Microvariation in verbal *rather*

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1 Introduction

- Verbal *rather* refers to cases where the word *rather* seems to have some properties of a verb.

  (1) a. I would have **rathered slept** in a bed because,
         in all honesty, his lap was not very comfortable.
      b. I would have **rathered dance** with my friends
         to these songs than watch the performers do it.[1]
      c. I would **rather him** call me by my first name than be called Mom.
      d. I would **rather** (that) he call me by my first name.

  – In (1a–b) *rather* looks like a verb in that it takes the participle *-ed* ending.

  – In (1c) *rather* looks like a verb in that it appears to license an embedded subject under ECM, and that it cannot be omitted.

  – In (1d) *rather* looks like a verb taking a CP complement, and it cannot be omitted.

- The use of verbal *rather* is subject to substantial variation, as we will see.

- Why is this interesting?

- The nature of verbal *rather* and the variation around it goes beyond simple lexical variation; this isn't a verbal form of "*soda* vs. *pop* vs. *coke*".

- In fact, its syntactic properties are of substantial interest. Here I name just a few.

1.1 Licensing of silent verbs

- There is reason to think that verbal *rather* in some uses licenses a silent light verb HAVE.

- That is, the attested sentence in (2a) really has a silent verb HAVE as indicated in (2b).

  (2) a. Would you rather break up with someone… or have them break up with you? […]
         I would rather him break up with me.[2]

  b. Would you rather break up with someone… or have them break up with you? […]
     I would rather ~~HAVE~~ him break up with me.

– The conditions that allow this thus contribute to a broader picture of the licensing of silent elements, verbs in particular (van Riemsdijk 2002; Harves 2008; Harves and Kayne 2012; Harves and Myler 2014; Tyler and Wood to appear; Kayne 2009, 2011, to appear).

1.2 (Nearly) "closed class" kind of verb in the first place

- If *rather* is a verb, it is a verb that (in some cases) takes a bare infinitive complement (with no *to*), at least for some speakers.

– This is very restricted in English. For ECM verbs, there is a small set of verbs, such as:

  (3) a. Causative verbs: *have*, *make*, *let*, but not **cause* or **force*
      b. Perception verbs: *see*, *hear*, *feel*, but not **detect* or **sense*
      c. *help* but not **assist*, or **aid*

– For non-ECM verbs, there is a small set, such as:

  (4) a. *help* but not **assist* or **aid*
      b. The auxiliary *dare*

– Other auxiliaries (even auxiliary *need*) are different, in that they cannot take inflection or be embedded under *have*.

1.3 Parasitic participles

- As seen in (1a), verbal *rather* constructions sometimes allow two participles with only one auxiliary *have*.

– This is (nearly) unique in English, to my knowledge, and for that reason alone, warrants further study.

– Moreover, this phenomenon is found in other varieties of Germanic, where it is known as a "parasitic participle" construction (Den Dikken and Hoekstra 1997):

  (5) Han har **velat**   **åkt**   till Spanien.
      he has wanted.PRF gone.PRF to Spain
      'He has wanted to go to Spain.'   (Wiklund 2001:211) (Swedish)

  (6) Han hevði **viljað**   **lisið**   bókina.
      he had   wanted.PRF read.PRF book.the
      'He would have wanted to read the book.'   (Wiklund 2007:191) (Faroese)

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[1] https://www.yelp.com/biz/the-awesome-80s-prom-new-york
[2] http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20100721222936AAy3sbz

- Why doesn't English have them more generally? According to Wurmbrand (2012):

> "A precondition for licensing [Parasitic Participles] is that the language allows constructions of the form AUX–MOD–V. Since these constructions are independently excluded in English (English modals can never be embedded), [Parasitic Participles] are not found in English." (Wurmbrand 2012)

– The prediction is that if English develops AUX–MOD–V constructions, parasitic participles become possible. Verbal *rather* appears to bear this out.

- There is one other auxiliary that can take inflection and be embedded under auxiliary *have*, and that is *dare*.

(7)   a.   He dared not leave class early.
       b.   He didn't dare leave class early.
       c.   He wouldn't have dared leave class early.

– Even under *have* (or *do*), *dare* takes a bare infinitive complement, suggesting that it is still an auxiliary.

– And in fact, parasitic participles are possible with *dare* as well:

(8)   a.   He wouldn't have **dared left** class early. (My judgment)
       b.   I don't think he would have **dared given** dad a hug six months ago,[3]
       c.   …opening my eyes to things I wouldn't have **dared eaten** before[4]
       d.   …and he would never have **dared left** a drink in her secret sanctum.[5]
       e.   I wouldn't have **dared left** Hallen at 4 months old, so I am feeling a twinge of guilt for leaving Hazel this early.[6]

- This warrants further research, but I will set aside *dare* for the time being.

1.4 Restricted distribution

- For many speakers, verbal *rather* is only possible in the context of another modal, usually *would*.[7]

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[3] http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/languagelog/archives/004235.html
[4] http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/languagelog/archives/004235.html
[5] *Dark Bites: A Short Story Collection* By Sherrilyn Kenyon, retrieved on Google Books.
[6] https://www.dearnovemberdays.com/2017/06/26/spit-up-with-a-side-of-guilt/
[7] Some speakers allow *rather* to have a much wider distribution, and do not require a modal, a level of variation that I will set aside for now.

