

# Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies

---

Volume 7  
Issue 1 *Special issue: The Beachy Amish-  
Mennonite Churches*

---

Article 11

2019

## Dutchified English in an Ohio Beachy Amish-Mennonite Community

Lara Downing

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/amishstudies>



Part of the [Linguistics Commons](#)

Please take a moment to share how this work helps you [through this survey](#). Your feedback will be important as we plan further development of our repository.

---

### Recommended Citation

Downing, Lara. 2019. "Dutchified English in an Ohio Beachy Amish-Mennonite Community." *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies* 7(1):1-18.

This Original Research Article is brought to you for free and open access by IdeaExchange@UAkron, the institutional repository of The University of Akron in Akron, Ohio, USA. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies by an authorized administrator of IdeaExchange@UAkron. For more information, please contact [mjon@uakron.edu](mailto:mjon@uakron.edu), [uapress@uakron.edu](mailto:uapress@uakron.edu).

# Dutchified English in an Ohio Beachy Amish-Mennonite Community

LARA DOWNING

*Victims of Crime Assistance Program*

*Community Refugee & Immigration Services*

*Columbus, OH*

**Abstract:** This article compares the English spoken by Beachy Amish-Mennonites just outside the Holmes County, OH, plain community with the English of non-plain neighbors. Although there is no previous linguistic research about the Beachys in this region, previous research on the dialects of English spoken by Amish communities suggests that differences from regional standards are influenced by deliberate border maintenance, primacy of language in expressing ethnic identity, and interference from Pennsylvania German, known to speakers as “Dutchified English.” However, little research has examined the English of the Beachys, who, compared to the Amish, occupy a less conservative position between separation from and engagement with broader society. The variables I focus on are initial th-stopping, final obstruent devoicing, and the low back vowel merger. The first two variables are documented for Amish English and various German bilingual communities. Th-stopping is also socially salient and is associated with the more religiously orthodox Amish churches in Holmes County. I collected production and perception data from ten speakers in the Beachy congregation and five non-Anabaptist speakers from the same region, and I present here my findings of the use of th-stopping and final consonant devoicing, both of which are attested, although neither are used categorically, and the low back merger, which is attested categorically in all non-Anabaptists but in only one Beachy speaker. The perceptual data has theoretical implications for the role of community identity and border maintenance between non-plain neighbors and the heavily Amish Holmes County community.

**Keywords:** Beachy Amish-Mennonite; Holmes County, OH; Pennsylvania Dutch; Pennsylvania German; triglossia; language contact

**Acknowledgments:** I wish to thank everyone in the Ohio State University linguistics department who shared advice and expertise through every stage of this project, particularly my advisor Brian Joseph, Don Winford, Kathryn Campbell-Kibler, everyone in the Phonies and Changlings discussion groups, the audiences at the American Dialect Society 2015 annual meeting, and the audience at the 2015 MLK symposium, all of whom gave invaluable feedback. Most of all, I would like to thank Cory Anderson, who introduced me to the community and without whom this project would not have been possible.

---

**Address correspondence to:** Lara Downing; ldowning@cris-ohio.org; 1925 E. Dublin-Granville Rd, Suite 102 Columbus, OH 43229

**Recommended citation:** Downing, Lara. 2019. “Dutchified English in an Ohio Beachy Amish-Mennonite Community.” *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies* 7(1):1-18.

**Publication type:** Original research, open access (may be freely distributed). *JAPAS* is published by the Amish & Plain Anabaptist Studies Association ([www.amishstudies.org](http://www.amishstudies.org)) and the University of Akron.

## INTRODUCTION

“Dutchified” English refers to varieties of English influenced by contact with Pennsylvania Dutch, also known as Pennsylvania German (PG), a dialect derived from Middle High German of the Palatinate and found mainly in Pennsylvania and the Midwest United States (Van Ness 1995). While historically PG has been spoken by both secular and sectarian Pennsylvania Germans, use among secular speakers has dwindled to limited communities in Pennsylvania, whose variety of Dutchified English is nearing obsolescence (Anderson 2014). This article describes a study done on the Dutchified English of a sectarian community in Central Ohio.

Previous research on English spoken in sectarian Pennsylvania German communities—including the Mennonites, Amish, and Beachy Amish-Mennonites (“Beachys”)—shows conflicting accounts of PG interference (Enninger 1985; Enninger 1987; Fuller 2005; Huffines 1980; Johnson-Weiner 1998; Raith 1977; Rohrer 1974). This lack of consensus is unsurprising given the diversity among sectarian communities. Many sectarian communities maintain the use of PG as their L1 (primary language) and use English in limited contexts, including school and interactions with monolingual English speakers, while other communities have undergone language shift entirely to English. Between these outer bounds exists communities at just about every intermediate point. Previous research has been conducted mainly among the more conservative (and most numerous) affiliations of Old Order Amish. Relatively little is known about the English of the Beachys, a group that broke off the Old Order Amish and is more open to reassessing practices such as dress styles, technology restrictions, and theology (Anderson 2012; Schwieder and Schwieder 1977; Smith 2013).

Sectarian Pennsylvania Germans are generally considered rural ethno-religious groups that are organized geographically and socially primarily by small, local churches. Each church varies in its exact affiliation and, although it may belong to a regional or national conference, each determines its own practices to an extent. For this reason, the current study is confined to one particular Beachy church just outside the Holmes County,

OH, Amish community and to members of the geographically overlapping non-plain community.

The basic research questions explored in this study are as follows:

1. Do members of this Beachy Amish-Mennonite church use features that distinguish their English from that spoken by their non-plain neighbors?
2. If so, what features do they use that distinguish them?
3. What social perceptions are associated with those features?

In order to answer these questions, I focus on three variables: initial  $\delta$ -stopping, final obstruent devoicing, and the low back merger, also known as the caught-cot merger. The first two variables are documented for Amish English and various German bilingual communities. Initial  $\delta$ -stopping is socially salient, and is associated with the more religiously orthodox Amish groups in Holmes County.

## THE BEACHY AMISH-MENNONITES

The Beachys are an affiliation of the Amish sect of Anabaptism. Unlike the more conservative Amish branches (Petrovich 2017), Beachy Amish-Mennonites are evangelical and allow, sometimes even encourage, individuals not born to the faith to convert and become members of the church, although this remains relatively rare. It is much more common to have families or individuals who were born in a different Amish affiliation choose to join a Beachy church in adulthood.

Each congregation has its own statement of purpose regarding particular practices and beliefs. However, there are core values that are common across Beachy church communities. These include adult baptism, after which the individual becomes a full member of the church; some degree of separation from the world; privileging the church community as the primary social unit rather than the individual; and engagement in outreach programs aimed at non-plain people. A sample of practices that help define Beachy Amish-Mennonites as an identifiable group include distinctive dress, including a head covering for women; forgoing the

use of television and radio and having church-prescribed limits for internet use; and a cappella singing of hymns in church. They are distinct from the Old Order Amish in that they are car-driving rather than buggy-driving, have grid-sourced electricity and phones in their homes, and perform outreach work outside of the community (Anderson 2012).

### **The Coshocton County Beachy Community**

The Beachy congregation under study here is situated in Coshocton County, OH, directly south of Holmes County. Holmes County is home to the largest Amish settlement in the world. Although census reports only account for the Amish population, Holmes County was estimated in 2012 to be nearly 42% Amish, and represents the center of an Amish settlement of 36,000 people (Donnermeyer, Anderson, and Cooksey 2013). It is also home to some Mennonite affiliations, both conservative and mainstream groups. Holmes County is the center of an Amish-themed tourist industry, centered on Berlin and Walnut Creek, which brings many outsiders to the area for visits. Given its size, Holmes County serves as a focal point for Amish and Mennonites throughout Ohio, including those in Coshocton County.

The Coshocton County Beachys, as with all other Beachys, are car driving, have dress regulations, believe in missionary work, use electricity and phones in their homes, and restrict access to television and radio. Although many leave school after the eighth grade, some continue into high school and a few into college.

### **Language**

Pennsylvania German is both a part of the Anabaptist heritage and an important tool for maintaining a boundary between the church community and mainstream society. While Beachy communities vary in their use of PG (DeHaven 2010; Fuller 2005), the church under study consists mostly of L1 PG speakers. According to participants, only one or two families, out of a congregation of approximately 200 individuals, have members who do not speak PG. To be accessible to potential outside converts, however, all church services are held in English.

PG is used in interactions when all interlocutors speak PG and belong to the plain community,

such as interactions at home, certain work sites, and social functions. English interactions occur at school, the workplace when with non-Anabaptist coworkers or customers, and church services. My participants were split on the amount of English used in the home. One family claimed to use English and PG equally even when they were home as a family, while another family stated that they rarely use English when it is just them at home. Many Amish communities maintain a stable diglossic linguistic system wherein English is limited in the home and used at established social events only.

