The Founder Principle and Anguilla’s Homestead Society

1.0 Introduction

More than thirty years ago sociolinguistics pushed research about language in new
and necessary directions by revealing that “language change happens in a social
context whose factors guide the change” (Anttila 1993:44). About the same time,
work on Creole languages contributed significantly to a growing area of related
research when it described speech communities and individual speakers who
command wide ranges of speech forms (Alleyne 1971:174, Labov 1971:461-470,
McWhorter 2005:163). Ongoing research in both of these veins has shown that
findings in the study of variation remain highly relevant to answering certain
questions about language origins. In this chapter I hold that addressing new,
overlooked, or otherwise unconsidered historical data and considering their impact
on the representation of linguistic variation are ways of building on these insights
and, when appropriate, reshaping longstanding questions in the field. In particular, I
suggest that a description of the sociohistorical origins of the English-lexifier
Creole spoken in Anguilla, the most northerly of the Caribbean’s Leeward Islands,
can contribute to a more compelling and informed picture of genesis. A response to
suggestions that linguists examine Creole origins in a more diverse set of ecological
conditions (e.g., Alleyne 1980, Siegel 1987, Romaine 1982, Aceto 2003), this essay
offers a sociohistorical description of the island’s first five decades of colonization
by Britain.

Arends is one of the scholars to have rejected theories of Creole origins that
address or describe social phenomenon but do not engage history, pointing out that
“…historical correctness is not a frequently found feature of much work on creole
genesis” (2002:56). Others have made similar claims, effectively characterizing the
dominant theories of Creole language genesis as a set of barriers to advancement in
linguistic science. Chaudenson (2003:124), for example, charges that an “[…] ahistorical
and asocial approach […] has misguided creolists for a long time and led
them to formulate completely abstract hypotheses about the origins of creole
languages.” Alleyne (1986:306) makes a related argument when he writes, “Implicit
in a lar ge part of the literature on creole languages is a rather gross simplification of
the sociolinguistic situation existing at the time of genesis.” DeGraff (DeGraff and
Walicek 2005:13), staking out a neglected perspective on the discursive
construction of scientific knowledge that is consonant with critiques of colonialism,
describes a “preoccupation with beginnings” and questions “the too common belief

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research.
that Creoles are completely new languages, the newest languages that are available to inspection by linguists.”

This chapter builds on these critiques by situating Arends’ (1993:377, 2002:56) appeal for historical correctness alongside information that can assist in documenting the roots of Anguillian, the Creole language spoken in Anguilla today.¹ In doing so, it discusses the Founder Principle (hereafter the FP), a concept which was first applied to contact linguistics by Mufwene (1996, 2001). As will be explained below, linguists have used the FP to describe diachronic phenomena that connect language and social dynamics in the société d’habitation (i.e., homestead society) with shifts that occurred in the plantation period that followed it, and the contemporary structures of Creole languages. This paper offers a description of Anguilla’s early settlement, as its official founding by Britain in 1650 falls within the period that many linguists (e.g., Arends 1993, Rickford and Handler 1994, Arends 2001, Chaudenson 2001, Faraclas et al. in press) identify as key to understanding the origins of Caribbean Creoles. It does not test the FP or describe the latter stages of colonization in which a process of basilectalization purportedly made the speech of slaves more and more divergent from the lexifier. As much of Anguilla’s history still needs to be documented, this discussion of settlement is seen as a necessary first step towards a more complete (and accurate) description of language contact on the island.

This chapter consists of three main parts. Part one provides some additional background to the FP and points to ways in which it has been used to discuss and analyze social and linguistic phenomena. Part two, which describes Anguilla’s société d’habitation, provides a specific sociohistorical scenario within which some of the principle’s assumptions and hypotheses can be examined. It draws from archival sources to discuss language contact, social relationships, and possible evidence of linguistic variation during the early years of Anguilla’s colonization. The third and final part of this essay considers questions about historical correctness in a wider context and briefly looks at some critiques of the FP. Like the previous sections, it supports the view that “[…] creolization is not unigenerational, but rather a gradual process extending over a number of generations” (Arends 1993:373). These three sections have two aims: first, to shed light on the historical events and patterns of social interaction that guided processes of linguistic change among speakers in Anguilla; and second, to demonstrate that archival evidence can usefully inform theories that describe the formation of speech communities and the languages used within them.

2.0 The Founder Principle
Academics have used the FP to understand processes of change in a variety of disciplines. Among creolists, Mufwene borrowed the term from population genetics. In their overview of historical linguistics, Joseph and Janda (2003:71) revisit the use of the concept in biology, specifically Mayr’s “original” 1954 treatment of the principle.² They explain that Mayr considered founder populations (which he described as “small and isolated”) the “ideal place” for a dramatic reorganization of the gene pool “in the absence of any noticeable gene flow and under the conditions of a more or less strikingly different physical and biotic
environment” (Mayr 1982:602). Another biologist, Templeton (1980:1), extends Mayr’s work to describe situations in which genetic variability and polymorphism exist in the founder population as a set of “multilocus genetic systems” and later change via a process of selection. Below I suggest that his contributions are useful for conceptualizing linguistic variation in Anguilla’s early colonization.

Creolists discussing the FP position their work at the nexus of sociolinguistics and historical linguistics, typically approaching language change as a sociohistorical process. Those describing Caribbean societies often focus on language contact between Europeans and Africans in the early period of European colonization, the société d’habitation (i.e., the period described in works such as Arends 2001, Chaudenson 2001, Mufwene 2001, Williams 2003). They identify dynamics that led structural features of the language of initial founders (for colonies like Anguilla the assumption is usually that this “first group” is European) to be preserved in the Creole variety spoken by later generations as crucial components of early sociolinguistic scenarios.

In describing creolization, which can be thought of as a language restructuring process that is influenced by language contact in a specific historical period, FP accounts appeal to the uniformitarian principle, particularly the notion that “creoles have developed [gradually] by the same restructuring processes that mark the evolution of non-creole languages” (Mufwene 2001:1). These accounts emphasize the significance of intimate living conditions among slaves, indentured servants, and other early colonists. They (e.g., Arends 1993:372, 2001:292, Mufwene 2004) challenge rival understandings of origins that, in opposition to the gradualist position, posit a catastrophic break in transmission and the subsequent development of pidgins as “reduced means of communication based on sporadic contacts” (Mufwene 2007:67). Arends charges that such anti-gradualist ideas are “seldom based on actual historical evidence” (1993:92). He shows that archival sources take on a corrective role when they reveal stories to which theories of genesis, at best, only allude.