(9)   a.   I would rather them leave early.
       b.   I would {want / prefer} them to leave early.
(10)   a.   * I generally rather them leave early.
       b.   I generally {want / prefer} them to leave early.
(11)   a.   I would have rathered leave early.
       b.   I would have {wanted / prefered} them to leave early.
(12)   a.   * In the past, I have always rathered leave early.
       b.   In the past, I have always {wanted / preferred} to leave early.

– For such speakers, it shows that something special is going on. It is not as though *rather* is just another lexical verb meaning 'prefer'.

– This raises the question of what it means to "be a verb" in the first place.

1.5 Microvariation

- There is a lot of microvariation connected to each of the properties above.

– Thus, to the extent that those properties are interesting, verbal *rather* provides a way to refine our understanding of them.

– It also provides a chance to understand the dependence or independence of microparameters.

2 Wood (2013)

- Starting point: assume that *rather* in its use as a volitional adverb occurs in the specifier of a volitional Modal head, Mod$_{volition}$, in the sense of Cinque (1999, 2006).

(13)   Adverbial *rather*
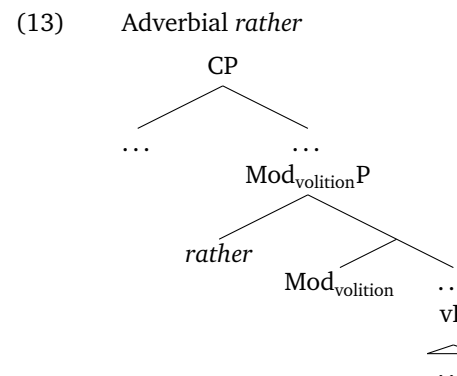
- Wood (2013) proposes two ways in which *rather* can start to act like a verb.

  (14)   Verb-like properties of *rather*
     a. $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ licenses a silent verb HAVE.
     b. $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ assigns and/or receives verbal features.

– In the first case, $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ (and thus *rather*) may or may not 'be a verb' in some technical sense.

– In the second case, I argue, it must be. That is, we may call something a verb if it assigns or receives verbal features (in the specific sense below). Verbhood is defined *configurationally*, not lexically.[8]

- I assume that when $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ assigns and/or receives verbal features, *rather* head-adjoins to $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$, perhaps historically a case of spec→head reanalysis (van Gelderen 2004).

  (15)   Verbal *rather*
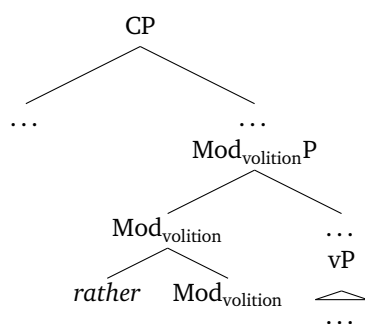
– Beyond the two properties in (14), silent HAVE itself may assign and/or receive verbal features.

- Thus, we have at least five microparameters associated with verbal *rather*.

(16)

Head	Property	
$\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$	± licenses HAVE	
$\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$	± receive verbal features	± assign verbal features
HAVE	± receive verbal features	± assign verbal features

– However, Wood (2013) also proposes that $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ doesn't technically "receive" verbal features at all. Verbal features of the relevant sort are a property of an inflectional functional head Asp.

– So really the parameters are (closer to):

(17)

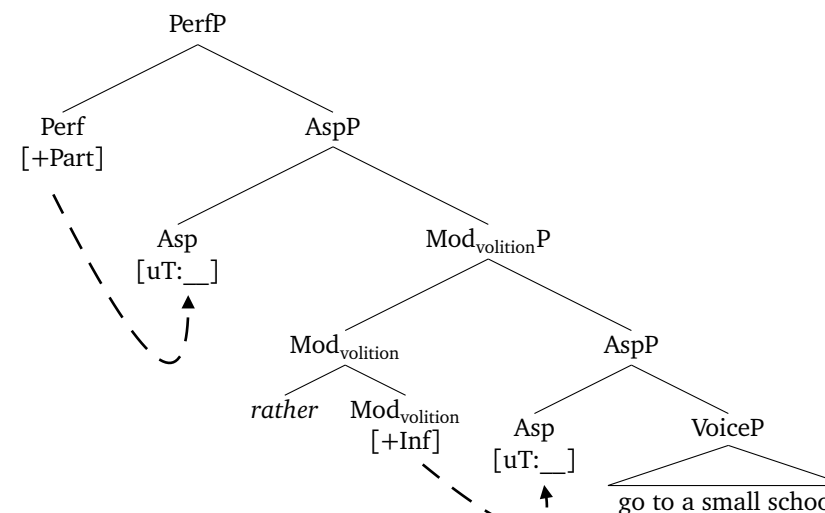| Head	Property	
$\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$	± licenses HAVE	
$\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$	± combines with Asp	± assign verbal features
HAVE	± combines with Asp	± assign verbal features

- By "verbal features" I refer specifically to inflectional features like [Inf] and [Part], which determine whether a verb is realized as a bare infinitive or as a participle.

