; Tottie, 1995), most zero relatives occur with personal pronoun subjects for all three varieties of Early AAE.

**Table 13: Distribution of ZERO according to the category membership of the subject of the relative clause**

	<b>ANSE</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>ESR</b>
Total N	245	406	116
Total zero relatives	91	78	68
Pronoun	<b>48%</b> 60/123	<b>38%</b> 47/124	<b>79%</b> 42/53
Definite NP <sup>20</sup>	44% 7/16	9% 1/11	40% 2/5
Relative Marker	23% 24/106	11% 30/271	41% 24/58

<sup>20</sup> The few instances of proper name were collapsed with definite NP.

#### 4.1.2.7. Syntactic function of the relative marker in the relative clause

As Table 14 clearly shows, in all three varieties of Early AAE, zero relative is preferred when it is direct object. This finding is consistent both with studies of other varieties of English and with descriptive rules for StdE (Adamson, 1992; Cheshire, 1982; Guy and Bayley, 1995; Quirk, 1957; Quirk et al., 1985).

**Table 14: Distribution of ZERO according to the syntactic function of the relative marker in the relative clause**

	<b>ANSE</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>ESR</b>
Total N	245	406	116
Total zero relatives	91	78	68
Direct Object	<b>52%</b> 63/122	<b>38%</b> 46/120	<b>78%</b> 38/49
Subject	23% 24/106	11% 30/271	41% 24/58
Prepositional Complement	25% 4/16	14% 2/14	67% 4/6
Indirect Object	0% 0/1	-- 0/0	-- 0/0
Other	-- 0/0	0% 0/1	0% 0/1
Notional subject	-- 0/0	-- 0/0	100% 2/2

#### 4.1.3. Discussion of replication analysis

We can see that all three varieties of Early AAE pattern remarkably similarly with respect to choice of zero relative. They also pattern with other varieties of English — standard, regional and historical — for most of the factors investigated (five out of seven: adjacency, premodification, humanness, category membership of the subject of the relative clause, and

syntactic function of the relative marker in the relative clause) suggesting that these diaspora varieties stem from an older variety of English.

From what we know of creoles, we can also see that (see Section 3.3.3.3) zero in Early AAE and English can be found in constructions similar to those reported for Jamaican Creole English and Hawaiian English, but there are no numbers to tell us if the hierarchy of constraints in those varieties parallel those of Early AAE and English. This offers little evidence to support the hypothesis that these three varieties of Early AAE originated as a prior creole.

However, the results for zero relative presented in section 4.1.2 are misleading because of the number of factors that interact with each other. The basic assumption is that factor groups contribute independent effects to the probability that a zero relative will be selected, however, as in so many other cases, notably the copula (Walker, in press), and the plural (Poplack et al., in press), this turns out to be a false assumption. Variable rule analysis for relativization in both Tottie (1995, 1997) and Guy and Bayley (1995) show that there may be possible interaction between factor groups.

Table 15 shows a variable rule analysis for the data discussed in Section 4.1.2. As can be seen, in the analysis for each variety discussed, the variable rule analysis demonstrates interaction between factor groups. The bolded numbers in Table 15 indicate a reversal of the order of factor weights (e.g. for ESR, function of head in matrix: .93 here for Notional Subject and .82 for Subject Complement) as compared to percentages (80% for Notional Subject and 88% for Subject Complement) for the same factors.

Table 15: Factors Contributing to the choice of zero relativizer

	ANSE <sup>21</sup>		SE		ESR	
Corrected mean:	0.344		0.135		0.623	
Total N:	241 <sup>22</sup>		396		111	
	Factor weight	%	Factor weight	%	Factor weight	%
<b>Function of Head in Matrix</b>						
Subject Complement	.69	53	[ ]		.82	88
Subject	.59	50	[ ]		.22	23
Notional Subject	.55	35	[ ]		.93	80
No syntactic function	.46	34	[ ]		.55	67
Direct Object	.43	33	[ ]		.46	63
Prepositional Complement	.35	26	[ ]		.22	44
	<i>Range</i>	34			71	
<b>Function of Relative Marker in Relative Clause</b>						
Direct Object	.69	52	.79	38	[ ]	
Subject	.31	23	.36	11	[ ]	
Prepositional Complement	.28	25	.34	14	[ ]	
Other	—		K/O <sup>23</sup>			
	<i>Range</i>	41		45		
<b>Adjacency of Head and Relative Marker</b>						
Adjacent	.53	40	[ ]		.59	65
Non-adjacent	.17	11	[ ]		.10	19
	<i>Range</i>	36			49	
<b>Humanness of Head</b>						
Non-human	[ ]		[ ]		.75	80
Human	[ ]		[ ]		.35	46
	<i>Range</i>				40	
<b>Grammatical Category of Head</b>						
Pronoun	[ ]		.74	21	[ ]	
Indefinite NP	[ ]		.71	31	[ ]	
Definite NP	[ ]		.26	11	[ ]	
Numeral	[ ]		K/O		[ ]	
	<i>Range</i>		48			
<b>Premodification of Head</b>						
Premodified	[ ]		.55	22	[ ]	
Not Premodified	[ ]		.53	19	[ ]	
Not Premodifiable			.15	13	[ ]	
	<i>Range</i>		40			
<b>Category Membership of the Subject of the Relative Clause</b>						
Pronoun	[ ]		.59	38	[ ]	
Relative Marker	[ ]		.48	11	[ ]	
Definite NP	[ ]		.12	9	[ ]	
Indefinite NP	[ ]		K/O		[ ]	
	<i>Range</i>		47			

21 The factor groups selected in the "stepping up" did not correspond with those selected in the "stepping down" which further indicates interaction between factor groups.