Given the increased personal liberties that came with leaving the Amish, Beachy churches are in a state of flux on many issues, and language is no exception. Some of my participants expressed concern for the increase in English borrowing in PG and that some children in the church do not speak PG, yet none felt that this needed to be directly addressed. For now, it is progressing naturally.

### **PREVIOUS RESEARCH**

Dutchified English is best understood as a set of features that originate from contact between PG and some dialect of American English. Benor's (2010) ethnolinguistic repertoire theory offers a useful framework for understanding usage patterns of Dutchified English. Defined as a "fluid set of linguistic resources that members of an ethnic group may use variably as they index their ethnic identity" (p. 160), the ethnolinguistic repertoire theory posits a set of distinct features that speakers are able to make use of variably. Such a theory's primary advantage in the case of Dutchified English is its ability to account for intra-speaker variation. The relevant features act as a linguistic toolkit, which speakers make use of variously depending on context. Speakers have access to both the ethnically marked and standard (or regional) features, and have a degree of agency in choosing which feature to use.

Benor applies this theoretical construct to language use among Jewish Americans to account for common contradictions that occur in the descriptions of 'ethnolects', including inter- and intra-group variation, out-group use, and delineation of the ethnic group and 'ethnolect'. These same problems arise in the use of Dutchified English,

where there is considerable variation in the use of particular features, frequency of use, and social meaning associated with their use between individuals, families, communities, affiliations, and between secular and sectarian speakers. We use the linguistic repertoire construct to interpret the findings of this particular study.

However, most previous research refers either to Dutchified English as an ethnolect, or to a variety of ‘Amish English’. Anderson (2014) describes the “unraveling” of Pennsylvania Dutchified English, which she describes as a variety of Dutchified English spoken by secular Pennsylvania Germans in south Central Pennsylvania that is quickly approaching extinction. The most salient feature, defined linguistically and socially, is obstruent devoicing, a feature which has been simplified in younger generations and now extends beyond the German devoicing in the syllable final environments to obstruent devoicing in all environments except word-initially or at the onset of a stressed syllable. According to Anderson, this feature shows unraveling in three ways: different obstruents are being devoiced, the frequency with which individuals devoice is decreasing generationally, and the phonological constraints of devoicing are changing, in that they now devoice in most environments. Use of the ethnolinguistic repertoire construct would allow for a much simpler understanding of the unraveling that Anderson describes. The phonetic rules associated with the features are simplifying by becoming broader and affecting more phonemes. They are also changing in their social meaning and therefore being utilized less frequently and by fewer speakers. Rather than characterizing the use of Dutchified features as code switching or code mixing, secular Pennsylvania Germans are using the linguistic repertoire less frequently and to achieve different goals than those of previous speakers.

Previous research on the English spoken by Amish communities in the U.S. suggests that differences from the regional standard are influenced by a number of factors, including deliberate border maintenance, primacy of language in expressing ethnic identity, and interference from PG. Early research on English spoken by the Amish describes a very heavily influenced English resulting from incomplete English competency. Frey (1945) describes Amish English as “American English built on a framework of Pennsylvania Dutch phonemic

**FIGURE 1: INTERFERENCE HIERARCHY AS PRESENTED IN ENNINGER (1985)**

1.	Initial $\theta$	$\rightarrow$	S
2.	Final r	$\rightarrow$	$\emptyset$
3.	Initial v	$\rightarrow$	W
4.	$\text{ɔʊ}$	$\rightarrow$	O:
5.	Z	$\rightarrow$	S
6.	Initial w	$\rightarrow$	V
7.	Final v	$\rightarrow$	F
8.	$\widehat{d} \text{ } 3$	$\rightarrow$	$\widehat{t} \text{ } j$
9.	eɪ	$\rightarrow$	e:
10.	$\wedge$	$\rightarrow$	ɔ
11.	Final before s: r	$\rightarrow$	$\emptyset$
12.	Final b,d,g	$\rightarrow$	$\text{b}_\text{̥}, \text{d}_\text{̥}, \text{g}_\text{̥}$

patterns and interjected continually with whole or part loan-translations from the dialect” (p. 86).

Later research characterized Amish English as being nearly indistinguishable from regional standard English except in informal settings when speakers would exhibit a degree of “interference” from PG (Raith 1980; Huffines 1980; Enninger 1985; Enninger 1987). They all refer to what is called an ‘Interference Hierarchy’, which includes 12 features in an ordered ranking, for which the lowest ranked feature is most common; where any higher feature is present, one should expect to find all lower features as well. As shown in Figure 1, the lowest ranked feature is final obstruent devoicing. The highest is the pronunciation of initial / $\theta$ / as /s/. So a person producing the / $\theta$ /→[s] feature is likely to also use all of the other features, down to final obstruent devoicing. This can be easily applied to the linguistic repertoire theoretical construct, and may give us an idea of what to expect in Dutchified English. We might find that the higher the position on the hierarchy, the more frequently the feature is used and the more widespread it is across individuals.

Huffines (1986) attributes PG features in English to L1 interference in older generations who have not achieved English fluency. In younger generations, she attributes bilingual PG English speakers, as well as monolingual English speakers, to the construction of ethnic identity. She utilizes Giles and Johnson’s (1987) ethnolinguistic



boundary model to explain intergenerational variation and variation between secular and sectarian groups. Huffines (1980) finds that among fluent English speakers, secular Pennsylvania Germans exhibited more interference because they used language as a primary mode of expressing their ethnic identity, whereas more conservative, Amish and Old Order Mennonite speakers had hard non-linguistic boundaries such as plain dress and horse and buggies.

Many Anabaptist communities have undergone language shift entirely to English and abandoned PG. Johnson-Weiner (1998) highlights the importance of the church community in making choices of language maintenance or shift. According to her, a community chooses to either use PG in order to mark themselves as Old Order Amish or Mennonite and create a boundary between themselves and outsiders, or actively choose to privilege evangelicalism and reject Old Order practices. However, many communities choose a middle path, and how they choose to navigate that path showcases the subtleties of ethnic identity. The Coshocton County Beachys walk the middle path by maintaining bilingualism even in the youngest speakers while losing the ridged domains of use, borrowing lexical items in both directions, and exhibiting features of Dutchified English non-categorically.

## METHODOLOGY

The current study compares the phonetic output and qualitative attitudinal data from two groups: a Beachy Amish-Mennonite church in Coshocton County, OH, and non-plain Anabaptists living co-territorially in the same set of townships. The purpose of this comparison is to determine if features of Beachy English are part of the regional dialect rather than characteristic of Amish English. This is particularly important because historical migration patterns in the area include a large number of migrants of German ancestry.

As a researcher, gaining access to Beachy communities raises several practical and ethical concerns. Because some degree of separatism is valued in most Beachy communities and many families may be uncomfortable with aspects of research such as having strangers in their home and around children, being recorded, being asked about problems within their community by a non-

member, and having to sign consent forms, it is necessary to have either a previously cultivated relationship of trust in the community or an informant who can direct the research in appropriate behavior and vouch for him/her. I used an informant known to this community to connect me to families who were willing to participate and who passed my contact information along to them. I was able to schedule meetings at the participants' home and interview all family members over the age of 18. All interviews with Beachys were conducted in February of 2014. I received an exemption from requiring written consent forms and received verbal consent for voice recording.

I collected data from 10 Beachy participants, collected during four separate interviews and representing four families. Two women of middle age and two sets of parents with adult children were interviewed.

The Beachy participants have roots that quite recently extended from Holmes County. Some members were born Amish or had parents who were born Amish and who lived around Holmes County's eastern border. All Beachy participants say that PG is their first language and that they either learned English at the same time or when they began school. All claimed equal or near equal fluency in both languages. This varied slightly based on their chosen career. For example, one young female recently spent time teaching out of state, where she used only English, but is now working only in the home and rarely uses English. Others stated that they use an equal amount of PG and English in the home. This group has an extremely tight social network. Most of their social interaction is with others in their church, with only occasional shared social events with other Beachy churches or local non-plain people. Four interact daily with non-plain customers at their place of employment.

The non-plain participants represent a very different type of group. Because it is a rural area and I did not have an inside informant among the locals, I had to approach people working or participating in community activities in the nearby businesses, which were few. I collected data from five individuals: one working at the local town hall, three from a genealogy club meeting, and one from a local library. All non-plain participants have sporadic contact with the Beachys, either as customers or through combined events. Although none

claimed to have local Beachy or Amish ancestry, one woman does have a grandmother of Amish decent. All non-plain participants are monolingual English speakers. Interviews were conducted between February and April of 2014.