– For both HAVE and $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$, the verbal features in question are [Inf]. So if a verb is [+Inf], it assigns the [Inf] feature to any lower verb with an unvalued [uT:__] feature.

– Likewise, I will abbreviate a head H that can combine with Asp as H[+Asp], although this is really a statement about the combinatorial syntax rather than the feature content of that head.[9]

– Thus, "fully" verbal *rather* in the absence of HAVE will have the following structure (omitting the subject):

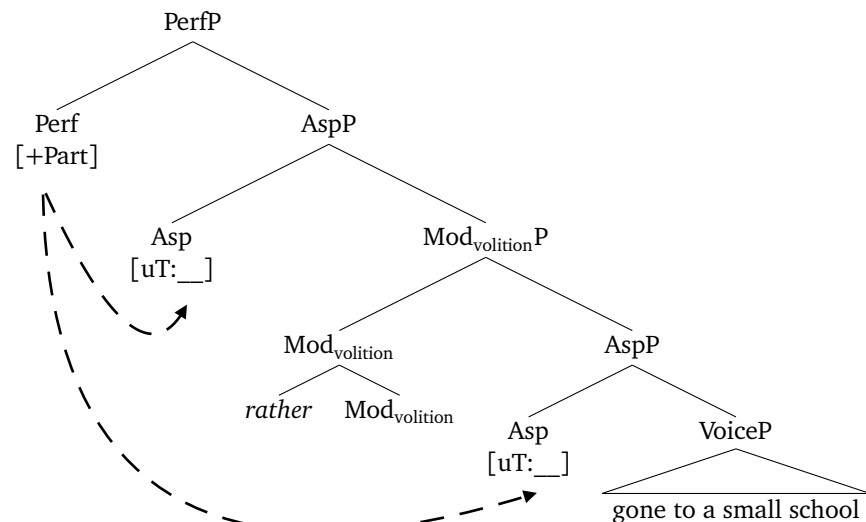 (18)   a.   I would have rathered go to a small school.
         b.

– The feature [Part] will be assigned to the higher Asp, and [Inf] will be assigned to the lower Asp.

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[8] This is more than just terminological; the point is that independent of syntactic distribution, or the presence/absence of argument structure, we can identify a syntactically natural class of elements that assign and/or receive these features.

[9] It could, for example, be thought of as a property of Asp rather than $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$: $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ is just on the list of elements that Asp may combine with.

- Parasitic participles arise if two heads project Asp, but the higher one does not assign any verbal feature.

  – So if $Mod_{volition}$ is not [+Inf], but projects Asp, the result will be:

  (19)　a.　I would have rathered gone to a small school.

  b.

  PerfP
  ├── Perf [+Part]
  └── AspP
      ├── Asp [uT:__]
      └── $Mod_{volition}$P
          ├── $Mod_{volition}$
          │   ├── *rather*
          │   └── $Mod_{volition}$
          └── AspP
              ├── Asp [uT:__]
              └── VoiceP
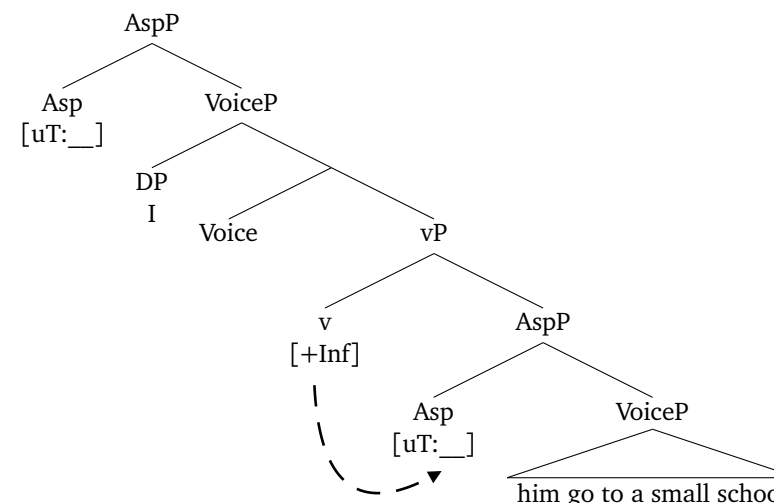   gone to a small school

  – In this case, the feature Part will be assigned to both Asp heads.

- Now consider silent HAVE. I assume following Myler (2016) that the English verb *have* is the realization of a little v head in the context of a transitive Voice head.

  – With ECM *have*, the vP embeds a VoiceP.[10]

- I assume that this v also generally has a [+Inf] feature, and that Asp combines with VoiceP (see Johnson 2014:35ff. for support from Appalachian English).[11]

  (20)　a.　I had him go to a small school.

  b.

  AspP
  ├── Asp [uT:__]
  └── VoiceP
      ├── DP — I
      └── Voice
          └── vP
              ├── v [+Inf]
              └── AspP
                  ├── Asp [uT:__]
                  └── VoiceP
                      him go to a small school

  – Here, transitive Voice licenses the embedded subject.

  – The lower Asp head is assigned [Inf] by v (=*have*), while the higher Asp will be valued [Past] by T.