22 These numbers do not match up with the numbers in Table 8 (245 for ANSE, 406 for SE and 116 for ESR) due to the need to eliminate knockouts (see footnote 23) in order to be able to run the multivariate program. These were Numeral, Other and Indefinite NP.

23 Indicates a "knockout". For example, 0 of the 2 tokens of Other here were for zero relatives.

Some of the interaction seen in Table 15 can be attributed to the correlation of zero relatives in subject function with humanness, and zero relatives in object function with non-humanness. This may be seen in Table 16 which shows that most human antecedents function as subjects and most non-human antecedents function as objects. This has also been reported by Ball (1996), Tottie and Rey (1997), Schneider (1989), Montgomery (1991), and Quirk et al. (1985). Thus, given a particular antecedent, it is difficult to tell whether the choice of zero relative is due to the syntactic nature of the relative marker in the relative clause or to the humanness of the antecedent. Attempts to factor out this interaction result in further overlap among the interaction term (human subject, human object, non-human subject, non-human object) and other factors, subject of the relative clause in particular.

Table 16: Cross-tabulations of humanness and syntactic function of the relative marker in the relative clause for ZERO for ANSE, SE and ESR

	ANSE		SE		ESR	
	Subject	Object	Subject	Object	Subject	Object
Human	78	13	223	37	56	13
Non-human	28	109	48	83	2	36

In order to overcome some of the interaction, I reanalyzed the data such that zero relatives in subject function and non-subject function are analyzed separately, rather than pooling them as done by Tottie and Rey (1997). This also helps to maximize comparability with previous research on zero relatives, which has dealt mostly with dialects that do not generally have zero relatives in subject position. It presents the data in a more syntactically meaningful manner, acknowledging the syntactic difference between relatives in subject function and object function.

#### *4.2. Results from re-analysis*

In this section of my thesis, I reanalyze the data for ANSE, SE and ESR by dividing the data into zero relatives in subject function and zero relatives in non-subject function for the reasons specified in Section 4.1.3.

However, separate analyses of relatives in subject and non-subject function does not factor out the interaction completely and the data in some cells was too small to support a variable rule analysis. Therefore, in what follows, I again focus on the *proportions* of zero in each of the contexts I have identified, basing my discussion on marginal percentages. In Section 4.2.1, I present the overall distribution in non-subject and subject function. In Section 4.2.2, I present relative marker usage in non-subject function according to the factor groups discussed in Section 3.3, and in Section 4.2.3, I discuss the use of relative markers in subject function according to those same factor groups.

#### 4.2.1. Marginals for zero in subject and non-subject function

Tables 17 and 18 show the distribution of relative markers in non-subject and subject function, respectively. Examples of the favored relative in non-subject function for each of the three varieties can be found in (65), (66), (67), and in subject function in (68), (69) and (70).

Table 17: Overall distribution of relatives in non-subject function

	ANSE	SE	ESR
<b>Zero</b>	<b>48%</b> 67	<b>36%</b> 48	<b>76%</b> 44
<b>That</b>	30% 42	15% 20	17% 10
<b>What</b>	21% 29	<b>48%</b> 65	7% 4
<b>Who</b>	-- 0	1% 1	-- 0
<b>Which</b>	1% 1	1% 1	-- 0
<b>Total</b>	139	135	58

- (65) That the bad thing  $\emptyset$  I could ever do. (ANSE/032/280t)
- (66) And the next little **what** I'm raising too. (SE/015/119)
- (67) Uh, I, I could say a whole lot  $\emptyset$  I don' like to say. (ESR/008/249)

**Table 18: Overall distribution of relatives in subject function**

	<b>ANSE</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>ESR</b>
<b>Zero</b>	23% 24	11% 30	41% 24
<b>That</b>	59% 63	24% 66	48% 28
<b>What</b>	17% 18	55% 149	10% 6
<b>Who</b>	-- 0	8% 23	-- 0
<b>Which</b>	1% 1	1% 3	-- 0
<b>Total</b>	106	271	58

- (68) You mean the one **that's** away? (ANSE/009/1597)
- (69) They got one **what** is a nurse. (SE/005/193)
- (70) An' we use' to go home to people **that** worked in the kitchen.  
(ESR/005/89)

A comparison of Tables 17 and 18 shows, as expected, that the distribution of variant pronouns is different in different syntactic functions. In non-subject function, zero is the preferred variant not only in ESR but also in ANSE, with 76% and 48%, respectively, and though *what* predominates in SE, zero is three times as frequent in non-subject function as in subject function (36% vs 11%). In subject function, *that* is the preferred variant in both ANSE and ESR, with 59% and 48%, respectively, and *what* is still the preferred variant in SE, with 55%. Zero is a strong competitor in ESR, where it is used in as many as 41% of all cases, and robust (23%) in ANSE, though it accounts for only 11% in SE.

Both in their alternation among *that*, *what*, and zero and, to some extent, in their distribution, the three varieties of Early AAE thus parallel other standard and non-standard

varieties of English in Britain as well as in the United States. *That* needs hardly any comment, as its widespread use in both speech and writing on both sides of the Atlantic is well-documented (cf. e.g. Guy and Bayley, 1995; Tottie and Rey, 1997). The same holds for zero in non-subject function. As we have seen above in Section 2.2.1, *what* is well represented in English regional dialects, constituting a major variant in northern East Anglia, where there is also strong historical evidence for its frequency in historical English as well, as discussed in Section 2.3 above. The widespread use of zero in subject function is well-documented in non-standard dialects like Appalachian English and Scottish English.