Because the non-plain group is chiefly defined by geography and lack of belonging to the Beachy church, they make up a fundamentally different type of social group. Their social networks are loose. Two of the participants from the genealogy club meeting are sisters, but the rest are unrelated and do not attend the same churches. The town hall worker and librarian do not know any of the other participants.

Once participants were recruited, I asked them to participate in three tasks. They were first asked to read a word list containing the targeted variables, then to read a brief reading passage, and finally to engage in an informational interview. The interview portion had two parts, the first intended to collect demographic data, language background, as well as information about the participant's social network, and the second part about their perceptions and attitudes about their community in relation to other nearby communities. I recorded them using a Roland R009HR high resolution recording device. Recording conditions varied slightly between locations, due to echoing concrete floors, children talking, or other background noises. Where background noise inhibited acoustic analysis, the sample was thrown out. I describe each of the interview steps in further detail in the following sections.

### Word List

The word list consists of 78 words, containing three variables, which are discussed in detail in the following section: initial  $\delta$ -stopping, final devoicing of stops and affricates, and the low back merger. There were also filler words that contained additional variables of possible interest, but for the purposes of this article, I did not look at any of those. Each participant was asked to read the word list at a comfortable pace, repeating each word twice.

### Reading Passage

The reading passage is a 189-word paragraph. It is a short story about a son and his father fishing

before the son leaves for college. It contains between 13 and 15 possible tokens of each variable. The environment predicted to trigger  $\delta$ -stopping is represented by 15 tokens, but there is some word repetition, particularly in the words “the”, “their”, and “them”, which are all repeated at least once. However, this repetition provides the opportunity to look at potential cross lexical interaction. The participants are asked to read the passage at whatever pace is comfortable for them.

### Interview

The first part of the interview portion is intended to collect general demographic information regarding the participant's family and language background, education, employment, and social network. To that end, I questioned them regarding what language they spoke at home as children; how often they use English and PG in their daily lives; who goes to their church; with whom they socialize outside of work; what towns they have lived in; what type of schools they go to or have gone to; whether or not those schools were mostly Beachy, mostly non-Anabaptist, or mostly Amish; and what other languages they know. One family spent some time as missionaries in Haiti; thus, all family members speak some Haitian Creole. Two of the parents were born Amish and attended Amish schools as children. None claimed to socialize with non-plain people regularly outside of work.

The second portion of the interview was aimed at more subjective information. In the case of the Beachy families interviewed, I did this portion as a group. Therefore eight of the ten Beachy participants did it as a group. None of the non-plain people did a group interview, due to the circumstances of recruitment.

Every effort was made to engage all participants in the group interviews, although the fathers did tend to dominate the discussion. The motivation for doing group interviews was to create a relaxed environment for informal speech and candid opinions. This seems to have been successful in the latter goals, but the interview portion did not prove a good source of phonetic data, due to simultaneous speech, background noise, and sensitivity of the recording device. Therefore, only the reading passage and word list were used for formal phonetic analysis.

The questions in the second portion of the interview centered on the participants' perception of the Beachy community in relation to other plain churches nearby, the non-plain community, and the nearby Amish communities. The following is a sample of the questions that were asked during this session regarding interaction with other communities:

In what situations do Beachy and English [non-plain people] interact around here?

Do Amish live around here? Do Amish and Beachy interact much? In what situations?

How is your community different from other Anabaptist communities?

Other questions sought to clarify the participants' conception of terms such as "community" and how they perceived people around them to fit into it.

Is the Beachy community separate from the English community or do you consider them part of the same community? In what ways are they separate and in what ways are they the same community?

Do you wish they were more or less separate, or is it okay the way it is?

I then asked questions directly about language use. Although all participants knew that I was a linguistic researcher and had just conducted a linguistic centered task in reading the word list and reading passage, I wanted to give them the opportunity to bring up linguistic differences on their own before directly asking.

Do Beachys in your community sound any different (in English) than the non-Anabaptists? How so? What characteristics distinguish between them?

Do Beachys in your community speak differently than other Beachys in other churches? How so? Which characteristics distinguish between them?

And finally, I asked them about change in their community:

During your lifetime, have you seen Beachy practices change? How so? Are they for the better or for the worse?

Do you think the English spoken by younger Beachys is different from the English spoken by older people?

During your lifetime, have you noticed the English spoken by Beachys change? For the better or for the worse, or neither?

Altogether, this three-part process took about 25 to 40 minutes for families and about 15 to 20 for individuals; I also asked follow-up questions to get further clarification. I tried to keep this process as informal as possible.

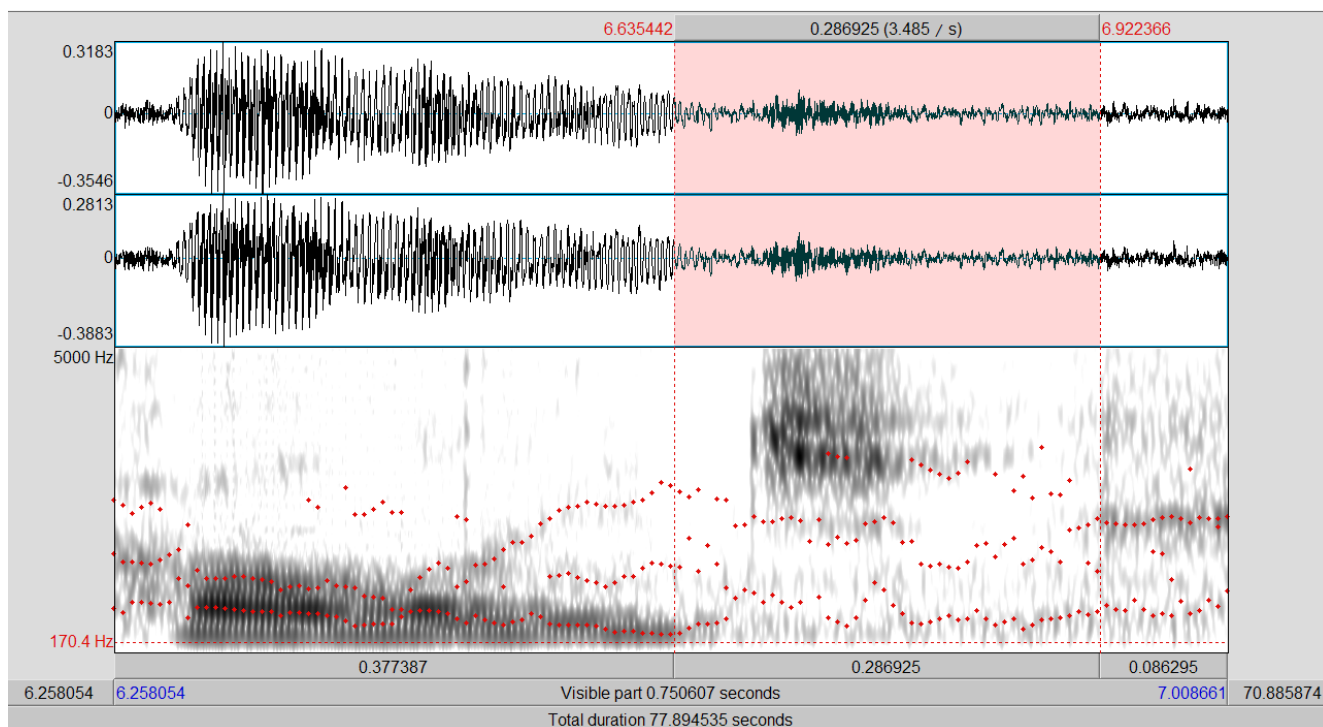
## Variables

Phonetic production data was collected for three variables: final obstruent devoicing, initial *ð*-stopping, and the low back vowel merger. Each differs in saliency; previous research also suggests it may differ by region of Dutchified English.

Obstruent devoicing is considered the most salient feature of Pennsylvania Dutchified English. Anderson (2014) describes it as the feature most quickly referenced when mimicking a Dutchified accent. It is also commodified to some degree. The humorous guidebook titled *How to Speak Dutchified English: An "Invaluable" Introduction to an "Enchoyable" Accent of the "Inklisch Lank-witch"* (Gates 1987) has four examples in the title alone. Although Pennsylvania Dutchified English devoicing has spread to obstruents in all environments, this analysis is limited to devoicing in word final position as predicted on the interference hierarchy.

Final obstruent devoicing is also the feature at the lowest level of the interference hierarchy (Raif 1980, Huffines 1986, Enninger 1985), leading one to expect it to appear in any individual who exhibits any sign of PG interference. Despite its high social saliency in Pennsylvania and inclusion in nearly all previous research on Amish English or Dutchified English, none of my participants, nor any other Pennsylvania Germans I spoke to before



**FIGURE 2. HIGHLIGHTED AREA SHOWS DEVOICING OF FINAL AFFRICATE /dʒ/ IN “COLLEGE”**

beginning formal research, including New Order Amish men in Holmes County, ever mentioned this as an example of distinct Dutchified speech.