2.1 Diachronic Distribution and Prestige
Recognizing substantial confusion among linguists about what languages were spoken by early colonial European populations, Mufwene has repeatedly asserted that linguists should compare Creoles to the nonstandard vernaculars spoken by relevant proletarian migrant populations, rather than to more “standard” metropolitan varieties not even spoken by founders. Suggesting a methodology useful for identifying these varieties, he relates the FP to Zelinsky’s Doctrine of First Effective Settlement, which states:

Whenever an empty territory undergoes settlement, or an earlier population is dislodged by invaders, the specific characteristics of the first group able to effect a viable, self-perpetuating society are of crucial significance to the later social and cultural geography of the area, no matter how tiny the initial band of settlers may have been. (1973/1992:13, quoted by Mufwene 2001:27)
From Zelinsky’s perspective, the first settlers to establish a stable society play an unequivocally significant role in shaping the social and cultural geographies that later take form in the area, even in cases of small early settler populations. He explains: “in terms of lasting impact, the activities of a few hundred, or even a few score, initial colonizers can mean much more for the cultural geography of a place than the contributions of tens of thousands of new immigrants generations later” (1973/1992:13-14; quoted by Mufwene 2001:27).

Joseph and Janda (2003:50) suggest that the borrowing of concepts from biology into linguistics has led to some “corrective but nonetheless genuine insights – mainly of a sociolinguistic nature – which are of great value to the study of language change.” However, when commenting specifically on the use of the FP in creolistics, they doubt that the linguistic phenomena described as founder effects “[…] always involve direct analogs of their alleged biological counterparts” (2003:71). In particular, Joseph and Janda (2003:72) question Mufwene’s 1996 assertion that the features that “[…] are spread in creoles due to the [FP] might be considered disadvantageous in the metropolitan varieties of the European lexifier-languages […]” Noting that Mufwene describes these features as “rare, not dominant, and/or used by a minority,” they suggest that these features quite probably lacked (overt) prestige and were “frequent and dominant due to their occurrence in unmonitored, casual-style natural speech” (Mufwene 1996:84-85, quoted by Joseph and Janda 2003:72). They explain:

aside from the problem of quite probably lacking overt prestige, the linguistic features in question would most likely be both frequent and dominant – due to their occurrence in unmonitored, casual-style, natural speech – and it appears further that, as features of working class speech, such features would not in fact be used by a minority either, but by a majority, or at least a plurality. (2003:72)

Surprisingly, these comments neither fully reveal the importance of sequential events and a gradualist framework to the FP nor contradict the assertions made by Mufwene. While the said features may have been stigmatized within certain metropole populations and had limited statistical frequency in some contexts, these same ecological conditions did not necessarily apply in the colonies, where their selection was favored. 3

When juxtaposed with a closer look at the FP, Joseph and Janda’s commentary indicates that more attention should be given to linguistic variation as a factor of geography, culture, and time. These three points help situate their critique and merit further elaboration. First, in terms of geography, the FP does not equate the superstrate variety (i.e., “the lexifier”) spoken by Europeans in the Caribbean during the early stages of colonization with metropolitan varieties. That in some cases forms selected by those who constituted the “first group” differed from those that maintained widespread prestige in metropolitan contexts draws attention to the complexity and significance of macro-level ecological factors (e.g., migration, colonization, indentured servitude, and the Atlantic Slave Trade), which over time led founder features to be included in new communal (e.g., Caribbean Creole) varieties. Second, regarding culture and social norms, the FP allows for these to
differ across space, as non-standard vernaculars and/or Creoles did not necessarily lack prestige in the societies where they were used (e.g., those of the Caribbean). In fact, Templeton’s model implies that linguistic and sociocultural norms would vary and cluster within a community, even one small and isolated. In considering the third variable, time, the FP allows for speakers to have associated a substantial degree of overt prestige with linguistic features of the founders and for this prestige to have influenced the forms selected by subsequent generations. Parallels can be drawn between these cautionary points about collapsing sociohistorical context and Duranti and Goodwin’s (1992:6) view of context as “[…] a socially constituted, interactively sustained, time-bound phenomenon,” an approach that can assist in identifying the conditions that led speakers over time to maintain only certain linguistic forms from a larger feature pool.

2.2 Social Ecologies and the Interaction Factor

Chaudenson underscores the significance of gradualism to arguments utilizing the FP by asserting that the inequities of slavery did not lead to the genesis of Creole languages in the homestead society. Focusing primarily on French colonization, he describes the period a time of “[…] settling in, becoming acclimatized, and developing the minimum infrastructure needed by the colonial agriculture that would define the following period.” Chaudenson (2001:97) identifies a key demographic trend that differentiates social ecologies diachronically as colonization proceeds: a slow rise in the size and importance of the slave population. Within this framework, the transition from the homestead society to the next period (i.e., the plantation period) signals passage from a situation in which slaves spoke approximations of the language of their masters to one in which linguistic variation became widespread and eventually included the use of a Creole. He (2001:113) holds that the shift to the latter period is gradual rather than abrupt or absolute.

Chaudenson recognizes relations between persons of European and African ancestry in the société d’habitation as key to the sociolinguistic processes that the FP has been used to describe (2001:64). While others who discuss Creole origins deal with formulaic approaches to demographics, his generalizations about sociohistory describe micro-level phenomena associated with interaction and dynamics of daily life at the level of the speaker. Like the broader descriptive chronology associated with periodization, his explanation can be seen as a call for researchers to probe how and why social factors surrounding and shaping situations of language contact rank as pertinent to accounts of language change.