#### 4.2.2. Zero relative markers in non-subject function

In this section, I will discuss zero relatives in non-subject function. The majority (between 38% and 78%) of relative markers in non-subject function were direct objects in all three varieties of Early AAE, with a sprinkling of prepositional complements and isolated examples of notional subjects (Table 19). This is as expected because, in general, the relative marker is largely either subject or object and the exclusion of zero relatives in subject function means that the remainder, zero relatives in non-subject function, would be direct object.

**Table 19: Distribution of ZERO according to the syntactic function of the relative marker in the relative clause.**

	ANSE	SE	ESR
Total N	139	135	58
Total zero relatives	67	48	44
Direct Object	<b>52%</b> 63/122	<b>38%</b> 46/120	<b>78%</b> 38/49
Prepositional Complement	25% 4/16	14% 2/14	67% 4/6
Notional Subject	-- 0/0	-- 0/0	100% 2/2
Indirect Object	0% 0/1	-- 0/0	-- 0/0
Other	-- 0/0	0% 0/1	0% 0/1

4.2.2.1. *Adjacency of the antecedent NP head and relative marker*

Table 20 demonstrates that the adjacency of the relative to its antecedent is as relevant to the diaspora varieties of English as it is to British English (Quirk, 1957), standard American English (Guy and Bayley, 1995; Olofsson, 1981), 16th century English (Rydén, 1966) and 17th century English (Rissanen, 1984). As Table 20 shows, all three varieties of Early AAE also favor zero relatives when they are adjacent to the antecedent NP head.

**Table 20: Distribution of ZERO according to adjacency of the antecedent NP head and the relative marker.**

	<b>ANSE</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>ESR</b>
Total N	139	135	58
Total zero relatives	67	48	44
Adjacent	<b>50%</b> 66/131	<b>37%</b> 47/127	<b>84%</b> 43/51
Non-adjacent	13% 1/8	13% 1/8	14% 1/7

#### 4.2.2.2. Premodification of the antecedent NP head

Premodification (Table 21) has a small effect on choice of zero relative for ANSE, not at all for SE, and for ESR, zero relative in non-subject function co-occurs with heads that are not premodifiable. Further investigation may implicate superlatives or universal quantifiers, as has been shown in the study by Olofsson (1981), although in an analysis (including relatives in subject and non-subject function together) of superlatives for zero relatives done by Tottie and Rey (1997), premodification by a superlative did not have an effect.

**Table 21: Distribution of ZERO in restrictive non-adverbial relative clauses according to premodification of the antecedent NP head.**

	ANSE	SE	ESR
Total N	138 <sup>24</sup>	135	58
Total zero relatives	66	48	44
Premodified	54% 34/63	38% 19/50	67% 14/21
Not Premodifiable	50% 16/32	36% 4/11	87% 13/15
Not Premodified	37% 16/43	34% 25/74	77% 17/22

<sup>24</sup> The totals here are 138 and 66 rather than 139 and 67 respectively because one token was not coded for this factor group since I was unable to determine whether the antecedent was modified because, as you can see below, the antecedent is interrupted with (incomprehensible). See also footnote 18.

That was the (incomprehensible) woman Ø I ever seen. (ANSE/030/513t)

#### 4.2.2.3. Grammatical category of the antecedent NP head

Contrary to the findings of Huddleston (1971), but in accordance with the findings of Taglicht (1973) and Tottie (1995) for written British and American English, Table 22 shows that definite NP heads do not correlate with zero relatives in these materials. On the contrary, definite NPs show a lower-than-average incidence of zero in SE. Pronominal antecedents have the highest incidence of zero in ANSE and ESR. There is no difference in the choice of zero for pronouns and indefinite NPs in SE. This factor group is problematic, though, because of confounding between definiteness and subject type. Further investigation is required on this point.

**Table 22: Distribution of ZERO according to the grammatical category of the antecedent NP head.**

	ANSE	SE	ESR
Total N	139	135	58
Total zero relatives	67	48	44
Pronoun	55% 17/31	50% 8/16	89% 16/18
Definite NP	48% 34/71	24% 18/76	74% 20/27
Indefinite NP	43% 16/37	51% 22/43	62% 8/13

#### 4.2.2.4. Syntactic function of the antecedent NP head in the matrix clause

This factor group has produced some confusing results. ANSE and ESR both show a tendency for zero to occur with subject complements, while SE shows a tendency for zero to occur with direct objects and subject complements. There are several possible problems here. First, there are only a few tokens in many of the cells (for example, in Table 23, see Notional

Subject, 1/4 for ANSE, 0/1 for SE, and 1/1 for ESR), with the exception of subject complement, direct object and no syntactic function<sup>25</sup>. More consideration of the syntax of each of these functions is needed. For example, subject complement and direct object are both in complement position of the VP. Also, notional subjects are not even considered relatives by some researchers (Ball, 1996). The question of whether any of these factors has any effect on the choice of relative requires further investigation.

**Table 23: Distribution of ZERO in restrictive non-adverbial relative clauses according to the syntactic function of the antecedent NP head in the matrix clause.**

	ANSE	SE	ESR
Total N	139	135	58
Total zero relatives	67	48	44
Subject Complement	79% 19/24	38% 8/21	88% 15/17
Subject	55% 6/11	25% 4/16	20% 1/5
Prepositional Complement	33% 4/12	29% 4/14	80% 4/5
Direct Object	35% 16/46	40% 20/50	81% 22/27
Notional Subject	25% 1/4	0% 0/1	100% 1/1
No Syntactic Function	50% 21/42	36% 12/33	33% 1/3

<sup>25</sup> No syntactic function is a mishmash of many tokens (see (a) and (b) below) for which the syntactic function of the antecedent in the matrix clause cannot be ascertained.