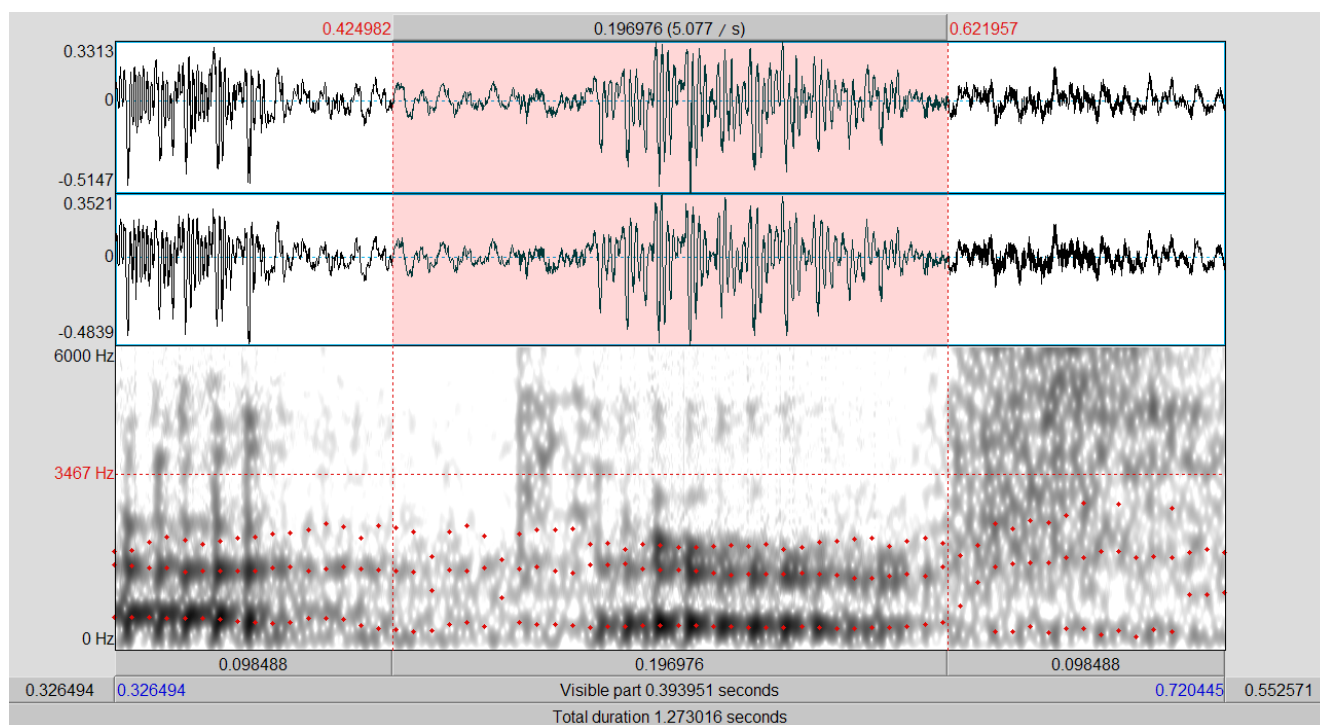
For the purposes of analysis, devoicing is treated as dichotomous, although acoustically the obstruents are only partially devoiced. Anderson (2014) demonstrates that when devoicing is socially salient, speakers treat obstruents as either voiced, unvoiced, or devoiced, without conscious distinctions between partial and full devoicing. As in PG (Kopp, 1999), devoiced obstruents still exhibit less voicing than that of voiced obstruent and more than phonemically unvoiced obstruents.

Plosives /d/, /g/, and the affricate /dʒ/ were categorized as devoiced based on spectrographic and wave form analysis in PRAAT (Boersma & Weenink, 2011), as shown in Figure 2. The length of glottal pulsing during consonant closure, voicing bar, vowel length, as well as impressionistic determination were used to label each word final obstruent after sound clips were randomized to reduce expectation bias.

Although initial  $\delta$ -stopping is not referenced in previous research on Amish English or secular Dutchified English with the exception of Thompson (2006), who describes its use in the English of Swiss Amish in Northern Indiana, it appears to

be highly salient for the Beachys. It was, without exception, the feature referenced, if any, that distinguishes Amish and Beachy English from the regional standard English. As one Beachy woman states, “Some would tend to say ‘dis’ and ‘dat’ instead of ‘this’ and ‘that.’ That’s something my Dad, he didn’t really care for... but I think it’s a little bit sloppy.” Likewise, it is also the most common feature referenced by the non-plain people. For example, one woman says, “A lot of times I will pick up that they say ‘dis’ and ‘dat.’ They’ll substitute a ‘d’ for a ‘th’.” The non-plain people mentioned a couple other features, such as the perception that Amish sound Canadian or Minnesotan, which is likely related to Canadian-like raised vowels. They also mentioned syntactic and lexical features that tend to be stereotypical examples such as “make the door shut” rather than “shut the door”.

Interestingly, although it is never directly referenced as a feature of Pennsylvania Dutchified English,  $\delta$ -stopping does appear in written Dutchified English in Gate’s humorous guidebook. In a Dutchified rendition of “Chulus Cesar” it reads, “De efil dat men do liffs after dem; De goot iss oft interrred viss dare bontz” (Gates 1987, p. 75).

**FIGURE 3. HIGHLIGHTED AREA SHOWS THE INITIAL /ð/ OF THE WORD “THEIR”**

D-stopping was also categorized dichotomously as either stopped or not stopped. This was done impressionistically and by presence or absence of a visible stop burst in the spectrogram, as shown in Figure 3. Sound clips were again randomized to reduce expectation bias.

The low back merger represents a very different relationship between the English spoken by Beachys and that of the surrounding non-plain people. While this merger is widespread across much of North America, it remains incomplete and in a transitional stage in the midland dialect region, including central Ohio (Labov, Ash, and Boberg 2008). According to *The Atlas of North American English*, the pronunciation of COT and CAUGHT is neither consistently merged nor consistently distinct in the Midlands.

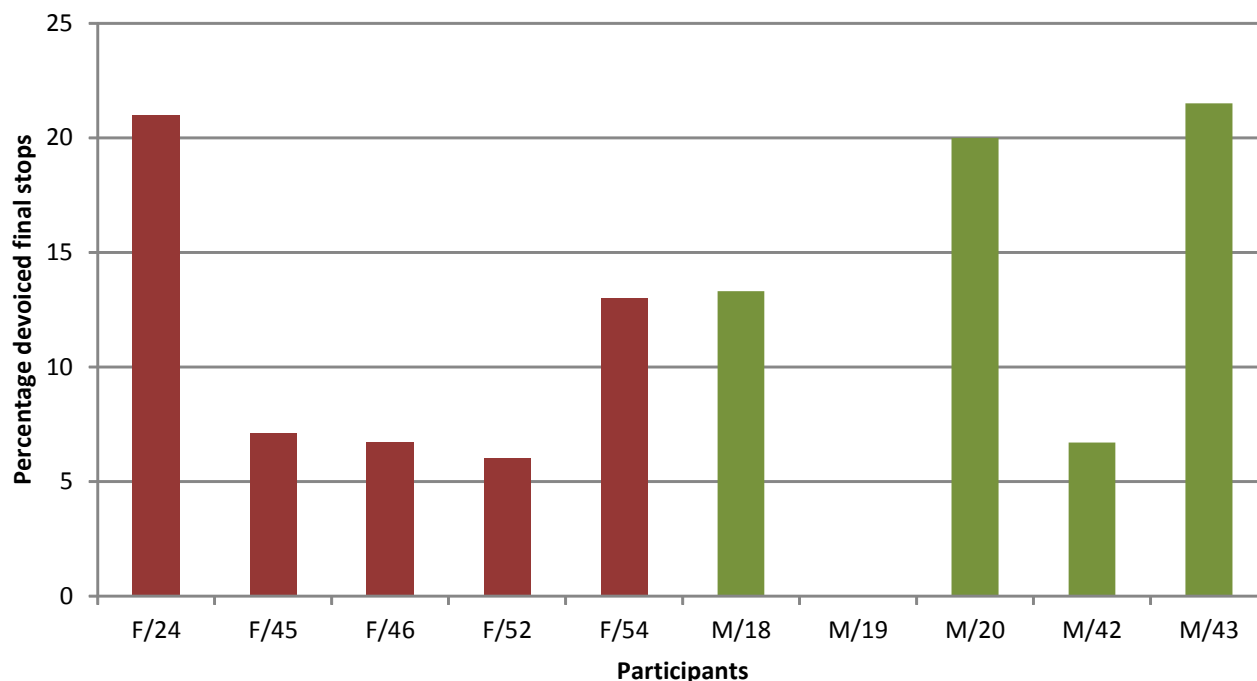
An analysis of the low-back merger helps to determine whether the Beachys are engaging in regional sound change, and whether or not they are doing so at approximately the same rate and merging to the same fronted place of articulation as the non-plain people.