Two assertions have been made about the nature of the intimate relationships between Africans and Europeans in homestead societies. While both have proven to be influential in how linguists interpret the FP, they are probably best understood as interpretations of context-specific sociohistorical evidence rather than as hypotheses or claims of the principle itself. First, in Chaudenson’s (2001:101) words, blacks and whites lived in a period in which a “social gap […] between masters and slaves […] did not yet exist.” This view posits that frequent interaction among early inhabitants and the absence of markedly differentiated ways of life characterized homestead communities. Describing everyday experience, he holds that slaves and settlers “[…] worked in the fields, fished, and hunted together, lodged in the same
wood-and-leaf ‘huts,’ suffered from the same ills, and experienced the same food shortages in the same destitution…” (2001:101). He elaborates:

Throughout this period [the société d’habitation], most slaves were not only totally dependent on their masters (a feature characteristic of slavery), but also, because of their permanent contracts, they were confined to the narrow and isolated environment of the homestead. (2001:99)

Second, concerning linguistic behavior, Chaudenson argues that “Robinsonian conditions,” described as “the destitute style of Robinson Crusoe marooned on his island,” created quotidian patterns of living and experience which led Africans and their owners to speak in a very similar, if not identical, way (2001:12). These assertions support the hypothesis with which the FP is often associated: Africans spoke close approximations of the lexifier (i.e., the language(s) of their masters). The idea is that through locally-defined sets of conditions, persons of African ancestry, purportedly the subjects of strong linguistic assimilation, spoke like Europeans, including those who bought, owned, and sold them. Both of these claims will be examined below in terms of their applicability to seventeenth-century Anguilla.

3.0 A Diversity of Founders
Anguillian’s diverse external origins indicate that its history cannot be limited to interactions between colonizers and slaves on the island, as the social factors defining language contact there were not limited to in situ development. The context relevant for identifying the varieties that early migrants arrived with predates initial contact between Europeans and Africans on the island and extends beyond the shores of Anguilla. However, the staggered arrivals of Europeans and Africans in the second half of the seventeenth century do mark a period in time during which the ecological conditions previously associated with other places (e.g., macro-level political, economic, and ideological forces influencing language use and prestige) become influential in the fledgling society’s attempts to be viable and self-perpetuating.

LePage and Tabouret-Keller (1985:188) identify speakers as central actors in any attempt to understand the emergence of Creole languages in sociohistorical context. In broad perspective, the origins of those who migrated to Anguilla can be traced to Europe, Africa, and at least four Caribbean speech communities: St. Christopher (today known as St. Kitts), Nevis, Antigua, and Barbados. However, this migration took many forms: it was European and African, male and female, free and forced, international and intranational, transoceanic and regional, long-term as well as temporary. The narrative provided in this paper draws attention to this differentiation and the realities of linguistic variation that structures of socioeconomic hierarchy imply. Considering the relevance of Chaudenson’s assertions about relative egalitarianism and Robinsonian conditions, it explores the possibility that communicative practices and social ecology more sharply differentiated Europeans from Africans than his and most interpretations of the FP suggest. If communication among founders was structured, at least in part, by
individual linguistic abilities (e.g., fluency in African or European languages, motivation to acquire or reject a new language, bilingualism), race, or socioeconomics, then variability in cultural background, speech, attitudes toward the language of the dominant group(s), and social status may have helped to create and sustain divergent sociolinguistic norms.

3.1 Europeans in the Seventeenth Century

Written references to early settlement by the English date back to histories from the seventeenth century. Southey (1650) writes that Anguilla:

 [...] is said to have been discovered and colonized by the English this year: it was filled with alligators and other noxious animals, but the soil was good for raising tobacco and corn and the cattle imported multiplied very fast. It was not colonized under any public encouragement, each planter laboured for himself, and the island was frequently plundered by marauders. (quoted by Jones 1976:12)

These and other accounts (e.g., De Rochefort 1658, Jones 1976:12-13, Petty 1991:2) indicate that British families were the first settlers, without discussing the possible significance of others (e.g., the Arawak, Dutch, Spanish) who lived on or passed through the island before 1650.

The assumption that “the English” arrived first and that they alone therefore constitute the homestead population is complicated by the presence of other groups and the strikingly transient nature of settlement during the first few decades of colonization. Records show that a heterogeneous group (not all homesteaders, not all English, not all permanent settlers) and bound laborers (men, women, and children of European and African descent who were not always confined to their master’s homesteads) lived in Anguilla. The former included people from England, Ireland, and possibly Scotland and Wales (Mitchell 1989: 34, 50-51; Hair and Law 1998: 243; Games 2002: 38).

Archival records discussed below indicate that Anguilla’s emergent vernacular was influenced not only by varieties transferred by Europe, but also by varieties used in colonies that were founded earlier than Anguilla. A series of historical links to St. Christopher, Barbados, and other locations explains why early Caribbean varieties are likely to have been distinguished by some features, but to have shared others. Baker (1999:355) identifies two such contact languages in the English colonies prior to the official settlement of Anguilla: one variety in St. Christopher as early as 1623 and the other in Barbados after 1626. Both can be considered among those that may have been spoken in Anguilla’s homestead period. However, as suggested above, speakers from more than two points of origin certainly shaped Anguillian’s pre-cursor. In addition, the origins of and influences on their language can be traced to earlier sites of migration. For example, Antigua, another place from which Anguilla’s colonists arrived, was settled early by the British and, like St. Christopher, it received a substantial number of immigrants from Barbados, Surinam, and West Africa (Parkvall 2000:123). Speakers who emigrated from Antigua to Anguilla in the 1650s may have used some speech forms resembling
those of working class migrants arriving from Barbados in the same period.

While St. Christopher is not the only source of Anguilla’s founding Europeans, three factors indicate that the varieties used there may have had a strong influence on its emergent vernacular. Each draws further attention to the roles that geographical space and time play in organizing variation. First, interaction between the two islands (associated with colonial administration, trade, migration) was frequent during the period in which Anguilla was settled. Second, prior to Anguilla’s colonization, groups from St. Christopher migrated to two islands from which Anguilla attracted European inhabitants, Nevis in 1628 and Antigua in 1632 (Baker 1999:338). Finally, a variety used in St. Christopher may have also been transferred to or influenced the language of certain groups (e.g., migrants, persons with whom migrants from St. Christopher interacted) in Barbados (another site from which groups moved to Anguilla), even though it is typically considered a point of diffusion.

In 1656 Anguilla suffered attacks, a reminder that regional rivalries were potentially decimating for small and relatively unprotected communities. At that time the British and the French utilized it and other island niches in campaigns to subdue and destroy the indigenous people inhabiting the area (Beckles 1999:286). Carty and Petty (2000:58) claim that “Caribs” [i.e., Arawak] “[…] raided the island and wiped out the settlement, killing almost all of the men, plundering and burning all of the houses and keeping the women and children for slaves.”

