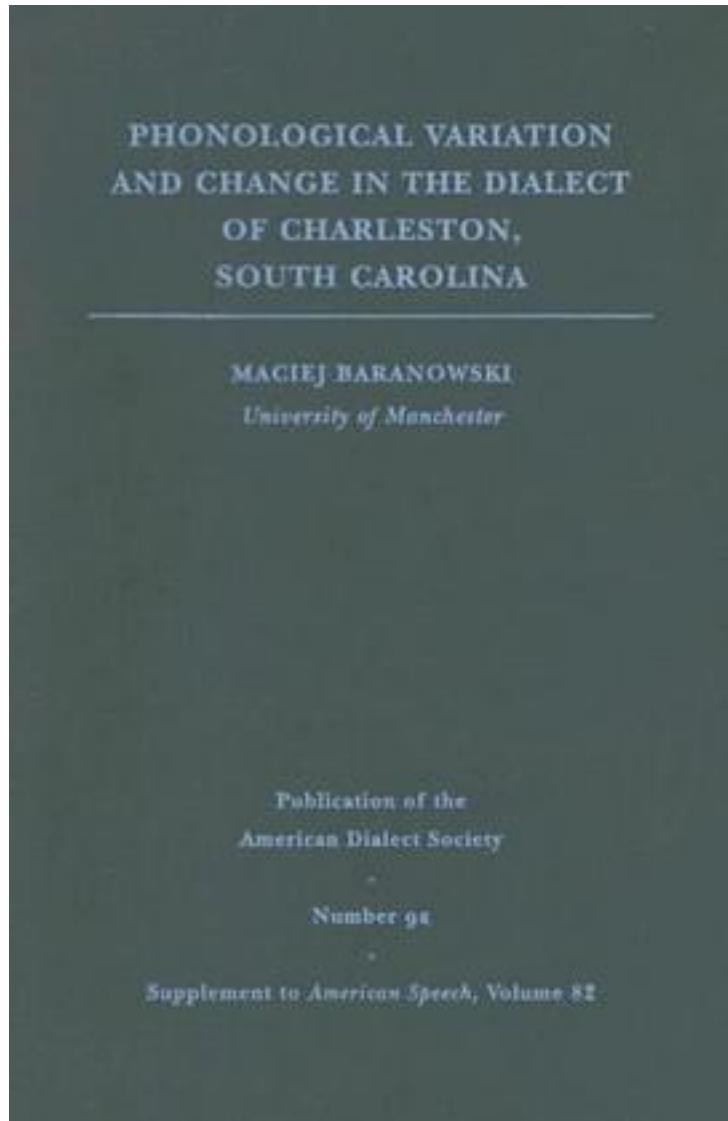


Phonological Variation and Change in the Dialect of Charleston, South Carolina



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This volume, one of the most comprehensive studies of language change in any southern city, presents an in-depth examination of the linguistic patterns of the residents of Charleston, South Carolina, an area that claims one of the most distinctive dialects in American English. In the process of regionalization, Charleston has undergone a linguistic revolution unseen for any other dialect of English studied to date, in which the traditional dialect has been replaced with a very different type of linguistic system. The new system remains distinct from most other southern dialects. This study traces the retreat of the traditional features with a sample of one hundred speakers, aged eight to ninety, across social classes. The best-known features of the traditional dialect - a lack of distinction between /ihr/ and /ehr/, as in beer and bear, and ingliding and monophthongal long mid vowels /e:/, /o:/, as in take and goat - have now largely disappeared. Social class and age are important factors in the linguistics of the Charleston area. While some older Charlestonians still have the back and ingliding /ow/ vowel, as in goat and so, younger speakers, particularly those in the highest-status social group, show very advanced fronting of this vowel. This volume is organized chronologically, moving from traditional speech into the distinctively different linguistic style that has emerged.

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