- Naturally, this structure can be embedded under verbal *rather*, generating either of the following:

  (21)　I would have rathered have him go to a small school.

  (22)　I would have rathered had him go to a small school.

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[10] Although in certain experiencer *have* constructions, v actually takes a FreeP complement, where Free is an Appl-like head that introduces experiencer semantics and takes a VoiceP complement.

[11] Specifically, Johnson (2014:35ff.) discusses the fact that Appalachian English allows infinitival *to* in experiencer/causative *have* sentences:

(i)　They had glasses **to** break (on them).　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Appalachian English)

Johnson (2014) argues that this *realizes* the Asp head, which is not pronounced in other varieties of English. Perhaps the verb head-moves to Asp in these other varieties, but not in Appalachian English.

- However, this *have*[+Inf] can also be silent. I proposed that this is when *have* raises by head-movement to Mod$_{volition}$.

  (23) a. I would have rathered him go to a small school.

  b.

  ```
                              PerfP
                             /      \
                          Perf       AspP
                         [+Part]    /    \
                                  Asp      Mod_volition P
                                 /   \    /        \
                          Mod_volition  Asp  ⟨Mod_volition⟩  AspP
                           /    \     [uT:__]        /    \
                        Asp    Mod_volition    ⟨Asp⟩     VoiceP
                       /   \                  [uT:__]   /    \
                    Voice   Asp  rather Mod_volition   DP     ⟨Voice⟩   vP
                    /  \   [uT:__]                     I           /   \
                   v  Voice                                     ⟨v⟩     AspP
                 [+Inf]                                        [+Inf]  /    \
                                                                     Asp    VoiceP
                                                                   [uT:__]  /    \
                                                                     him go to a small school
  ```
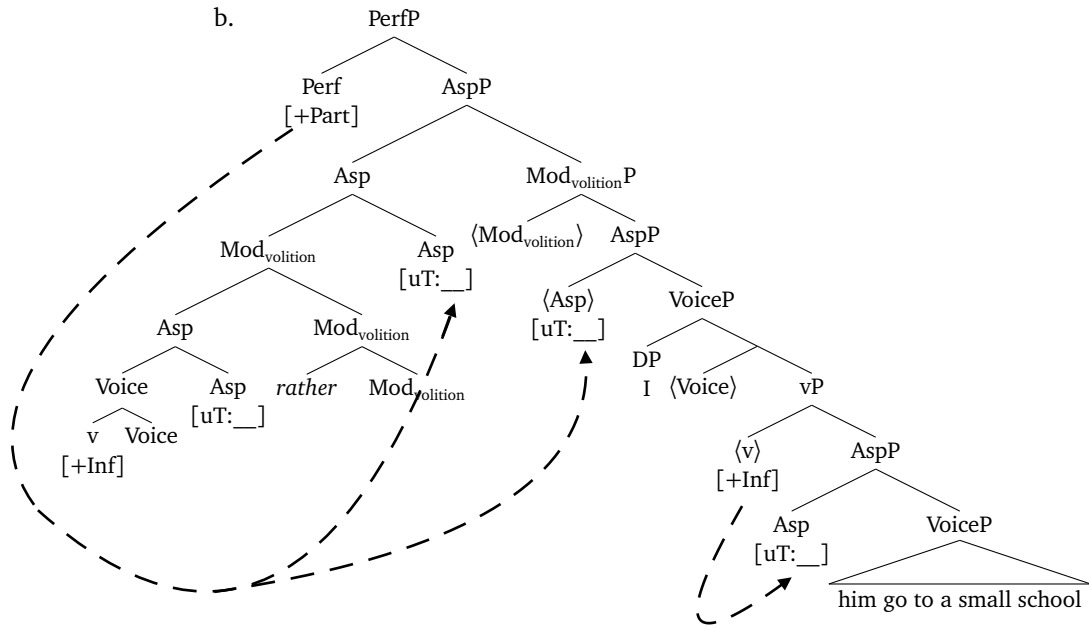
  - Here, even though *have* is silent, it may assign the [+Inf] feature to the lowest AspP.
  - Note that I will not always show the complex head structure in what follows, but I assume that it holds when silent HAVE is present.

- We will discuss this movement, and why "have" is special, further below.

- First, consider one more aspect of HAVE that is special: unlike its overt counterpart, it may lack the [+Inf] feature.

- Without the [+Inf] feature, if Mod$_{volition}$ also lacks the [+Inf] feature, Perf may assign [+Part] to all three Asp heads.