Apparently a small portion of the island’s population remained in Anguilla following the conflicts of 1656, key to the maintenance of the viable and self-perpetuating settlement posited in the FP (see Williams 2003:97). Those who stayed faced future attacks (by the Arawak and French), as well as difficulties that characterized life in Anguilla for decades to come (e.g., lack of substantial rainfall, a largely limestone typography, soil suitable for few crops, limited economic opportunities, and insecurity about the settlement’s future). Ironically, those departing in 1656 and 1660 may have later acted as conduits of linguistic innovation or change on the island, as speakers who eventually returned to the island were among these groups. These returnees may have introduced new forms from elsewhere in the Caribbean, contributed to the preservation of older “founder” forms in Anguilla, or possibly done both.

A wave of immigrants arriving shortly after the 1656 exodus included a substantial number of former and runaway indentured servants, escaped criminals, and people who owed debts. Those fleeing servitude arrived from the islands of St. Christopher, Nevis, and Antigua. Williams (2003:97) suggests they lived alongside “small holders, debtors, and criminals.” St. Christopher had been recently divided between England and France. Crowding in its newly formed English sector led relatively large numbers of people to set out for less populated destinations like Anguilla in the mid-1650s (Dunn 1972:121). The wealthier among these and other early inhabitants are likely to have arrived with enough capital or credit to purchase land and labor. In contrast, migrants of lower socioeconomic status generally lacked the ability to buy farms, contracts of indenture, and slaves.
In 1660 Anguilla began to officially receive the protection of the British Crown (Williams 2003:97). Six years later the population elected Abraham Howell Deputy Governor until “some lawfully constituted authority should take up the burdens of office” (CSP 1666 document quoted by Jones 1976:13). About the same time Howell became Deputy Governor, another conflict with outsiders took place, this time with the French (Carty and Petty 2000:58, Williams 2003:97). When three hundred troops landed in 1666, “the colonists fired their own houses and took to the woods […]” (CSP 1661-1668, June 6, 1666). Once the English regained control of the island, the population had decreased in size; however, it seems that once again the group of core speakers envisioned in the FP remained. 12

Throughout the second half of the seventeenth century, conflict between colonial powers in Europe increased population movement within the Leewards and emigration to Anguilla. In April 1666 the British attacked the French in St. Christopher, seized 400 African slaves, and deported 5,000 European settlers. This led to an increase in the number of Anguilla’s inhabitants. Its existence as a place of refuge for Europeans (persons establishing themselves for the first time and returnees) contributed to the heterogeneity of linguistic forms and cultural traditions in contact. This happened while its status as a place of permanent settlement for others contributed to the continuity of forms resulting from ongoing language contact among long-term inhabitants. As political relationships abroad shifted, many who had sought refuge in Anguilla left. Subsequent to these influxes the island’s population remained relatively small.

Events in Europe point to a wave of return migration in 1667 after the signing of the Treaty of Breda (which ended the 1666-1667 war between France and England and allowed the English to regain their position in St. Christopher). A Major John Scott who visited in September of 1667 wrote of leaving the island in “good condition.” He noted that in July 1668, “[…] 200 or 300 people fled thither in time of war” (CSP 1661-1668, November 16, 1667 and July 9, 1668).

Two groups emigrated from Barbados late in the 1660s. In 1667 indentured servants who had recently completed their contracts of service arrived. A second group from Barbados joined the populace in 1668 (Petty 1991:3, Williams 2003:97). It probably included indentured servants who had completed their service and possibly some who fled bondage. Indentured servitude (usually involving whites working under a contract) was distinct from African slavery, the other major form of conscripted labor that was used in the Caribbean during this period (Wrightson 2002:140). Although they were forced laborers, “[…] Indentured servants were not considered chattels, and they were (at least theoretically) able to work off their indenture and become free; the children of these servants were not bound by their parents servitude” (Scott 2002:171).

Between 1668 and 1669 a group of Irish migrated to Anguilla from the French part of St. Christopher (Mitchell 1989: 57-58). Some accounts suggest that they ravaged the existing settlement, prompting some inhabitants to hide in the island’s scant “bush.” 13 However, it seems that within a relatively short period the different groups managed to coexist, economic activity accelerated, and the population grew.

Regional and international economic dynamics provide a wider context for documenting the relationship between migration and language change. At the time,
plantation sugar production and slavery thrived in Barbados (see Zahedieh 2002:56-57). As the industry grew and investors’ wealth increased, large planters expanded their plantations by buying smaller estates. This decreased available options for less prosperous whites and indentured servants, as neither “free” Europeans forced off their land nor indentured servants completing their service could afford land there (Mintz 1985:53). Some of them migrated to Anguilla and other northerly Leewards (e.g., Montserrat, Saba, Antigua). Given that socioeconomic hierarchy tends to correlate with patterns of linguistic variation, this exodus suggests that economic industrialization led to the dispersal of varieties spoken by a landless, exploitable labor force. Drawing attention to class division, such ideas could have reinforced the notion that it was natural for those who were deemed poor and less civilized to speak differently from the wealthier inhabitants of more profitable colonies (see Joseph 1987:56, Rickford and Handler 1994:225).

Based on this still incomplete sketch of Anguilla’s early European presence, three working hypotheses, each of which at this stage I see as generally compatible with the FP, can be formulated. First, both the pre-settlement chronologies and interactions on the island define and differentiate the experiences and dynamics of this speech community and should be considered in identifying its founders, the language(s) they used, and the nature of linguistic interactions among them. The complex web of crisscrossing migratory paths that contributed to the shaping of this society, various attacks, erratic influxes and departures of refugees and migrants, and the local impact of conflicts and changes in Europe all point to ways in which speakers were affected by political-economic relationships outside their immediate environment.

Second, Anguilla’s founders include a number of groups that challenge common assumptions about the category “founders” and “English.” These subcategories include but are not limited to Caribbean migrants from places such as St. Christopher, Barbados, Nevis, and Antigua. Individuals in these groups could have made distinct but overlapping contributions to the feature pool from which speakers selected the linguistic forms that eventually crystallized into the colonial vernacular. When membership in the pool of speakers considered to be founders is opened to the wide variety of speakers in the first few decades of settlement, it becomes a diverse as well as fluid group.