(a) And the kind of shoes  $\emptyset$  we had on when we got married. (ANSE/p/459)

(b) At that time, yes, everybody  $\emptyset$  you'd see. (SE/002/364)

#### 4.2.2.5. Humanness of the antecedent NP head

Table 24 shows that humanness of the antecedent NP head does not exercise a consistent effect on choice of relative marker in Early AAE. Only ESR shows a weak tendency, established for spoken and written American English and written and spoken British English (Biesenbach-Lucas, 1987; Quirk, 1957; de Haan, 1989), to favor zero as a relative marker with non-human antecedents, SE shows a weak tendency to the contrary, with no effect at all in ANSE. In Section 3.3.3.5, we saw that both human antecedents and non-human antecedents have been found to correlate with zero relative. It is not surprising, then, to find the confusing results in Table 24.

**Table 24: Distribution of ZERO according to humanness of the antecedent NP head.**

	<b>ANSE</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>ESR</b>
Total N	139	135	58
Total zero relatives	67	48	44
Non-human	48% 57/118	34% 31/92	80% 33/41
Human	48% 10/21	40% 17/43	65% 11/17

#### 4.2.2.6. *Category membership of the subject of the relative clause*

Consistent with findings concerning the importance of the grammatical category of the subject of the relative clause in British English (Quirk, 1957; Taglicht, 1973), as well as American English, (Olofsson, 1981), Table 25 reveals that personal pronouns also clearly favor zero relative for SE and ESR, though in ANSE, category membership does not affect choice of relative. Note that most of the subjects of zero relative clauses are personal pronouns rather than definite NPs, indefinite NPs or nouns. Again, as we saw for grammatical category of the antecedent NP head, there is a confounding of definiteness versus indefiniteness with noun and pronoun. This factor groups needs further analysis before we can conclude that it does not have a significant effect on the choice of zero relative.

**Table 25: Distribution of ZERO according to the category membership of the subject of the relative clause**

	<b>ANSE</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>ESR</b>
Total N	139	135	58
Total zero relatives	67	48	44
Definite NP	50% 7/14	9% 1/11	40% 2/5
Personal pronoun	49% 60/123	37% 46/123	79% 41/52
Indefinite NP	-- 0/0	100% 1/1	100% 1/1
Noun	0% 0/2	-- 0/0	-- 0/0

#### *4.2.2.7. Summary of factors determining the use of zero relatives in non-subject function*

We see that among the factors singled out by previous researchers as favoring zero relativization, the varieties of AAE studied here share much in common with other dialects of English, including varieties of standard English. The most robust similarities in non-subject relative function concern adjacency of the antecedent and relative marker, while category membership was a determining factor in two of the three Early AAE varieties. However, we do not see the very robust results that we did for the replication study. The section on zero relatives in subject function (Section 4.2.3) will shed further light on the differences between the replication results and those of the reanalysis.

#### *4.2.3. Zero relative markers in subject function*

As already pointed out in Section 2.2.1, zero relatives in subject function are well established in non-standard varieties of English. The speakers of Early AAE documented here ranged between 11% (SE) and 41% (ESR), with ANSE falling between them with 23% (see Table 18).

Turning now to factors determining the use of zero relativization in this context, we cannot expect the same constraints to apply to zero relatives in subject function as to zero relatives in object and other non-subject functions, for several reasons. I have already shown (Table 16, Section 4.1.3) that humanness of the antecedent is tied to subject function of the relative marker; there are pragmatic reasons for this, as humans tend to be agents and non-human entities tend to be patients (cf. Tottie and Rey, 1997: 239f). Moreover, the factor group involving the category membership of the subject of the relative clause is void, as the subject is always the relative marker. And related, the syntactic function of the relative marker is, of course, subject, unlike non-subject function where there are several possible syntactic

functions (direct object, indirect object, prepositional complement). However, I coded subject relative constructions according to the same schema as the zero relatives in non-subject function for all factor groups, and report here on those factor groups which affected the choice of relative, viz. adjacency of the antecedent and the relative marker, and premodification, grammatical category, syntactic function, and humanness of the antecedent NP head.

#### 4.2.3.1. *Adjacency of the antecedent NP head and relative marker*

Table 26 shows the distribution of zero relatives in subject function in adjacent/non-adjacent constructions. Note that adjacent constructions are the majority in each variety, which is also true of zero relatives in object function (Section 4.2.2.1), and that in ANSE and ESR adjacency favors zero relatives, though in SE the effect seems to be reversed.

**Table 26: Distribution of ZERO according to adjacency of the antecedent NP head and the relative marker.**

	ANSE	SE	ESR
Total N	106	271	58
Total zero relatives	24	30	24
Adjacent	24% 23/96	11% 27/253	45% 22/49
Non-adjacent	10% 1/10	17% 3/18	22% 2/9

Following in (71) and (72) are some examples of zero subject relative non-adjacent to the antecedent NP head:

(71) They had a fella here  $\emptyset$  had a property. (SE/019/375)

- (72) I was so strong, Lord, that when I had my operation, right from there and across there, they said- they never saw ta-- no-one (HEAD) that had a operation  $\emptyset$  could come out and sit down and talk to people. (ANSE/016/760c)

Hackenberg (1972) also considered adjacency as a factor favoring zero relativization, but found that zero relative markers in subject function occurred with practically the same frequency in constructions where antecedent and relative marker were adjacent as in those where they were non-adjacent, or 27% and 32%, respectively. However, he did find that adjacency played a part in existential *there*-sentences: such constructions had 52% zero relatives, whereas non-existentials had only 28% (Hackenberg, 1972: 105 ff.). It thus seems of particular interest in this context to look closely at the particular syntactic constructions in which zero relatives in subject function occur in the dialects of Early AAE that I investigated, and to compare these with favored environments in other varieties of English that allow zero relatives in subject function. I do this in Section 4.2.3.8.