(24) a. I would have rathered him gone to a small school.

b.

```
                    PerfP
                   /     \
                Perf      AspP
               [+Part]   /    \
                       Asp      Mod_volition P
                      [uT:__]  /        \
                         Mod_volition      AspP
                        /     \          /    \
                   rather   Mod_volition Asp    VoiceP
                                       [uT:__]  /    \
                                              DP    Voice   vP
                                               I          /   \
                                                         v     AspP
                                                             /     \
                                                          Asp      VoiceP
                                                        [uT:__]    /    \
                                                               him go to a small school
```
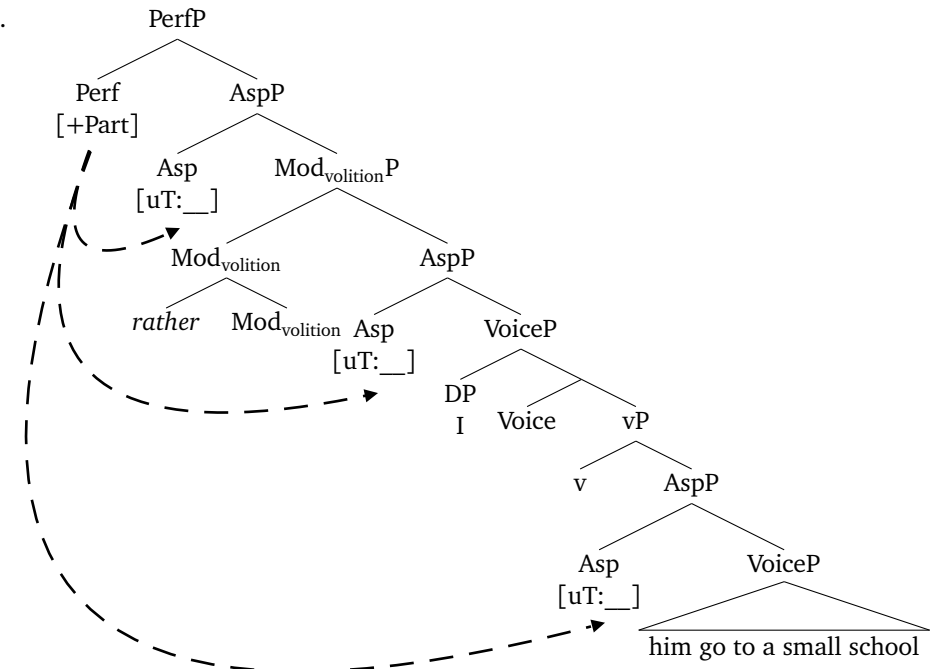
3 The present study

- The present study is based on a recent survey of the Yale Grammatical Diversity Project (YGDP) (Zanuttini et al. 2018).

- Like other YGDP surveys, this was administered on Qualtrics through Amazon Mechanical Turk, entirely online.

- In this survey, speakers judged the following sentences:

(25) a. I would have **rathered go** to a small school.
     b. I would have rathered sleep on the couch.
     c. We would have rathered stay in bed.
(26) a. I would have **rathered gone** to a small school.
     b. I would have rathered slept on the couch.
     c. We would have rathered stayed in bed.
(27) a. I would have **rathered him** go to a small school.
   b. I would have rathered him sleep on the couch.

c. We would have rathered him stay in bed.

(28) a. I would have **rathered him** gone to a small school.

b. I would have rathered him slept on the couch.

c. We would have rathered him stayed in bed.

(29) a. I would have **rather go** to a small school.

b. I would have rather sleep on the couch.

c. We would have rather stay in bed.

(30) a. I would have **rather gone** to a small school.

b. I would have rather slept on the couch.

c. We would have rather stayed in bed.

(31) a. I would have **rather him go** to a small school.

b. I would have rather him sleep on the couch.

c. We would have rather him stay in bed.

(32) a. I would have **rather him gone** to a small school.

b. I would have rather him slept on the couch.

c. We would have rather him stayed in bed.

- For each speaker, I calculated their median judgment of the three sentences for each construction.

- So if we say a speaker found a sentence "acceptable", it means that they judged at least two sentences of the three sentences to be a 4 or a 5 (on a scale of 1–5).

- If we say a speaker rejects a sentence, it means they judged at least two of the three sentences as a 2 or 1.

- The discussion below will be based entirely around the (a) sentences as representative of their class. Thus, the microvariation studied in this survey revolves entirely around the eight constructions represented by the following eight sentences:

(33) a. I would have rathered go to a small school.

b. I would have rathered gone to a small school.

c. I would have rathered him go to a small school.

d. I would have rathered him gone to a small school.

(34) a. I would have rather go to a small school.

b. I would have rather gone to a small school.

c. I would have rather him go to a small school.

d. I would have rather him gone to a small school.

- The results were imported to the YGDP mapping tool, so that the distribution of different grammatical systems and correlations could be studied.