Third, micro-level distinctions that operate within categories of place and nationality assist in understanding language contact on the island. Significantly, a given set of linguistic features do not simply and/or uniquely correlate with one place alone (e.g., England, St. Christopher, Anguilla). Highly relevant quotidian social distinctions (e.g., those existing between men and women, long-term and short term residents, landholders and non-landholders, “free” homesteaders and indentured servants, Protestants and Catholics) probably led linguistic parameters and speaker identities to be configured differentially across subgroups of founders. These differences point to the existence of social gaps among Europeans and draw attention to living conditions (e.g., difficulties farming, attacks, raids, economic vulnerability, frequent migration) that for the majority of the island’s early population appear to have been distinct from those described above as Robinsonian. Among these is the reoccurring phenomenon of a core group of people finding
refuge in the woods in times of crisis, a pattern that could have contributed to cohesion and to the reconfiguration of the power relations that determined which founders and norms dominated the island’s landscape thereafter. The further study of available sociohistorical data can assist in demystifying the sociolinguistic processes which shaped and reflected interaction within the population. It can also help to reconstruct factors that might have encouraged features selected by given speakers to filter down through subsequent generations in ways that may have been disproportionate to the size of the founder population.

3.2 Africans in the Seventeenth Century

Anguilla’s colonization, like that of other Caribbean islands, coincides with the sale and commodification of Africans that Britain relied on to propel its expansion throughout the globe. The largest numbers of slaves the English forcibly transported in this period were taken from West Africa, an area that early European observers described as “linguistically and ethnically fragmented” (Hair and Law 1998:241). While it began as an erratic trade, the regular shipment of enslaved Africans to the Leewards increased and became regular by the early 1640s when large-scale sugar production began in Barbados (1998:255). Initially this primarily illicit trade was concentrated around New Calabar (in Nigeria). Later it centered around Allada (Republic of Benin) (1998:254). Before 1710, the English and the Dutch supplied the majority of the British Caribbean’s enslaved laborers.

Anguilla’s earliest African inhabitants were probably slaves from St. Christopher, Antigua, and the other islands from which Europeans migrated. It is clear that some of the earliest Africans in the region were taken to St. Christopher from Senegal in 1626 (Hubbard 2002:21-22). Perhaps first introduced to Anguilla in small numbers in the late 1650s or early 1660s, Africans definitely constituted a substantial portion of the population by the 1680s. Like Europeans, this sector included numerous ethnicities and subgroups, including women, children, elderly, and the infirm. This diversity contributed to the sociolinguistic complexity of the homestead society. Unfortunately, due to the position of the enslaved in colonial society, information available about them is more fragmented than data about Europeans. Furthermore, sociohistorical data about Africans in the seventeenth century is sometimes assumed to be irrelevant or altogether irretrievable, an affront to the attempt to implement historical correctness as envisioned by Arends.

According to Singler (1993:242-243), the linguistic origins of those Africans who were forced to migrate during the period up to 1710 can be traced to three areas: the Gold Coast, the Slave Coast, and the Windward Coast. He states that those Africans enslaved and exported from the Gold Coast spoke mainly Akan, a Western Kwa dialect cluster; those from the Slave Coast generally spoke another Western Kwa cluster, Ewe-Fon; and those from the third area, the Windward Coast, included speakers of Mande, particularly Northwestern Mande and to a lesser extent Western Kru languages. According to Rawley (1981:94), the majority of the slaves the Dutch transported to the Caribbean came from the Slave Coast (contemporary Togo and Benin) during the early phase of Leeward colonization.

One of the challenges linguists face is that the designation “Windward Coast” as used by slave traders remains difficult to precisely place within Africa. Hall
(2005:30-31) finds that it could mean anywhere from Greater Senegambia / Upper Guinea to the Bight of Benin. However, she states (2005:105) that the English increasingly traded on the Gold Coast and the Slave Coast (especially Lower Guinea), perhaps diminishing somewhat the problems that the “Windward” distinction poses for determining the origins of Africans who were taken to Anguilla in the late 1600s. By the 1690s the English controlled most of the slave trade to their colonies (Hair and Law 1998:257).

When the Royal African Company replaced the Company of Royal Adventures in 1672, a slave depot to serve the Leewards was established in Nevis. Typically planters from Nevis had “first choice” in buying slaves, prompting buyers’ and owners’ complaints about the quality and quantity of slaves from would-be purchasers in places like Anguilla (Dyde 2005:55). Williams (2003:98) claims that slavery in Anguilla was not firmly established at this time; however, difficulties Europeans faced in sustaining the community and their simultaneous reliance on enslaved labor suggest that Africans were integral to the existence of the settlement almost from the outset. The establishment of the Nevis depot and three additional factors support the proposal that African slavery was solidly established in the seventeenth century, rather than in the late eighteenth as Williams suggests.

First, African labor made possible any cultivation of relatively large tracts of land and the early colonists’ exportation of agricultural products. In terms of indirect evidence, both Soothe and De Rochefort refer to the growing of tobacco, a plant that the indigenous Arawak of the region also grew. Dyde (2005:43) and Petty (1991:2) refer to 1658 reports that Anguillian tobacco was “highly prized by experts.” In addition, small groups of slaves probably labored in the production and export of other items (e.g., cotton, wool, cocoa, indigo). While some accounts depict slaves as brute, unskilled laborers, early settlement reveals that Africans were important to Anguilla’s sustenance. Some are likely to have contributed valuable knowledge and expertise about raising livestock and harvesting salt, yams, and coconuts from Africa, as these practices existed in seventeenth-century Anguilla as well as across their ancestral homelands. Most Africans were probably owned by smallholders and “small gentry” (see Dunn 1972:129).