#### 4.2.3.2. Premodification of the antecedent NP head

Premodification has an effect on the choice of zero for ANSE and ESR, but not for SE (Table 27). ANSE and ESR make use of zero relative when the antecedent is premodified 32% and 65% respectively. For SE, there is no difference between premodification and not premodified in the choice of zero relative. Here the results are much stronger than those for premodification in zero relatives in non-subject function (Table 21, Section 4.2.2.2), with both ANSE and SE sharing the same constraints, while ESR differs. Interestingly, there are also fewer tokens of not premodifiable (*everything, anything, etc.*) antecedents. At present, I am unable to explain this, although, as has been suggested previously (Section 4.2.2.2), looking at special modification and universal quantifiers may shed light on these differences.

**Table 27: Distribution of ZERO according to premodification of the antecedent NP head.**

	ANSE	SE	ESR
Total N	106	271	58
Total zero relatives	24	30	24
Premodified	32% 12/37	12% 10/84	65% 11/17
Not Premodified	19% 11/58	12% 20/167	38% 13/34
Not Premodifiable	9% 1/11	0% 0/20	0% 0/7

#### 4.2.3.3. Grammatical category of the antecedent NP head

Table 28 shows the distribution of zero relatives in subject function according to the grammatical category of the antecedent NP head. Each variety, ANSE, SE and ESR, shows a correlation between zero relative and indefinite NP. For zero relatives in non-subject function, ANSE and ESR prefers zero relative when the antecedent is a pronoun, while SE sees no

difference in preference for zero relative between indefinite NP and pronoun. As mentioned earlier in Section 4.2.2.3, it is difficult to know if the results are a function of definiteness or subject type. The results in Table 28 lead me to believe that, here, the results may be an effect of definiteness, simply because there are fewer antecedent pronouns for zero relatives in subject function. In fact, there are fewer antecedent pronouns for zero relatives in subject function than there were for zero relatives in non-subject function (see Tables 22 and 28, 20% versus 55%, respectively, for ANSE, 13% versus 50%, respectively, for SE, and 11% versus 89%, respectively, for ESR). This finding is interesting in and of itself, indicating that zero relatives in subject function are rarely found with a pronoun antecedent.

**Table 28: Distribution of ZERO according to the grammatical category of the antecedent NP head.**

	<b>ANSE</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>ESR</b>
Total N	106	271	58
Total zero relatives	24	30	24
Indefinite NP	<b>25%</b> 6/24	<b>20%</b> 19/93	<b>69%</b> 9/13
Definite NP	22% 15/67	3% 3/115	40% 14/35
Pronoun	20% 3/15	13% 8/61	11% 1/9
Numeral	-- 0/0	0% 0/2	0% 0/1

#### *4.2.3.4. Syntactic function of the antecedent NP head in the matrix clause*

Syntactic function of the antecedent NP head in the matrix clause, as mentioned previously (Section 4.2.2.4), needs further investigation, because the results are inconsistent and not robust. This may, of course, mean that this factor group does not exert any influence

on the choice of zero relative. On the other hand, it may indicate interaction between this factor group and another. Further study may provide us with the answer.

Problematic is the fact that we have a preponderance of factor groups and very few tokens representing almost every cell (see Table 29). This makes it difficult to make any strong claims and may explain the inconsistency and lack of robust results. Perhaps, if like Macaulay (1991), I had included fewer factors, this factor group might explain more of the facts of relativization. Also, further syntactic analysis may be needed regarding the inclusion of notional subject.

**Table 29: Distribution of ZERO according to the syntactic function of the antecedent NP head in the matrix clause.**

	<b>ANSE</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>ESR</b>
Total N	106	271	58
Total zero relatives	24	30	24
Subject	38% 3/8	2% 1/42	23% 5/22
Notional Subject	38% 5/13	0% 0/2	60% 3/5
Direct Object	27% 7/26	21% 24/113	33% 5/15
Subject Complement	24% 5/21	3% 1/33	88% 7/8
Prepositional Complement	18% 2/11	6% 1/18	20% 1/5
No Syntactic Function	8% 2/26	5% 3/60	100% 3/3
Indirect Object	0% 0/1	0% 0/3	— 0/0

#### 4.2.3.5. Humanness of the antecedent NP head

As expected, we see that most of the antecedents are human. This follows from the aforementioned fact (Section 4.1.3 and Table 16) that most subjects are humans and most objects are non-human. ANSE shows a preference (SE a slight preference) for zero when the antecedent is human, while ESR shows a slight preference in the opposite direction.

**Table 30: Distribution of ZERO according to humanness of the antecedent NP head.**

	ANSE	SE	ESR
Total N	106	271	58
Total zero relatives	24	30	24
Human	27% 21/78	12% 26/223	41% 23/56
Non-human	11% 3/28	8% 4/48	50% 1/2

#### 4.2.3.6. Syntactic constructions for zero relatives in subject function

Ball (1996: 257) gives a useful overview of typical constructions here, listing them as follows:

- (i) Existential constructions (with examples from Ayr, Yorkshire, Somerset, Appalachian English, as well as earlier English)
- (ii) Possessives with *have* and *get* (with examples from Ayr, Yorkshire, Norwich, and Appalachian)
- (iii) *It/That*-Clefts (with examples from Somerset, Appalachian, and 17th century English)

- (iv) "Other", as in *Everybody Ø lives in the mountains has an accent all to theirselves*, from Appalachian English (Wolfram and Christian, 1976: epigraph)

I checked the occurrence of these different constructions in my material and compared it with the data found in Hackenberg (1972). This work includes an extremely useful appendix listing all the relative constructions in his Appalachian English data, and it was thus possible to calculate the proportions of the different types of constructions with zero relatives. I report the distribution of zero relatives in subject function in Early AAE dialects as well as in Hackenberg's data on Appalachian English in Table 31.