– The full distribution of 578 participants (who passed the controls) is shown here:
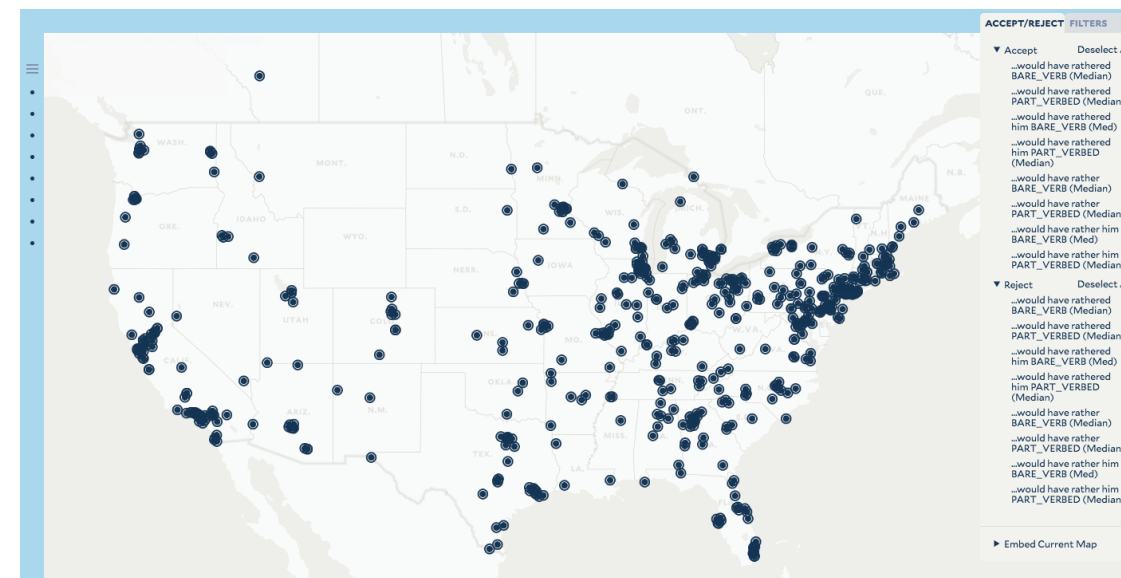
4 Microvariation and the parameter space

- To review, there are basically five parameters doing the work to derive the constructions above:

(35)

Head	Property	
Mod$_{\text{volition}}$	± licenses HAVE	
Mod$_{\text{volition}}$	± combines with Asp	± assign infinitive
HAVE	± combines with Asp	± assign infinitive

– Note that "±" is not being used in a technical sense above. It can be read as "has (=+) or lacks (=−)" the property in question.

- Are these parameters independent of each other, or are there dependencies among them? What combinations of them seem to be attested in the grammars of individual speakers?

- In principle, we could imagine that they are independent. Each setting corresponds to an independent functional item that a speaker could possess. There would thus be eight varieties of Mod$_{\text{volition}}$ and four varieties of HAVE.

(36) a. $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$ {[+HAVE],[+Asp],[+Inf]}   e. $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$ {[+Asp],[+Inf]}

      b. $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$ {[+HAVE],[+Asp]}   f. $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$ {[+Asp]}

      c. $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$ {[+HAVE],[+Inf]}   g. $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$ {[+Inf]}

      d. $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$ {[+HAVE]}   h. $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$ {}

(37) a. HAVE {[+Asp],[+Inf]}   c. HAVE {[+Inf]}

      b. HAVE {[+Asp]}   d. HAVE {}
         (Median)

– For now, we set aside the fact that this system of heads cannot operate independently. They are active when *rather* is in $\text{SpecMod}_\text{volition}$P, but not necessarily with just anything there (e.g. *preferably*; though see below on *sooner*).

– So some of the $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$ heads must be sensitive to what is in their specifier. But here again—are they independent? Or do they come in a bundle?

• In fact, we find at least three generalizations, leading us to propose the four grammars in (39).

    (38) Generalizations

        ❶ A grammar with $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$[+Inf] has $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$[+Asp]

        ❷ A grammar with $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$[+Asp] has $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$[+HAVE].

        ❸ A grammar with any HAVE has all of them.

    (39) Sets of grammars

        a. **Grammar A**: HAVE{([+Asp]([+Inf]))}, $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{([+HAVE])\}

        b. **Grammar B**: HAVE{([+Asp]([+Inf]))}, $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{([+HAVE]),([+Asp])\}

        c. **Grammar C**: HAVE{([+Asp]([+Inf]))}, $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{([+HAVE]),([+Asp]([+Inf]))\}

        d. $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{\}

4.1 $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$[+Inf] → $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$[+Asp]

• We can diagnose the presence of $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$[+Inf] whenever *rather* takes a bare infinitive complement *outside* and ECM setting, as in:

    (40) a. I would have rathered go to a small school.
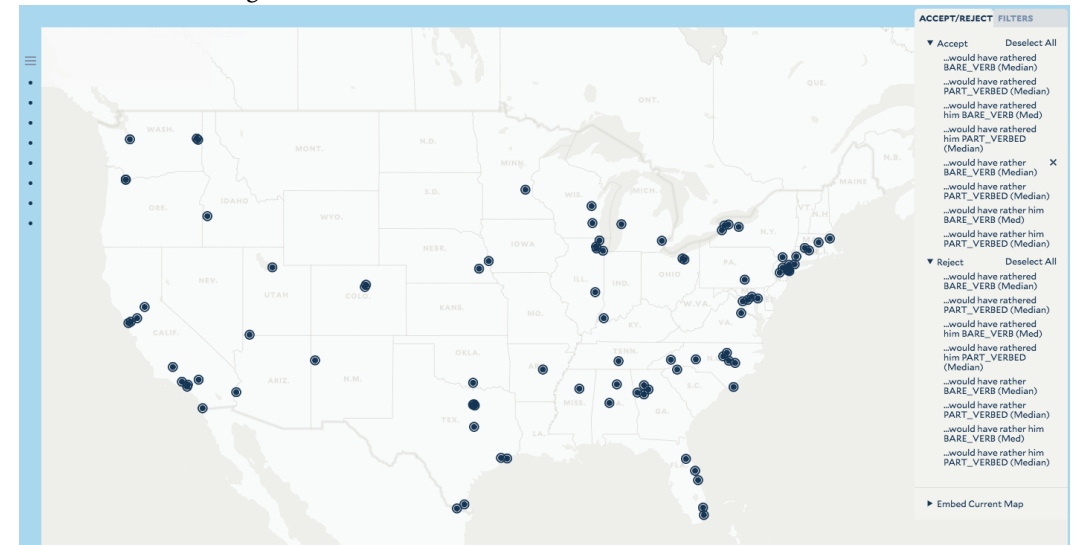
        b. I would have rather go to a small school.