Second, records suggest that if Anguilla was like nearby English possessions, then a small number of Africans existed from the outset of European arrival or shortly thereafter. By the mid-1660s enslaved African labor was widespread in St. Christopher and Nevis (see Dunn 1972:123-124). In 1666, Governor Willoughby complained to Britain’s King that “all the islands” were short of slaves, writing, “these settlements have been upheld by negroes and cannot subsist without supplies of them” (emphasis added, quoted by Dyde 2005:54). Such communications support the idea that Africans were crucial to the success of the settlement early on and indicate that Europeans considered slavery necessary in Anguilla and places where the environment proved relatively hostile to settlement. The 1678 Leeward Island population estimate alludes to Africans’s presence when it specifies that the number it gives for Anguilla refers specifically to 550 “whites.” Statistics for the same year from neighboring English Leewards (i.e., Antigua, Nevis, and Montserrat) indicate that approximately thirty-four percent of European households owned slaves (Dunn 1972:129).
Third, documents chronicling the move of colonists from Anguilla to Crab Island (today Vieques, part of Puerto Rico) in 1688 confirm slavery as a fundamental socioeconomic institution in the seventeenth century. At this time a large portion of the European population, three hundred, chose to flee harsh living conditions. They left and took one hundred enslaved Africans with them to Crab Island (Amédée Bonnet Benítez 1977, Guisti 1993). Too valuable to be left behind, this migration confirms that settlers saw Africans as key to successfully establishing themselves elsewhere. Their movement, like a 1689 evacuation of Anguilla’s population to Antigua (Oliver 1894, Mitchell 1989), underscores that the homestead environment was neither isolated nor strictly bound by geography, challenging somewhat a strict application of the theoretical assumptions of the FP. While this group of slaves has frequently been described in colonial documents as “from Antigua,” the comparison of English and Spanish archival materials indicates that they were from Anguilla.

Contesting Chaudenson’s proposal that a social gap between Africans and Europeans did not generally exist in the société d’habitation, evidence of slavery is consistently intertwined with evidence of social stratification. Africans possessed very few of the freedoms and rights that Europeans did. For example, slaveowners often had the option of deliberately following the migratory routes of relatives or people from their home regions, pursuing economic opportunities, and maintaining formal relationships (economic, social, and political) with persons on nearby islands. Africans had no such options. They were purchased and treated as property. Some reached Anguilla as a result of their masters’ decisions to migrate. In addition, were frequently captured, taken away, and sometimes resold as a result of conflicts with foreign powers (e.g., France’s 1656 attack on Anguilla, Britain’s 1666 attack on St. Christopher).

Period wills from Anguilla which identify Africans as inheritance and transfer their ownership among Europeans also demonstrate that the enslaved had less control of their destinies than did their masters (Mitchell 1989: 138-140, 144). They support Zahedieh’s (2002:57) argument that in this period slaves were a valuable commodity in the eyes of their white owners and among the most lucrative investments European households could make. Wills show that the transfer of slave ownership was a means of passing along wealth to descendants, celebrating marriage, marking entry into adulthood, and paying debts. They are a reminder that Africans did not have equal access to the school and church that were evidently important to community formation in late seventeenth-century Anguilla. These institutions, established on the “glebe land in The Valley,” (Mitchell 1989: 46) were established for Europeans, not the slaves they owned.

Further evidence of a social gap between Europeans and Africans in the British colonies, the 1661 “Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes,” institutionalized the rigid separation of persons of African descent. It established that European masters were responsible for the feeding, sheltering and clothing of slaves, whom it describes as “heathenish,” “dangerous” and “brutish.” In 1676 the Act of Barbados forbade religious instruction to slaves on the grounds that it would lead to “notions of equality.” As Chaudenson and others suggest, the type of racism associated with the nineteenth century plantation economy was not widespread in
the seventeenth century; however, evidence underscores the existence of social stratification, the unequal distribution of limited resources, and ideological precursors to modern racism—aspects of inequality that Wrightson (2002:152) terms an “emergent transatlantic complex”—in Anguilla in the seventeenth century.16

African slavery and indentured servitude differed from one another during this period. Occupying an intermediary position between owners and slaves, indentured servants had limited privileges and were indeed frequently subject to abuse; in contrast, “Africans and Afro-West Indians […] [were] available for perpetual slavery in a way that English servants were not” (Fields 1990:104). The 1661 Servant Code had the purpose of protecting masters’ investment in servants, facilitating servants’ social and political suppression, and protecting them from the excesses of brutal masters. Court records from 1700 show that in Anguilla an indentured servant of European ancestry (but not an African) could bring charges against his master in a court of law, pointing to severe whippings, forced labour, inadequate food, and “working in the fields as a slave […]” as cruel and inhumane treatment.17

Data discussed in this section have been used to make several assertions about the early presence of Africans in Anguilla. At least two deserve reiteration. First, records suggest that Africans with similar and overlapping experiences and backgrounds (e.g., those from the Gold Coast and the Slave Coast, enslaved Africans sold in Nevis, the slaves of smallholders who migrated from St. Christopher) clustered in Anguilla. This casts doubt on the proposal that Africans were necessarily an excessively diverse or random group of speakers who did not communicate among themselves using their native tongues (or other African languages) or a learner’s variety of a European language. Numerous questions arise: Were some slaves more likely to speak mutually intelligible languages or share a language of interethnic communication than others? Did political-economic factors lead Africans of similar linguistic backgrounds to cluster in Anguilla and other settings? Were groups of slaves who migrated with their masters more likely to target the language of European founders than individuals purchased in Nevis? How might the language attitudes of African-born founders have differed from those among them who were born in the Caribbean?

Second, slavery existed within the first few decades of colonization, possibly from the onset of English arrival, a period in which Africans were sharply differentiated from those who enslaved them as well as indentured servants. Linguists’ writings on the FP suggest that social and economic practices characterizing African-European interactions from the early stages of colonization could have had a continuing and decisive influence on the language of their descendants. At the same time, cultural, social, and economic conditions associated with slavery and settlement may have supported not only Africans’ approximations of European languages, but also a range of communication and expressive styles. Explicitly recognizing seventeenth-century Africans as founders calls for the consideration of a number of sociolinguistic scenarios: Did social hierarchy lead some Africans to sustain substrate forms? Could it have encouraged some to target
non-European forms? Did it make creolization a more protracted process than it would have been otherwise? Could it have set the stage for the emergence of linguistic forms and utterances that are “[…] not easily and unequivocally […] assigned to any existing idealised language system (such as ‘English’ or ‘Twi-Asante’), but rather all belonged to an interlanguage” (Alleyne 1986: 313)?