Table 31: Distribution of different types of subject zero constructions in three dialects of Early AAE and Appalachian English (APP E, Hackenberg, 1972)

	ANSE		SE		ESR		APP E	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
Existential constructions	21	5	-	-	13	3	40	39
Possessive <i>have/got</i>	13	3	63	19	8	2	26	25
<i>It/That</i> clefts	8	2	3	1	-	-	6	6
Other	58	14	33	10	79	19	27	28
Total		24		30		24		97

We see that, despite the sparseness of the data, the four types of constructions listed by Ball (1996) are all attested in Early AAE, although SE has no instances of *there*-constructions and *it/that*-clefts are absent from the ESR sample. Interestingly, the possessive *have/got* constructions are highly favored in SE, with 63% of the total. The distribution in Hackenberg's data is most similar to that found in ANSE: The most frequent type was the existential *there*-construction, followed by *have/got* constructions and cleft constructions. The residual "other" category accounted for 27% in Hackenberg's data and is large in all three varieties of Early AAE, ranging from 33% in SE to 79% in ESR. This is a mixed bag of

constructions that merits further analysis. However, in order to undertake a valid analysis of the data for zero relatives in subject function, one would have to re-analyze all subject constructions in search of possible constraints on the different constructions. Such an analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis; I therefore limit myself to giving examples of the three main types of subject zero constructions listed by Ball and a few from the residual category.

Existential constructions (including *it-* and subjectless types)

- (73) There was a few people Ø could knit gloves. (ANSE/015/173t)
- (74) Well isn't nobody Ø wouldn't go out- you didn't go from camp to camp. (ANSE/030/812t)

Possessives with *have/get*

- (75) Oh yeah we had a- old man Ø had chicken. (ANSE/038/196t)
- (76) And they had one Ø had came to town from before. (SE/002/640)
- (77) They had a, they had a preacher Ø treated us fine. (ESR/001/181)

*It/That*-clefts

- (78) That was onliest thing Ø was going back in them years.  
(ANSE/014/429t)
- (79) It was group of fellas Ø used to play guitar and...marimba and all those things, used to sing. (SE/019/759)

Residual

- (80) I used to look- look after the children for schoolteacher Ø used to teach school out to East-Preston. (ANSE/002/453)
- (81) You know that one Ø be talking proud. (ANSE/009/898t)

- (82) One died a single lady and the next one  $\emptyset$  died she was married to a Rhymer, Rhymer. (SE/018/585)

I also found that I could identify a focusing construction other than the *it/that*-clefts, as in (83)-(85):

#### Focusing

- (83) On the way- he's the only one  $\emptyset$  be on that land. (ANSE/031/398)
- (84) I was the last one  $\emptyset$  got married home. (SE/018/609)
- (85) I'm the man  $\emptyset$  straightened up [unintelligible - a place ].  
(ESR/012/346)

#### *4.2.3.7. Summary of factors affecting the choice of zero relatives in subject function*

We can see that there is a difference between the behavior of zero relative in subject function and zero relative in object function. While the subject of the relative clause includes definite NPs, indefinite NPs and pronouns for relatives in non-subject function, there are obviously only relative markers in this factor group for relatives in subject function. Also, in terms of syntactic function of the relative marker in the relative clause, the majority of zero relatives in non-subject function are direct objects, while zero relatives in subject function, of course, are categorically subjects. We also see that there were different constraints on the choice of zero for relatives in non-subject function and those in subject function. For example, consider premodification: For relatives in non-subject function, zero is preferred when the antecedent is premodified for ANSE and SE and not premodifiable in ESR, but for relatives in subject function, zero is preferred when the antecedent is premodified for ANSE and ESR, and there is no difference between premodified and not premodified for SE. Consider, also, the syntactic function of the antecedent NP head in the matrix clause. For relatives in non-subject

function, zero is preferred when the antecedent functions as subject complement for ANSE and ESR and when it is direct object for SE. For relatives in subject function, zero is preferred when the antecedent functions as subject or notional subject for ANSE, and again as subject complement for ESR and direct object for SE. All in all, there is sufficient evidence for treating relatives in non-subject function and relatives in subject function differently. It also suggests that relatives in subject function, which are mostly cleft sentences, existentials, *have/got* and focusing constructions, are not relatives at all (Ball, 1994, 1996; Tottie, 1995; Tottie and Rey, 1997).

The other piece of information that we can glean from the analyses above is that, although the replication showed the results were similar for all three varieties, the reanalysis showed that many of the effects of the replication are largely due to the behavior of relatives in non-subject function, which constitute most of the data. This becomes apparent when we make a comparison of the factor groups as discussed in Section 4.1.2 and Section 4.2.2. More factor groups (adjacency of the antecedent and the relative marker, grammatical category of the antecedent NP head, syntactic function of the antecedent NP head in the matrix clause and syntactic function of the relative marker<sup>26</sup>) share similarities between the replication and the reanalysis of relatives in non-subject function than between the replication and the reanalysis of relatives in subject function. This demonstrates that the researcher should not collapse different factors unless they parallel in terms of constraints.