– If speakers' grammar allowed $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$[+Inf] without also having $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$[+Asp], we would expect:

    – All forms of *rathered* would be rejected.

    – (40b) would be judged acceptable.

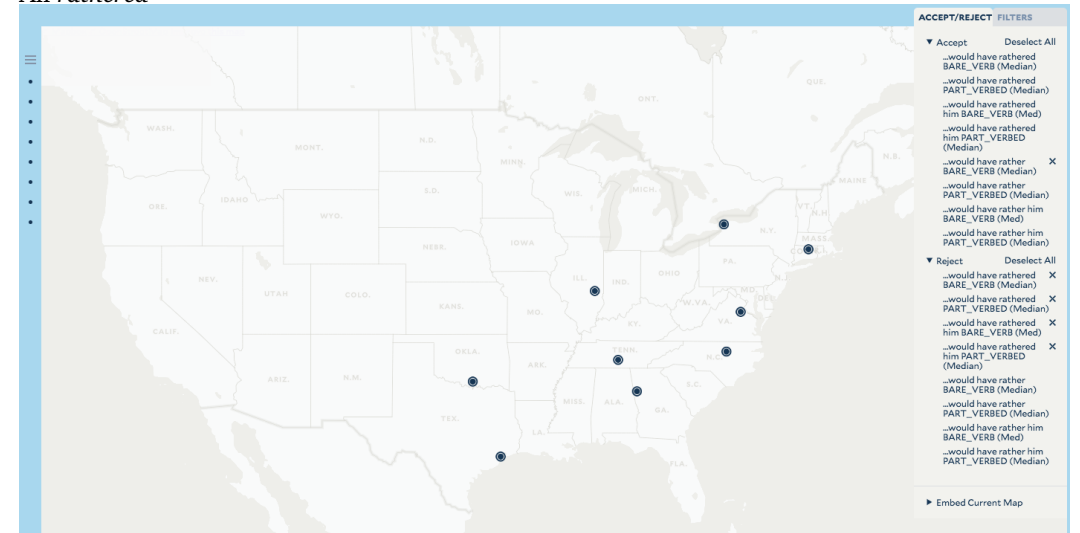• The map in (41) shows the speakers who accepted (40b).

– Of them, however, very few rejected all forms of *rathered*, as shown in (42).

(41) ✓ I would have rather go to a small school.
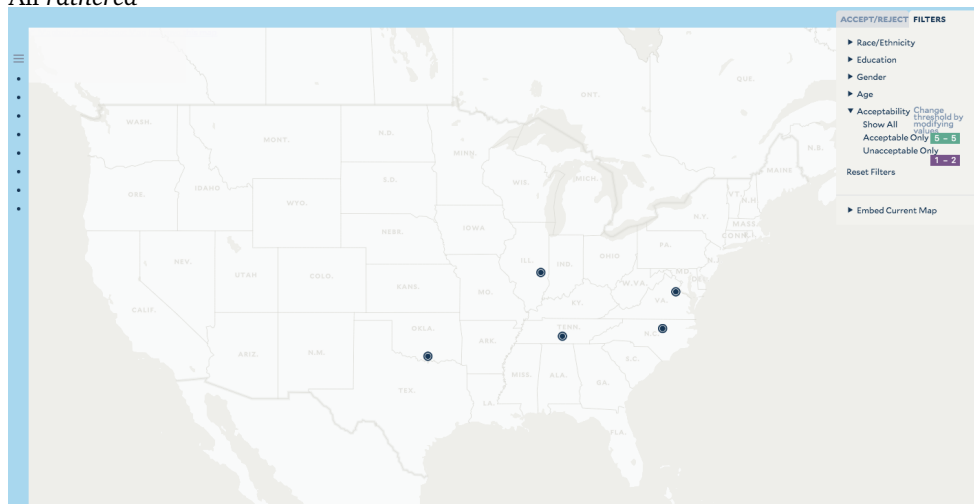

(42) ✓ I would have rather go to a small school.

    * All *rathered*

- Even among these speakers, few fully accepted (40b) (judging it as a 5), as shown in (43).