I use data from the word list as well as the reading passage to analyze low back vowels /a/ and /ɔ/. Using PRAAT, I took measurements of the

first and second formants at the center of the vowel in question and plotted them on a vowel chart.

## RESULTS

The Beachys exhibit devoicing at a greater rate than the non-plain people. However, there is also significant individual variation, as shown in Table 1. Only one Beachy participant does not devoice any final obstruents during the reading passage, the 19 year-old male who is attending a nearby community college. The oldest male and the young female who recently spent time out of state teaching children devoiced over 20% of the possible final obstruents. There are no clear patterns related to gender, age, or degree of daily interaction with non-plain people, although the sample is too small to make statistical inferences. However, these two are father and daughter; the young male who does not devoice is part of the other family. This does not mean that such trends do not exist, but given the relatively small token number in this sample, we must leave speculation about social meaning to future studies. All but one of the Beachy participants demonstrated that they sometimes devoiced obstruents word finally and sometimes produced those same obstruents fully

**TABLE 1. FINAL OBSTRUENT DEVOICING AMONG BEACHYS IN READING PASSAGE**

voiced. However, it must also be stated that the reading passage from which the devoicing data was collected is not able to offer comparisons for all possible prosodic environments.

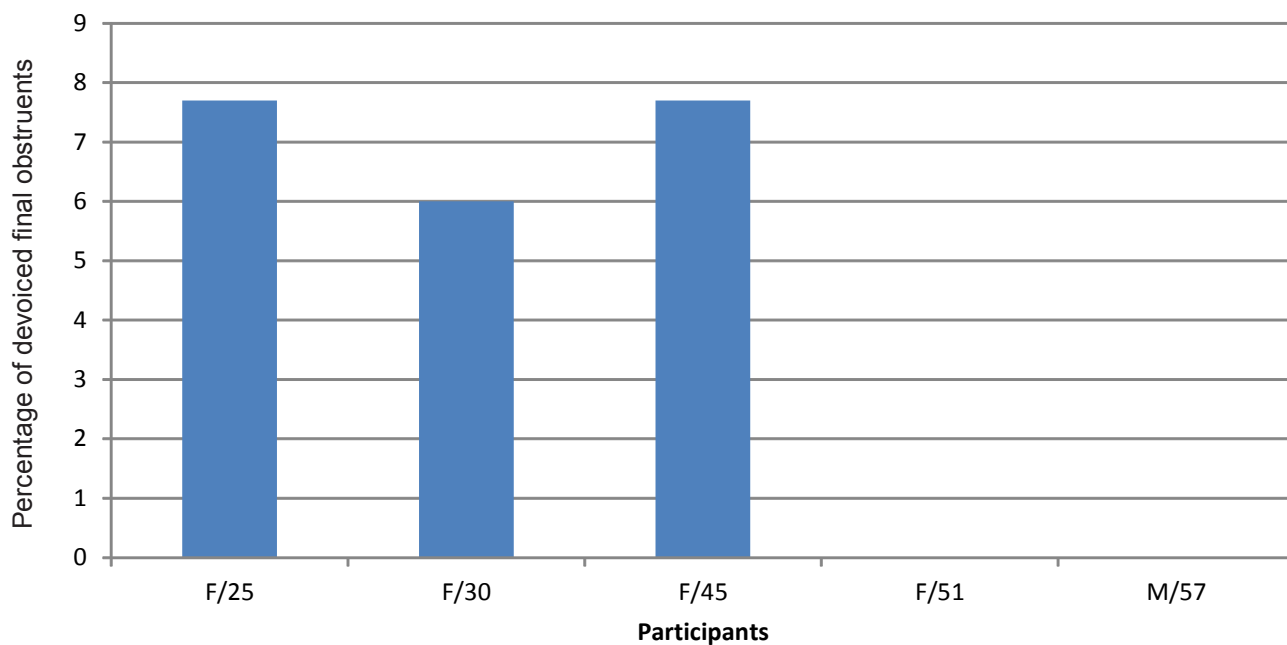
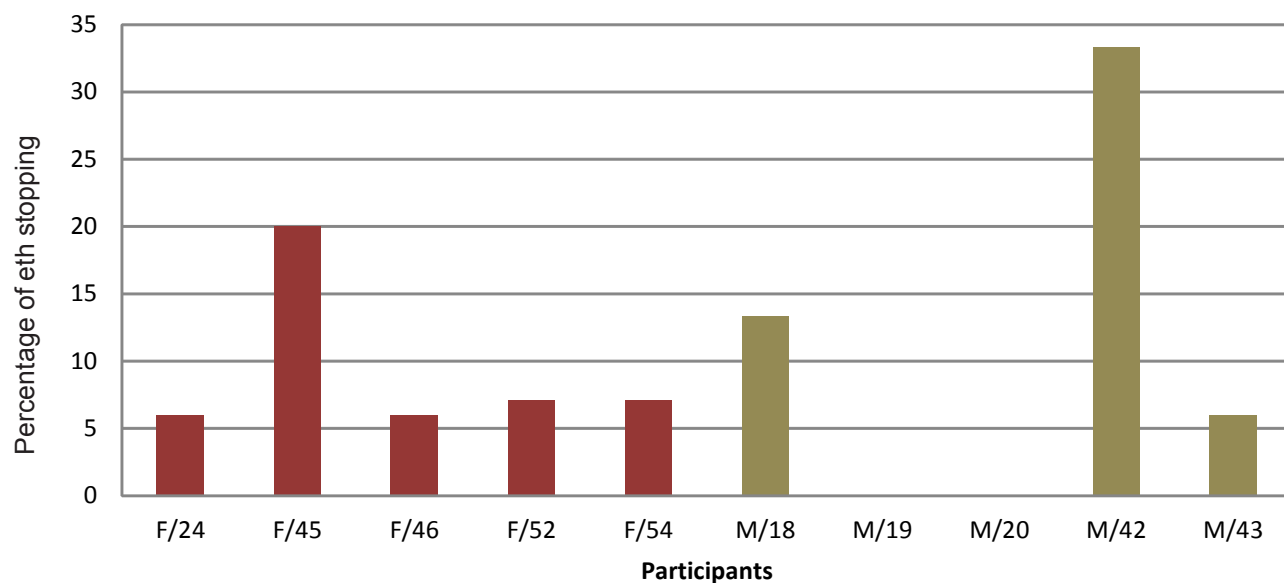
Table 2 shows that while there is overall less devoicing displayed by the non-plain people, three of the women are attested to devoice one token each. They do not devoice the same word in the passage, nor are any of the tokens fully devoiced, just as the Beachy devoicing. These results leave open the possibility that devoicing of final obstruents is a feature in both the Beachy and non-plain linguistic repertoire. Whether this is a borrowed feature from Dutchified English or the result of separate sound change is unclear at this point.

All but two of the Beachy participants produced the initial /ð/ as a /d/ at least once. Of those two, one is the same young male who did not devoice any final obstruents. One of the older men stopped 33% of the initial /ð/ phonemes. Again, we have no participants who use the feature categorically, as shown in Table 3. We again have a token of the Dutchified feature in the non-plain people. The male participant produced one token of ð-stopping in the reading passage. However, ð-stopping is shown to be significantly more frequent in Beachy speakers.

And in fact, any attestation of ð-stopping is particularly interesting given that all participants, either individually or as a group, reported the use of “dis” and “dat” by speakers other than themselves, be they more conservative, Holmes County Amish or sloppier speakers. It seems that the use of this feature is produced below the level of consciousness.

Perhaps the most surprising results are in the stark contrast between Beachys’ and non-plain people’s low back merger. Table 5 shows the results of all tokens of /ɑ/ and /ɔ/ from the reading passage and the word lists produced by Beachys. The young female is the only Beachy to have merged low back vowels. Table 6 shows the collective Beachy data with her vowels taken out, which provides evidence that the Beachys maintain a clear distinction between the two vowels. Table 8 shows the young female’s vowels on their own, which appear fully merged. Although I did not collect perceptual data of the merger, production data strongly suggests that the Beachys, with the one exception, have not begun merging *caught* and *cot* vowels.