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<sup>26</sup> Of these, syntactic function of the relative marker in the relative clause is most telling because, as we have seen, the replication and the reanalysis of non-subject relatives both saw a preference for zero when the relative marker functioned as direct object, while subject relatives *only* function as subject.

## 5. Summary of results and conclusions

The original intent of this thesis was to replicate Tottie and Rey's 1997 study of relativization in Early AAE, by simply expanding the dataset to include African Nova Scotian English and Samaná English. My findings turned out to be different from my expectations in one important respect: I found that the two additional varieties of Early AAE studied here displayed markedly different preferences as regards overall choice of relative marker. Although the three relative markers *that*, *what*, and zero were present in all three dialects, they occur in different proportions, with *that* as the preferred variant in ANSE, *what* in Samaná, and zero in ESR. *Which* is extremely rare in all three varieties, and *who* — but not *whom* — occurred only in a small proportion of instances in SE. However, I found that the differences across varieties that did emerge can largely be explained in terms of data and factor configurations leading to overlap and interaction.

Although, to my knowledge, there are no quantitative accounts of relative markers in Caribbean creoles, it is useful to make a qualitative comparison of my results with the inventory of relativizers given by Mufwene (1986) for Gullah. Note first the presence of *that* in Early AAE, a relative marker that is completely absent from the Gullah system but all-pervasive in standard as well as non-standard varieties of English on both sides of the Atlantic. Secondly, the Gullah relativizers *wuh* and *weh* are totally lacking in my data (as are the non-finite *fuh*-constructions). Thirdly, although Gullah does have *wat*, *who*, and zero relatives in both subject and non-subject function, the likelihood of these deriving from English seems vastly greater than that of Early AAE inheriting these elements from a creole system. Thus the use of zero relatives in subject function and *what* as a relativizer in ANSE, SE, and ESR is best seen as a legacy of English (non-standard and/or historical dialects). Particularly important is the fact that there is good historical evidence for earlier British dialectal usage of both these features. For example: *what* can be shown to have been frequent in East Anglia in the eighteenth century, thus predating the migration of African Americans to Samaná in 1824. The existence

of zero relativization is well documented in standard and non-standard dialects of English. Zeros in subject function are well documented in many non-standard varieties of English on both sides of the Atlantic. Indeed, despite Martin and Wolfram's (1998: 32) claim that a "notable difference between AAVE and many other English vernaculars is AAVE speakers' ability to form bare *subject relative clauses*," the findings of this thesis suggest that we could rather stress that this feature constitutes a notable similarity between AAVE and many English vernaculars.

However, the simple existence, or lack thereof, of forms in a variety is not necessarily revealing of the system that gave rise to them. In this context, overall distributions of variants are less revealing than an analysis according to the syntactic function of the relativizer in the relative clause. Thus the same tendency towards a functional split was found in all three varieties, in that all show an increased use of zero in non-subject function and a preference for surface relativization in subject function. ANSE and ESR both favor *that* in subject function whereas *what* is favored in SE.

Beyond the preference for *that* in ANSE and ESR, and for *what* in SE, it is illuminating to compare the distribution of zero and surface relatives in subject and non-subject function in the three varieties of Early AAE, both intra-AAE, and with other varieties of spoken English for which data exist. Based on Tables 17 and 18 above we can summarize the data as in Table 32. In this table, data for contemporary spoken British (BrE) and American (AmE) English are also presented, taken from Tottie (1995, Table 4)<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Tottie (1995) reports on relativizers in subject and direct object function, but the difference between those proportions and those I report for subjects and non-subjects is immaterial here.

**Table 32: Zero relativization in Early AAE and present-day spoken American and British English.**

	Subject		Non-subject	
		N		N
SE	11%	30	36%	48
ANSE	23%	24	48%	67
ESR	41%	24	76%	44
Spoken 20th c AmE <sup>28</sup>	2%	124	53%	78
Spoken 20th c BrE	5%	183	64%	239

Much more comparative work needs to be done concerning constraints on zero relative markers in subject function, both in Early AAE and in other varieties which feature them, but this must await more systematic reports on other dialects with zero relatives in subject function. In the interim, I note that the distribution and conditioning of zero relatives in subject function show surprising parallels across the varieties I have considered, particularly in view of their sparse number in Early AAE.

First, in all three varieties of Early AAE, there is a robust increase of zero relativization between subject and non-subject function, amounting to 25% in SE and ANSE and 35% in ESR. In fairly standard spoken corpora of British and American contemporary English, relatives in subject function are rare, as expected, but not categorically absent; the increase in zero relativization between subject and non-subject function is drastic, amounting to 50–60%. It is reasonable to regard the distributions of zero and surface relatives in Early AAE and present-day spoken English as instances of the same constraint, where subject function disfavors and non-subject function favors zero relativization. It seems clear that the distribution that we now have in spoken colloquial English has developed from an earlier stage, where zero relatives in subject function accounted for a higher proportion of the total, and which would have been closer to the distributions evinced by Early AAE (cf. the discussion in Section 2.1.1 above).

<sup>28</sup> The data for AmE and BrE are taken from the Corpus of Spoken American English assembled at the University of Santa Barbara and the British National Corpus, respectively (Tottie, 1995).

Looking next at constraints on zero relativization, I split up the zero relatives into two groups, subject and non-subject function. For the latter, the existing literature offers a fair amount of information concerning factors favoring its use in more or less standardized varieties of English. Although I did not discover a completely consistent constraint hierarchy across ANSE, SE, and ESR, this may be due to the inherent interactions between choice of relative and particular environmental features. In any event, I have found that the three dialects pattern similarly with respect to all but one of the constraints previously examined in the literature. Thus pronominal antecedents and adjacency of the antecedent NP head and the relative marker, two factors that are well established as favoring zero relativization in other varieties of English, also favor the zero relative marker across the three varieties of Early AAE, although the effects are stronger for ANSE and ESR than for SE. Personal pronouns as subjects of the relative clause favor zero relativization in two out of the three varieties.