The aforementioned questions complicate, and exist in tension with, the view that amiable or intimate relations between Europeans and Africans systematically led European vernaculars (and Africans’ approximations of them) to dominate, or be the most important or influential of, the sociolinguistic interactions among founders. They are meant to suggest that Anguilla’s founder community might actually qualify as a space and where “[…] alternative or opposing linguistic forms were generated and maintained” (Woolard 1985:740). This possibility does not preclude that some Africans learned colonial-era European vernaculars, but does draw attention to variation and the idea that emergent ways of speaking may have been marked not only as European, but also as African. As Alleyne (1980:305) argues, substrate languages are generally more significant to the sociolinguistic landscape than has been recognized.

4.0 Sociohistorical Extrapolation

While Mufwene and Chaudenson have posited that Africans who lived in colonial settings during the first decades of their settlement may have spoken close approximations of the European lexifier, they have also stressed the importance of recognizing variation. Mufwene (see Chaudenson 2001:ix), for example, offering a valuable caveat to the blanket application of the FP, holds that “Every theory generalizes from a limited body of facts.” As he points out, Chaudenson’s argument is “[…] based on the analysis of French creoles, especially those of the Indian Ocean.” Rejecting an “either-or” approach to linguistic/sociohistorical evidence, Mufwene goes on to establish an important distinction between theory and its application to specific historical trajectories, stating: “What matters most […] is how much can be extrapolated from Chaudenson’s study of the linguistic and other consequences of French settlement colonization to similar forms of colonization by other nations” (Chaudenson 2001:ix). Mufwene’s comments complement efforts to examine linguistic outcomes across systems of colonization (e.g., Dutch vs. English vs. French, vs. Spanish) as well as cases such as that of Anguilla, where colonization does not resemble what some creolists (e.g., Alleyne 1980, Aceto 2003, Faracles et al. in press) see as prototypically British.

Other researchers also draw attention to the period identified as the homestead period, but represent it as an era of social and linguistic heterogeneity (see Alleyne 1971:170, 1980:219). They question the assertion that a single language served as the principal means of communication among early inhabitants of the colonies. Commenting on the language of Barbados in this period, Rickford and Handler (1994:228, original emphasis) state:

[It] is unlikely to have been any ONE variety at any earlier time, as some scholars seem to be suggesting. Given the heterogeneous background of the island’s white population (composed of, for example, English, Scots, Irish with
their own internal regional and class differences) as well as the heterogeneity of the African-born population and given the differences in lengths of residence and social networks among the island’s inhabitants, it is as unlikely during the seventeenth century, as it is now, that EVERYONE spoke the same way (whether metropolitan or creole).

This latter perspective emphasizes linguistic diversity within communities composed of persons from Western Europe and West Africa, the same geographical areas from which newcomers to Anguilla arrived. It can be seen as having a stronger synchronic than diachronic dimension. Like this account, its focus is often the homestead society itself rather than its comparison to later periods. With this in mind, it seems that Anguilla’s *société d’habitation* resembles that which Rickford and Handler identify for Barbados. However, it should also be pointed out that the FP is not necessarily incompatible with the proposal that these settings were linguistically heterogeneous, even though some interpretations of the FP appear guilty of erasing or diminishing crucial aspects of sociolinguistic diversity.

In a discussion of the FP, McWhorter questions the utility of sociohistorical data such as that discussed above. He (2005:154) critiques the assertion that “a creole could have plausibly developed from a lexifier via a series of incremental approximations [...]” on the grounds that FP explanations “[...] spare linguistic demonstration in favor of extended sociohistorical extrapolation.” An advocate of the view that Creoles can be responsibly defined on language-internal grounds alone (e.g., McWhorter 1998, Parkvall 2000), he (2005:162-163) seems unconvinced that the failure to examine social context in analyses of Creole origins can constitute a serious methodological error. 18 His view of the FP does not necessarily treat language change and the diversity of relationships that characterize social interaction as historical phenomena that inform and respond to one another. It contrasts markedly with the position that “What we should really strive for, in diachronic pursuits [...], is what could be called “informational maximalism” – that is, the utilization of all reasonable means to extend our knowledge of what might have been going on in the past, even though it is not directly observable” (Joseph and Janda 2003:37).

Hymes (1974: 4) argues that it can be necessary for linguists to examine multiple facets of the history, social institutions, and linguistic forms of a given community. The consideration of non-linguistic data can strengthen the arguments presented above. Land ownership, for example, provides additional evidence of socioeconomic stratification and racial hierarchy in seventeenth century Anguilla. In 1673 William Stapleton, Captain General and Chief Governor of the Leeward Islands, granted the former Deputy Governor, Captain Abraham Howell, power to “give grant sett Pattents for Lands.” Early titles are for large tracts and “plantations” (see Mitchell 1989: 1673 and 1684 patents, Petty 1991:3, Jones 1976:14), not for subsistence plots of the sort sometimes assumed to have dominated the landscape in this period. 19 Relevant for formulating a link between land tenure and sociolinguistic phenomena, only persons of European descent with substantial economic resources could purchase land. Persons of African ancestry were allowed neither to buy, rent, nor legally own land, nor could they freely cultivate for their
own use the tracts owned by their masters. Land ownership *per se* did not necessarily lead to linguistic differentiation or linguistic stratification, but its distribution and ongoing importance in the island’s history indicates that the “haves” probably did maintain an upper hand in implementing what Sankoff (1980:5) describes as “[…] a highly structured system of speech varieties which mirrors and reinforces social class and power distinctions.” In addition, it shows that whites and blacks in Anguilla were clearly not on “[…] a nearly equal footing” as Chaudenson (2001: 97) suggests was the case in other French and English colonies.

Arends’ appeal to historical correctness can be seen as a desire for linguists to examine sociohistorical data and theory and the accumulative effects of what might be considered an aversion to history and a preference for illusions of ideological neutrality. It motivates complex readings of documents, including ones that explore how the experiences of slaves and other marginalized migrants (i.e., “histories from below”) inform understandings of language contact, language shift, and creolization in ways that scholarship which focuses on or adopts only their owners’ points of view does not. Blurring any constant distinction between extended sociohistorical extrapolation and linguistic science, it intimates that linguistic analyses which posit that Creoles develop via processes which are qualitatively different from those of non-Creole languages should not be held exempt from postcolonial critiques of researchers’ representations of the peoples, cultures, and minds of colonized places. Here historical correctness is invoked to argue that the manner in which early linguistic forms crystallized into a precursor of contemporary Anguillian was a gradual and protracted processes that began around the second half of the seventeenth century and continued thereafter.