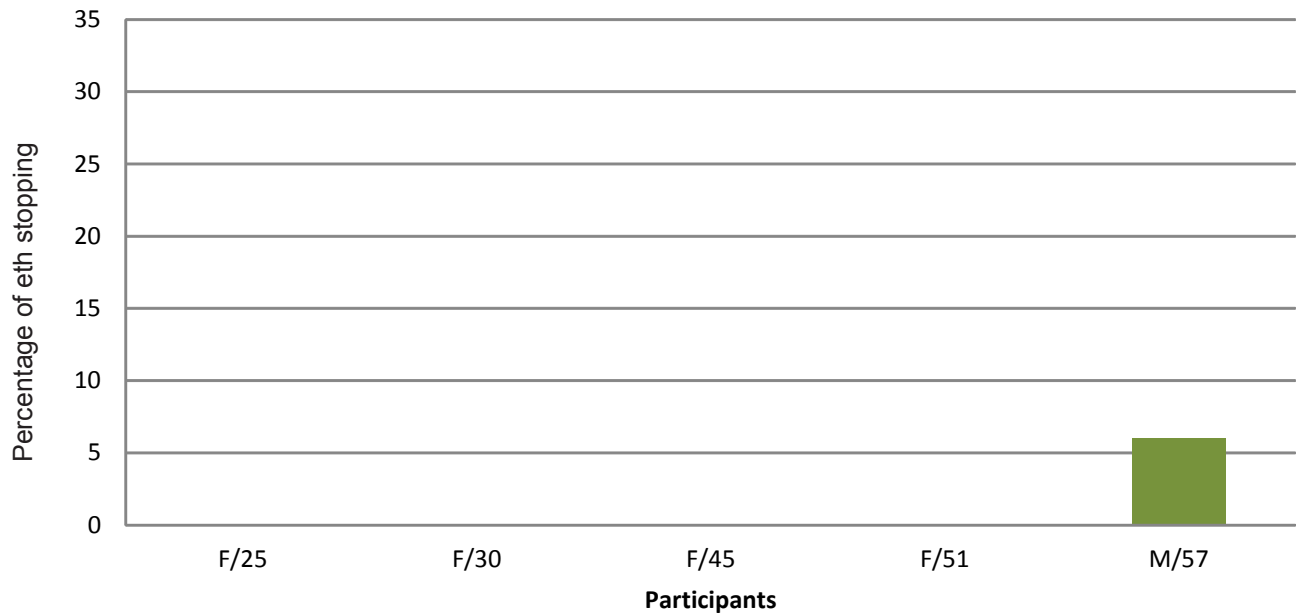
The non-plain people’s vowels, however, all appear fully merged, shown in Table 7. This is somewhat surprising on its own given that recent

**TABLE 2. FINAL OBSTRUENT DEVOICING AMONG NON-PLAIN PEOPLE IN READING PASSAGE****TABLE 3. INITIAL  $\delta$ -STOPPING AMONG BEACHYS IN READING PASSAGE**

descriptions of the low back merger in central Ohio have found mostly partial mergers, such as perceptual but not produced full merger (Labov, Ash, and Boberg 2008). Both the 30 year-old woman and the 57 year-old man show no distinction in their vowel productions, as shown in Tables 10 and 12.

Additionally, the 19 year-old male who used no  $\delta$ -stopping or final devoicing has completely distinct vowels, as shown in Table 11.

TABLE 4: PERCENTAGE OF INITIAL  $\delta$ -STOPPING AMONG NON-PLAIN PEOPLE



Perceptions

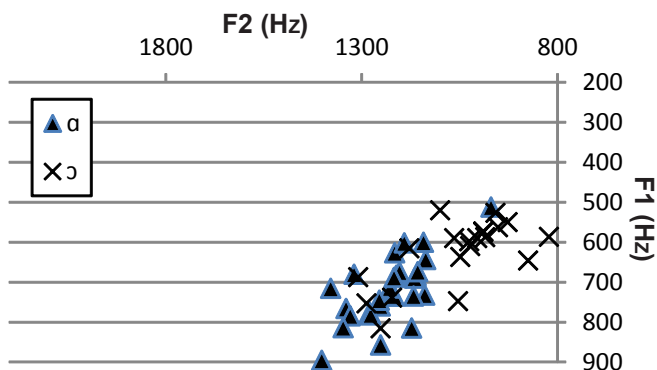
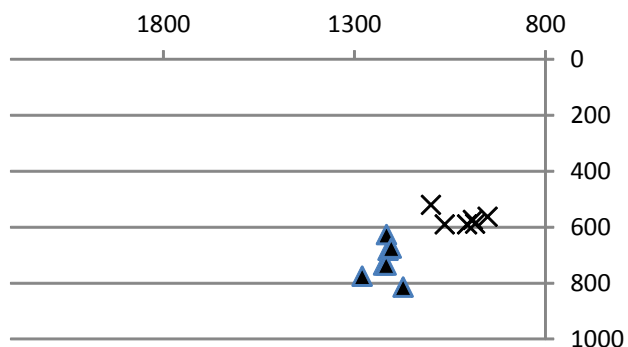
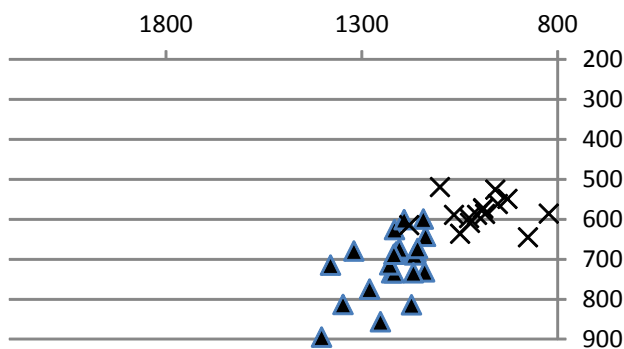
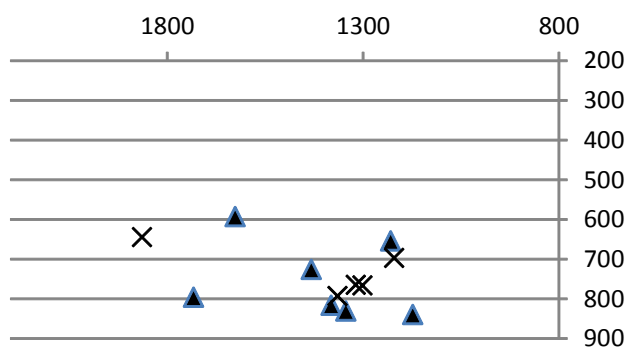
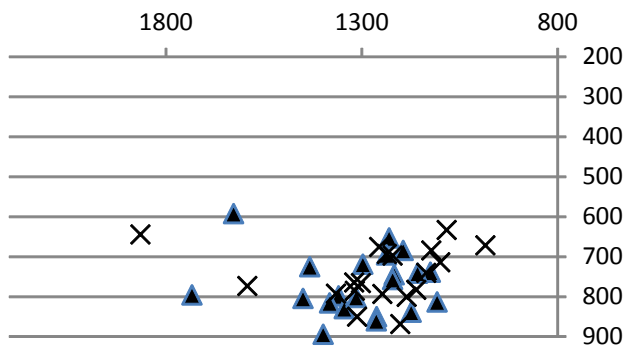
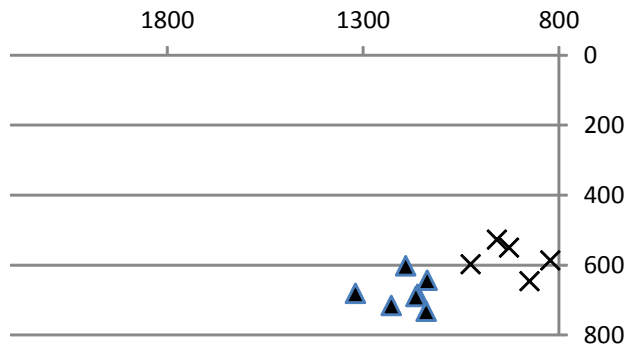
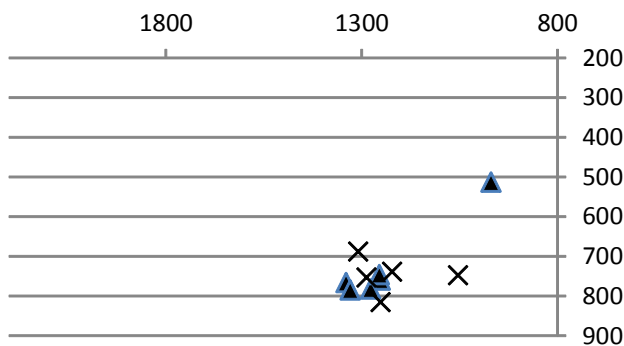
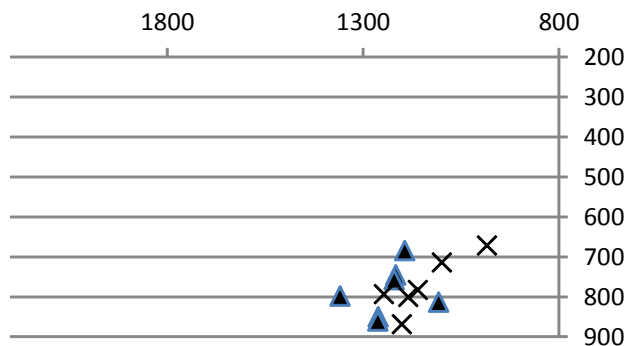
The perceptual interview portion of my meetings with Beachy participants reveals a concern, not toward differentiating themselves from the people living around them but rather positioning themselves in relation to those “up in Holmes County.” As one Beachy man said, “One reason we like being down here is that we’re a little more laid back than in the main Amish communities, not quite as much emphasis on having the latest.” This is in line with Huffines’ (1986) ethnic boundary framework; the Coshocton County Beachys benefit from hard non-linguistic boundaries with the local non-plain people by their plain dress and practices as well as hard linguistic boundaries in their use of PG. Additionally, none of the Beachys grew up non-Anabaptist. On the other hand, some of the Beachys were born to Amish families and grew up in Holmes County. While their style of dress and practices such as driving cars differentiates them from the Amish in Holmes County, PG still marks them as plain Anabaptists and they lack some hard linguistic boundaries, including language difference. These factors make the boundary between their communities relatively open, compared with the hard and closed boundary between the Beachys and their non-plain neighbors.