The existing literature has little to say about constraints on the use of zero relatives in subject function. Testing the same factors as those examined with regard to relatives in non-subject function, it was possible to show that indefinite NPs as antecedents favor zero relativization across the three varieties, most strongly in SE and ESR, and that antecedent/relative marker adjacency correlates with zero relative markers in subject function in ANSE and ESR. This indicates that these constraints would be worth testing on other English dialects with zero relatives in subject function.

Although no fully accountable studies seem to exist, many studies of zero relatives in subject function point out that they often occur in existential *there*-constructions, possessive *have/have got*-constructions, and *it/that*-clefts (cf. e.g. Ball, 1996); this holds for British dialects as well as Appalachian English. I have shown that Early AAE exhibits the same types of constructions (with variation between *there*, *it*, or *ain't* in AAE existential constructions) in much the same distribution as Appalachian English. A wide variety of other types was also attested, in Early AAE as in the other varieties. More systematic and accountable quantitative work is needed to establish accurate constraint hierarchies for the zero variant in this function,

but it seems clear that the similarities between Early AAE and other non-standard varieties with respect to this feature can hardly be due to chance or indeed to a creole substratum.

Thus, this analysis adds to the accumulating evidence based on other linguistic factors (such as, negation: Howe, 1995; Howe and Walker, in press; present tense -s: Poplack and Tagliamonte, 1991b; the plural: Poplack and Tagliamonte, 1992, 1994; the future: Poplack and Tagliamonte, 1995, 1996; Tagliamonte, 1991; past tense: Tagliamonte and Poplack, 1988, to appear; question formation: Van Herk, in press) that these varieties of Early AAE are descended from the same genetic stock, and that this stock is English, with strong representation of non-standard features. To this I must add the mounting sociohistorical evidence against the existence of a prior widespread plantation creole as the ancestor of AAE (Mufwene, in press).

In concluding, I stress that the parallels in relativization strategies I have described obtain despite the substantive differences in rates of variants in each of the three varieties of Early AAE. An intriguing direction for future research concerns the question of why each variety shows the distinct variant preferences it does. In particular, why does ANSE, elsewhere characterized by a preponderance of non-standard variants (Poplack, forthcoming; Poplack and Tagliamonte, forthcoming), feature so much standard *that*, while SE shows a marked preference for *what*? The fact that education plays no role in constraining relative marker selection, at least in Samaná (see Appendix I, Tables 33 and 34), where this was studied, suggests that these preferences were already present in the varieties that served as models for the early slaves.

Particularly revealing in this connection is Ball's (1996: 243) observation that there seems to be "no vernacular norm for either BrE or AmE with respect to the distribution of relative markers" but rather, "a wide range of variation both in the relative paradigm and in

relative frequencies within a given regional paradigm."<sup>29</sup> This is precisely what we observe in Early AAE.

We need to know more about variable historical, dialectal and regional patterns of relativization in the British English varieties spoken by the colonists, as well as about migration patterns of British speakers from England to North America, migration patterns of African Americans within North America, and from North America to the various locales in the diaspora. These lines of research were suggested by Montgomery (1997) and illustrated by Tagliamonte and Smith (in press). We also need to study the co-occurrence of relative markers with other features of standard and non-standard English, a considerable but hopefully not impossible challenge.

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<sup>29</sup> Ball restricts her statement to subject relatives, the type she studied, but her statement seems valid for other functions as well.

## 6. Appendix I

Table 33: Rates of relative marker by individual (Samaná speakers) (restrictive relative markers only)

Speaker No.	zero		that		what		who		which		Total
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	
<i>Some formal education</i>											
002	17	15	8	7	72	63	3	3	0	0	88
003a	22	10	11	5	65	30	2	1	0	0	46
014	0	0	28	5	56	10	17	3	0	0	18
015	30	3	10	1	60	6	0	0	0	0	10
016a	8	2	4	1	50	12	25	6	13	3	24
017	36	4	36	4	27	3	0	0	0	0	11
018a	27	12	27	12	36	16	9	4	0	0	44
019a	27	16	65	39	5	3	2	1	2	1	60
<i>No formal education</i>											
001	31	9	10	3	48	14	10	3	0	0	29
004	4	1	8	2	88	21	0	0	0	0	24
005	13	5	15	6	65	26	8	3	0	0	40
008	8	1	8	1	83	10	0	0	0	0	12
Total		78		86		214		24		4	

<sup>a</sup>Individuals connected with church activities

**Table 34: Rates of zero by individual (Samaná speakers) for relatives in subject and non-subject function**

Speaker No.	zero relatives in subject function			zero relatives in non- subject function		
	%	N	Total	%	N	Total
<i>Some formal education</i>						
002	13	7	56	25	8	32
003 <sup>a</sup>	11	3	27	37	7	19
014	0	0	15	0	0	3
015	0	0	6	75	3	4
016 <sup>a</sup>	0	0	18	33	2	6
017	14	1	7	75	3	4
018 <sup>a</sup>	22	8	36	50	4	8
019 <sup>a</sup>	20	8	40	40	8	20
<i>No formal education</i>						
001	8	1	12	47	8	17
004	0	0	17	14	1	7
005	7	2	30	30	3	10
008	0	0	7	20	1	5
	Total	30			48	

<sup>a</sup>Individuals connected with church activities

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