In Anguilla, the coexistence of culturally distinct groups in a relatively small, hostile, and early on unfamiliar, landscape acted as a protracted catalyst for cultural contact and linguistic change. Language contact during the 1600s remains intertwined with “[…] the social stratification of languages and levels of speech unmistakable in any complex speech community” (Sankoff 1980:5), despite the fact that the colony had been established for only a short time, and the existence of more egalitarian relationships between Europeans and Africans in the seventeenth century than in later periods. While social interaction among European and African founders may have encouraged mutual influence, hybridization, and koinéization of divergent linguistic forms, sociohistorical data underscore the existence of a social gap between Europeans and Africans in a stratified settlement where the founder event did not necessarily lead to reduced levels of linguistic variation. This finding, congruent with Templeton’s elaboration of the FP, confirms the possibility of a multilocus system distributed across a landscape in which tension, conflict, and resistance affected the maintenance and emergence of group boundaries, identities, communicative norms, and acts through which groups distinguished themselves from one another. Such varied configurations provide the contexts for the early stages of language change in Anguilla. They alone did not determine the outcome of language contact. Further research will determine whether sociohistorical data from subsequent periods support the hypothesis that only certain forms (e.g., those of Europeans and those of Africans who chose to target or approximate the
language of their masters) were maintained diachronically.

References


McKinnen, D. 1804. *A Tour Through the British West Indies in the Years 1802 and 1803, (…)*. London: J. White.


In this chapter Anguillian refers to the Creole spoken today in Anguilla, following the suggestion that such references utilize “adjectives of nationality” (Alleyne 1980). Speakers refer to this language using several names, including Anguillian, Anguilla Talk, dialect, English, and occasionally Guiili. Many Anguillians use the label “English” while also recognizing distinctions between the Creole and the island’s British-influenced “standard” (also “English”).
Labov (2001:503-504) holds that Sankoff (1980) “independently formulated” the idea as the “first past the post’ principle;” however, as a reviewer of this essay commented, she did not return to it in later discussions of Creoles. The history of the FP and closely related theories varies across sources and deserves more attention, but the task of clarifying it falls outside the scope of this chapter.

I appreciate the anonymous reviewer’s remarks on these matters and have used them in formulating this statement.

Chaudenson (2001) associates the plantation period with the emergence of three phenomena: (i) “social distance” between persons of European and African descent, (ii) the appearance of agro-industrial development, and (iii) Creole language genesis.

Cassidy (1980) argues against the idea that St. Christopher plays a critical role in the development of Atlantic English Creoles, a possibility seen favorably in Cassidy and LePage (1967). As explained by Cooper (1998:382), Cassidy rejects the latter position and the importance of the Leeward Islands as a whole, on the grounds of “their remoteness and small size.”

Contact probably increased after the first decade of settlement when William Watts was made Governor of both islands (Dyde 2005:43).

The settlement of persons from Antigua in Anguilla mentioned here preceded the arrival of Codrington and his group from Barbados in 1674. See Baker (1999:339) and McKinnen (1804:73).

Baker (1999:339) points out that these groups briefly constituted about thirty percent of the population of Barbados. He notes that persons from St. Christopher migrated to Barbados in 1627 and 1629 and suggests that their arrival impacted language change there. According to Petty’s (1991:2) description of the 1656 Amerindian conflict in 1656, “Most of the men were killed while the women and children were taken away.” Beckles (1999:287) describes the Arawak’s “strike and sail resistance strategy” during this same era and comments on resistance to two serious infractions on their freedom: the confiscation of their lands and ongoing attempts to enslave them. When Europeans settled Anguilla in the 1650s the indigenous people of the region were at least periodically present in the area.

Nearly half of the European immigrants to the West Indies in the seventeenth century were indentured servants (Beckles 1998:223).

Wars between Holland and England hindered commerce and the prohibition on foreign trade prevented the arrival of supplies, leading to a reduction in “fighting men.” Officials asked for indentured servants to be sent over and for “some speedy course [to be taken] to remedy these evils ….” (Oliver 1894:xxvii)

This action prompted the English who had settled there to flee to Virginia, Jamaica, and Nevis (CSP 1661-1668 – June 6, 1666).

Today some Anguillians say that the Irish formed the bedrock of early European settlement. Some from the Island Harbour area on the eastern end of the island trace their family lines to Irish, and to a lesser extent Scottish, migration.

Creolists have suggested that these slaves are generally more likely to have been African-born and to have spoken West African languages than in the century to follow when more were Caribbean-born (Chaudenson 2002:127). Multilingualism or proficiency in more than one African language was documented among many ethnic groups in the 1600s (Hall 2005:170).

Shipping records describing exports from Anguilla to Antigua suggest that these crops were grown in Anguilla in the late-seventeenth century. At least one slaveholder from Anguilla, R. Richardson, is among the “masters” of the sloops which transported these products. See Mitchell (1989: 125-126.)
Data from Anguilla support Scott’s (2002:173) position that as early as the seventeenth century, “The ruling class increasingly defined slaves as property, rather than as people, and placed the property rights of the owner above the individual rights of the slave.”

Philip Leonard, brother of George Leonard (then Governor of Anguilla), describes abuse at the hands of Colonel Norton. See “The Trial of Governor Norton at Old Road on December 10, 1700” in Mitchell (1989:120-121).

See McWhorter (2005:162-163) on Chris Corne’s remarks that “[…] someone should have pointed out by now mistakes in published analyses which could have been avoided had social factors been considered.”

As noted by (Mufwene 2007:71), “[…] the development of Creole need not be associated with one particular kind of economic activity.” It seems that Anguilla’s early economy, similar to that of St. Christopher in the 1650s, was mixed, consisting of large holdings as well as smaller ones (Dunn 1972:121-122).

As Chaudenson (2001) predicts, the onset of the eighteenth century is characterized by a number of changes, including the intensification of the plantation enterprise, even though it was only minimally successful in Anguilla. Agricultural output increased and colonists experimented with sugar cultivation, contrasting with earlier years in which fewer or no exports were produced (Carty and Petty 2000:59).

Templeton holds that the founder population is not always drawn from a single local geographic population or deme of the ancestral population. He (1980: 1013) argues against the idea that an ecological shift (the act of isolation) always causes speciation, also describing situations in which “[…] speciation occurs as a byproduct of ordinary microevolutionary processes.”