There is also a concern more with transfer from English to PG than PG to English. When asked how they have noticed their language changing or how young people speak differently than older people, they either did not notice a clear difference or they stated that even those who are fluent in PG use more English loan words than in previous generations. This may be a further indication that the Coshocton County community is in the beginning stages of language shift, in addition to the loss of English and PG domains and the influx of families into the church who do not speak PG.

DISCUSSION

Each of the three variables reported here is unique in its implications for PG interference. Devoicing final obstruents is the most straightforward result of influence from PG, which maintains the well-known standard German devoicing feature which is also present in PG (Kopp, 1999). It is the most highly predicted variable in the interference hierarchy, and in Pennsylvania Dutch communities, it is the most salient feature. Interestingly, Pennsylvania Dutchified English exhibits devoicing in a much broader set of phonetic environments than is found in German, which Anderson (2014) attributes to bidirectional transfer



**TABLE 5. BEACHY LOW BACK MERGER****TABLE 9. BEACHY MALE, 43****TABLE 6. BEACHY LOW BACK MERGER, FEMALE, 24 REMOVED****TABLE 10. NON-ANABAPTIST MALE, 57****TABLE 7. NON-ANABAPTIST LOW BACK MERGER****TABLE 11. BEACHY MALE, 19****TABLE 8. BEACHY FEMALE, 24****TABLE 12. NON-ANABAPTIST FEMALE, 30**

in composite language environments, resulting in features that are distinct from both contributing language varieties. Because the current study did not specifically incorporate data related to other possible devoicing environments, it remains to be seen if Ohio Dutchified English has developed similar devoicing patterns.

The participants' variable use of devoicing lends weight to the ethnolinguistic repertoire framework and suggests that its use is not merely L1 interference as a result of second language acquisition, in which case we would expect to see regular devoicing. The young male who did not exhibit this feature is currently attending college and stated that he is sometimes teased by classmates for having a "Dutch accent". This may contribute to his non-production of either of the consonantal variables. While further investigation into each individual's relationship to the church may also be highly relevant to their use of Dutchified English features, this line of questioning was deemed by me to be unethical, particularly in the family setting in which the interviews took place and given my position as a non-Anabaptist. However, a deeper investigation into each individual's construction of Beachy identity would likely further inform their use of Dutch features. Effects of register, topic, and interlocutor are other likely factors influencing the use of Dutchified features across contexts.

Ð-stopping, while a common feature of the English of L1 German speakers, is not discussed in previous research on Amish English or Dutchified English, except by Thompson (2006), who documents English of Swiss Amish in Adams County, Indiana. He suggests that, because he does not find any other evidence of German influenced English, "it is at least as likely that the change is the result of a commonly attested historical change toward more typologically common sounds" (p. 287). He also finds no evidence of this feature in Amish communities in neighboring counties. Without older attestations of ð-stopping in Coshocton County or Holmes County, we cannot say if it is a result of PG interference or a dialectal development.

While previous research treats Dutchified English, or Amish English, as language varieties, and characterize variable use as code switching or code mixing, I have found that the inter- and intra-speaker variation is more easily wedded to

the existence of ethnically marked features using Benor's (2010) ethnolinguistic repertoire model. As with Benor's Jewish English repertoire, Dutchified English consists of a set of features, most originating in language contact, that is employed variably to index an ethno-religious identity. This set of features is fluid and its use varies across communities, individuals, and contexts. Describing Dutchified English as an ethnolect or religiolect belies the fact that speakers vary in which features they exhibit and when. Although previous research has shown us that there is a set of features exhibited across communities, as evidenced by the interference hierarchy—attested in communities across time and in different states, as well as Pennsylvania Dutchified English—there is variation in the use, frequency, and social meaning, and also in the individuals who use them.

However, this model, which denotes a degree of both agency and fluidity, does not apply to the third variable: the low back merger. This feature is the only one to exhibit no intra-speaker variation. While it may be an indication that the two dialects are further diverging from one another by not sharing the vowel change, it is more likely that the Beachys will eventually participate in the merger for two reasons. First, the young woman already shows mostly merged low back vowels. She is the only one who shows any merger, and while this may be attributed to her time teaching out of state, it may equally indicate that some young people in the community are engaging in the shift. Secondly, what Labov (1994) refers to as Herzog's principle states that "mergers tend to expand at the expense of distinctions." This theory is supported by the expansion of the low back merger across most regions of the United States, and if we take it seriously, it is unlikely that the Beachys will continue to hold against it, despite their relative separation. Because of this, and given that the low back merger appears to be below the level of agency or awareness by the speakers, this variable is not considered a feature of Dutchified English. Rather, it is more likely to be a conservative form of the regional distinction. This can be further investigated by collecting data from older non-plain people from the area, if any remain who do not exhibit the merger.

## CONCLUSION

The stated goals of this research were to answer the following questions:

Do Beachys in this Coshocton County church speak English differently than the non-plain people who live in the same area?

If so, what features differentiate their English?

What perceptions and attitudes are associated with those differences?

I found that, overall, the Beachys do exhibit higher rates of final obstruent devoicing and  $\delta$ -stopping, and do not appear to be participating in the low back merger to as great a degree as the non-Anabaptists. This is not an exhaustive list of the features differentiating these dialects, and future research can likely find many other avenues, such as syntactic, lexical, and additional phonetic distinctions, including their vowel systems. I found that  $\delta$ -stopping is highly salient, both from a linguistic standpoint and at the level of social consciousness. People frequently cite “dis” and “dat” as lexical features of Amish and Mennonites, and Beachys make the further observation that they are found most often in Amish and Mennonite speakers in Holmes County.

I also found that the Beachys orient their identity in relation to Holmes County Pennsylvania Dutch communities more than to non-plain neighbors. This can be understood through an ethnolinguistic boundary theory (Giles and Johnson 1987) because they maintain hard, closed linguistic and non-linguistic boundaries with the non-Anabaptists, while their boundaries with the Holmes County plain people are more open, changeable, and less tangible. Therefore, that boundary requires more linguistic maintenance.

Although this study is preliminary, it opens the door to many further investigations, including intra-community variation, comparisons with Holmes County Amish, and additional linguistic variables. I offered support for the use of ethnolinguistic repertoire theories for analyzing Dutchified English rather than the use of ethnolect or regiolect to describe Dutchified English.

Finally, I believe that this research is the first to describe the repertoire of Ohio Dutchified English and have found minor differences from what has been reported in Pennsylvania Dutchified English, such as the saliency of final obstruent devoicing. Such differences are to be expected, given the relatively little interaction between Ohio and Pennsylvania settlements and given descriptions of divergence in the PG spoken in Pennsylvania and Ohio (Keiser 2012). The condition and vitality of Ohio Dutchified English are largely unknown by linguists, and whether it is diverging from the regional standard English or unraveling in the same manner as Pennsylvanian Dutchified English remains to be seen.

Weaknesses of the current study, including small sample sizes of both participants and data tokens, make conclusions about the distribution and use of the specified features premature. However, this article provides a first look at the English spoken by Beachys in Ohio, shedding light on many directions of further research and demonstrating that there is in fact a largely unrecognized source of linguistic diversity in rural Ohio.

## REFERENCES

- Anderson, Cory. 2012. “Beachy Amish-Mennonite.” *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*. Waterloo, ON: Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO).
- Anderson, V. 2014. “Bidialectalism: An Unexpected Development in the Obsolescence of Pennsylvania Dutchified English.” Supplement to *American Speech*, 88. American Dialect Society.
- Benor, S.B. 2010. “Ethnolinguistic Repertoire: Shifting the Analytic Focus in Language and Ethnicity.” *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 14(2):159–83. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9841.2010.00440.x
- Boersma, Paul & Weenink, David. 2011. “PRAAT: Doing Phonetics by Computer.” Version 5.2.29. Retrieved 15 July 2011. (<http://www.praat.org/>)
- DeHaven, Michael. 2010. “Pennsylvania German in Lyndon, KS: Variation, Change, Decline.” *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 3[supplement]:113–22.
- Donnermeyer, Joseph, Cory Anderson, and Elizabeth Cooksey. 2013. “The Amish Population: County Estimates and Settlement Patterns.”

- Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies* 1(1):72-109.
- Enninger, Werner. 1985. "The English of the Old Order Amish of Delaware: Phonological, Morpho-syntactical, and Lexical Variation of English in the Language Contact Situation of a Trilingual Speech Community." *English World Wide* 5(1):1-24.
- Enninger, Werner. 1987. "Amish English: Dutchified?" Pp. 547-79 in *Perspectives on Language in Performance: Studies in Linguistics, Literary Criticism, and Language Learning 1, to Honor Werner Hüllen on Occasion of His Birthday, 17 October 1987*, edited by W. Lörcher and R. Schulze. Tübingen, Germany: Gunter Narr.
- Frey, J. William. 1945. "Amish 'Triple-Talk'." *American Speech* 20(2):85-98.
- Fuller, Janet McCray. 2005. "The Sociopragmatic Values of Pennsylvania German ('Dutch'): Changes across Time, Place, and Anabaptist Sect." Pp. 800-07 in *Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Bilingualism*, edited by James Cohen, Kara McAlister, Kellie Rolsstad, and Jeff MacSwan. Sommerville, MA: Cascadia.
- Huffines, Marion Lois. 1980. "English in Contact with Pennsylvania German." *German Quarterly* 53(3):352-66.
- Huffines, Marion Lois. 1986. "Strategies of Language Maintenance and Ethnic Marking among the Pennsylvania Germans." *Language Sciences* 8(1):1-16.
- Gates, G. 1987. *How to Speak Dutchified English: An "Invaluable" Introduction to an "Encheyable" Accent of the "Inklisch Lankwicht"*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books.
- Giles, H. and Patricia Johnson. 1987. "Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory: A Social Psychological Approach to Language Maintenance." *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 68:69-100.
- Johnson-Weiner, Karen. 1998. "Community Identity and Language Change in North American Anabaptist Communities." *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 2(3):375-94.
- Keiser, Steven. 2012. *Pennsylvania German in the American Midwest*. Publication of the American Dialect Society, Vol. 96. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Kopp, Achim. 1999. *The Phonology of Pennsylvania German English as Evidence of Language Maintenance and Shift*. Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press.
- Labov, William. 1994. *Principles of Linguistic Change: Internal Factors*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Labov, William, S. Ash, and C. Boberg. 2008. *The Atlas of North American English. Phonetics, Phonology and Sound Change*. Boston, MA: De Gruyter Mouton. Retrieved 24 March 2015. (<http://www.degruyter.com/view/product/178229>)
- Petrovich, Christopher. 2017. "More than Forty Affiliations? Charting the Fault Lines." *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies* 5(1):120-42.
- Raith, Joachim. 1977. "Pennsylvania German-American English Bilingualism: A Case Study." Pp. 104-28 in *German in Contact with Other Languages*, edited by Carol Malony, Helmut Zobl, and Wilfried Stölting. Königstein, Germany: Verlag.
- Raith, Joachim. 1980. "Types of Speech Communities and Language Use." Pp. 131-46 in *Understanding Bilingualism*, edited by Werner Hüllen. Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang.
- Rohrer, David. 1974. "The Influence of the Pennsylvania German Dialect on Amish English in Lancaster County." *Mennonite Research Journal* 15(3):34-35 and 15(4):38-39.
- Schwieder, Dorothy, and Elmer Schwieder. 1977. "The Beachy Amish in Iowa: A Case Study." *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 51(1):41-51.
- Smith, William. 2013. "Continuity and Change in a Southern Beachy Amish-Mennonite Congregation." *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies* 1(2):48-68.
- Thompson, Chad. 2006. "English of the Swiss Amish of Northeastern Indiana." Pp. 273-92 In *Language Variation and Change in the American Midland*. John Benjamins Publishing Co.
- Van Ness, Silke. 1995. "Ohio Amish Women in the Vanguard of a Language Change: Pennsylvania German in Ohio." *American Speech* 70(1):69-80.

**APPENDIX A: WORD LIST**

1. Hide	16. Look	31. Udder	46. Fanned	61. After	76. Jury
2. Teenagers	17. Awed	32. Spouse	47. Bag	62. Know	77. Hock
3. Mud	18. Farther	33. Pawned	48. Had	63. Heed	78. Take
4. Mouse	19. Message	34. How'd	49. Hoed	64. Milk	79. Family
5. Bath	20. Dog	35. Hawk	50. Older	65. Juice	80. Book
6. Odd	21. Cousin	36. Collar	51. Mine	66. Caller	
7. Fat	22. Bag	37. Moose	52. Built	67. Butcher	
8. Path	23. Hired	38. Butter	53. Pond	68. Cot	
9. Father	24. Who'd	39. Hid	54. Pad	69. Choose	
10. Floor	25. Thing	40. House	55. There	70. Visit	
11. Dirt	26. Walk	41. Bells	56. Bathe	71. Buck	
12. Job	27. Caught	42. Either	57. Handed	72. The	
13. Roof	28. Rib	43. Want	58. Hide	73. Head	
14. Brother	29. Apple	44. Ditch	59. Mule	74. Leave	
15. Other	30. This	45. Woods	60. Cool	75. Herd	

**APPENDIX B: READING PASSAGE**

John and his father went fishing in the pond behind the old school the weekend before John went off to college. His Dad brought a book to read and neither of them spoke for four hours as they sat by the water. For the most part it was a comfortable silence, although occasionally John began to feel oddly awkward. He would look up at the sky to see a hawk fly overhead or at insects crawling on the rocks nearby and pretended he was alone. Who'd know how much time they had left together? One day he would look back on those times with regret, although he was never sure if it was because he'd enjoyed them more than he'd realized, or because as time passed it was easy to forget the long, hot walk from their house, the coldness of his father, or that he'd never once caught a fish. It was easier to remember the smell of dewy grass and algae coming off the water at dawn and the way his dog ran alongside them, the tags on his collar jingling as he pawed at their feet.



**APPENDIX C: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. How many people live in your household?
2. Do you have any siblings? Older or younger? How many?
3. Do you speak any language other than English? What language(s)? How well?
4. Does anyone in your household speak a language other than English? Who? Did you grow up hearing it?
5. Where did you go to school? Is that a public or a private school?
6. Did non-Mennonites go there? What about Amish?
7. Where do you work?
8. Do you work with mostly other Mennonites?
9. Do you work with Non-Mennonites?
10. Is your boss Mennonite?
11. Do you work with customers or clients?
12. Are they mostly Mennonites?
13. On a daily basis, how much do you interact with Non-Mennonites? In what situations?
14. In what situations do Mennonites interact with non-Mennonites in your community?
15. Do Amish live around here? Do Mennonites and Amish interact often? In what situations?
16. How is your community of Mennonites different from the other Mennonite communities?
17. How is it different from Amish that live nearby?
18. How is it different from non-Mennonites?
19. Is the Mennonite community in which you live separated from the Non-Mennonites that live in your city/town, or do you consider both Mennonites and Non-Mennonites part of the same community?
20. In what ways are they separate and what ways are they a one community?
21. Do you wish they were more or less separate? Why or how so?
22. During your life, have you seen Mennonite practices in your community change? How so? Are these changes for the better or for the worse?
23. Do Mennonites in Holmes County (or Plain City) speak differently than Non-Mennonites (either Amish or English)? If so, how is it distinct? What characteristics does Mennonite English have that other varieties do not?
24. Do Mennonites in your community speak differently than Mennonites in other communities? If so, how? What characteristics does your English have that distinguishes it from others.
25. Do you think the English spoken by Mennonites in your community is changing? If so, how? If so, do you think it's a good thing, bad thing, or neither?