- And among the speakers in (43), still fewer fully rejected all *rathered* (as a 1), as shown in (44).
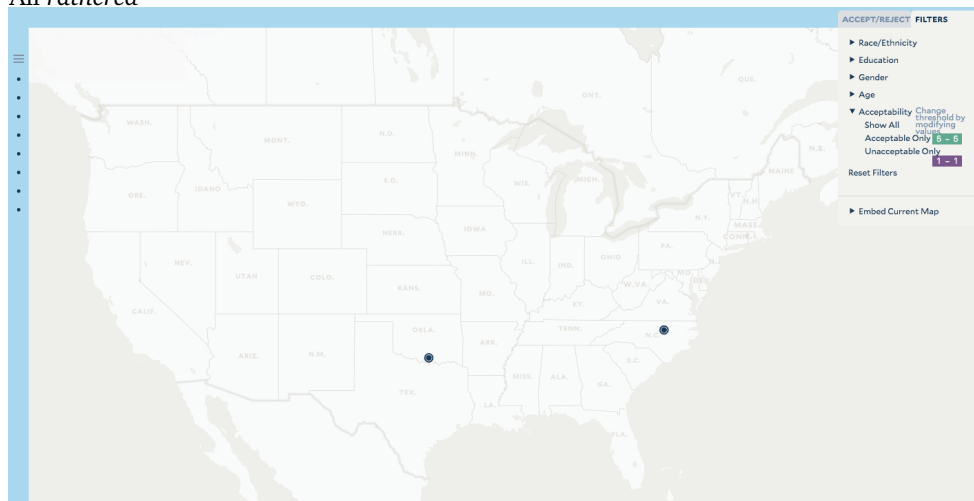
(43)　✓✓ I would have rather go to a small school.

　　　* All *rathered*

(44)　✓✓ I would have rather go to a small school.

　　　** All *rathered*

- At the very least, there is a very strong tendency: if speakers accept (40b), they do not reject *rathered*.

– Assuming this reflects their grammars, this means that speakers who have $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+\text{Inf}]$ also have $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+\text{Asp}]$.

– Thus, more speakers accept (40a) than (40b).

(45)　✓ I would have rathered go to a small school.
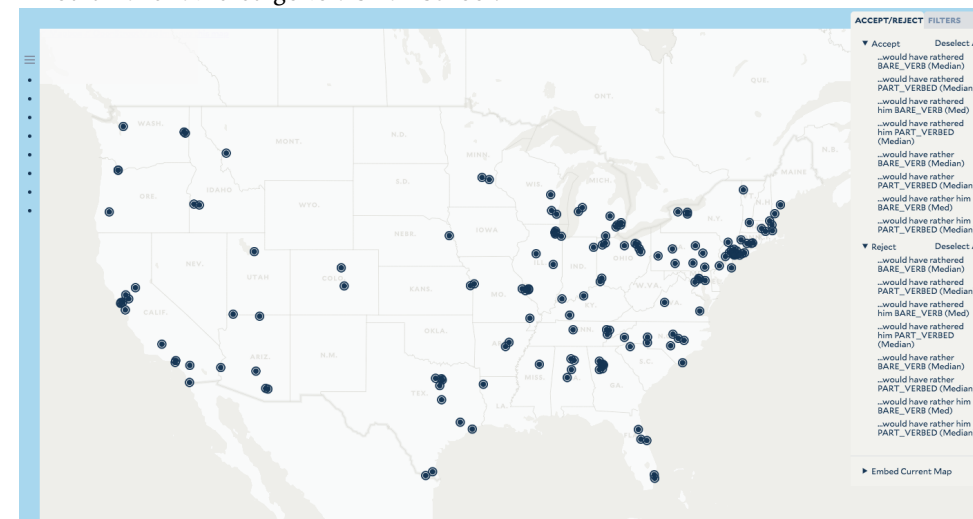
- Why might this hold?

– I tentatively propose that this is because the [+Inf] feature cannot occur in the absence of [+Asp].

　– **Possible motivation**: If [+Inf] occurred without [+Asp], it would not be embeddable under further verbal structure. It would create a root infinitive, which is perhaps deviant for a variety of reasons.

– This raises the question of why a number of speakers in my survey actually accepted *I would have rather go to a small school.*

- I propose that the morphological form is misleading, and that either *rather* or the verb is actually in a participial form.

– Christina Tortora (p.c.) stresses to me that apparently "bare" forms used as participles are far more widespread than we generally assume.

– See, for example, Johnson (2014:93ff.), in which forms such as the following are discussed:

(46) Appalachian English (Johnson 2014:94)

    a.   We eat cornbread and soupbeans every Thursday.   (Present)

    b.   We eat cornbread and soupbeans two hours ago.   (Past)

    c.   We **had eat** all the cornbread and soupbeans before y'all got here.   (Participle)

– This would predict that many speakers who accept (40b) would reject *I would have rather be there*.[12]

In sum

▶ Speakers who allow $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ to assign [Inf] generally also allow $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ to project Asp.

▶ I have proposed that this is because the [Inf] feature can only be assigned by something that projects Asp, within a given derivation.

▶ If this is right, it entails that some speakers project Asp syntactically without Asp being realized as a distinct, overt morphological form.


4.2 $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$[+Asp] → $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$[+have]

- We diagnose the presence of $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$[+HAVE] in a speaker's grammar when that speaker allows the ECM "use" of verbal *rather*. (47) shows the participants who rejected all such uses.

- We diagnose the presence of $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$[+Asp] in a speaker's grammar when that speaker allows the participle *rathered*.

- The maps in (48)–(49) show the participants who accepted the two non-ECM uses of the participle *rathered*.

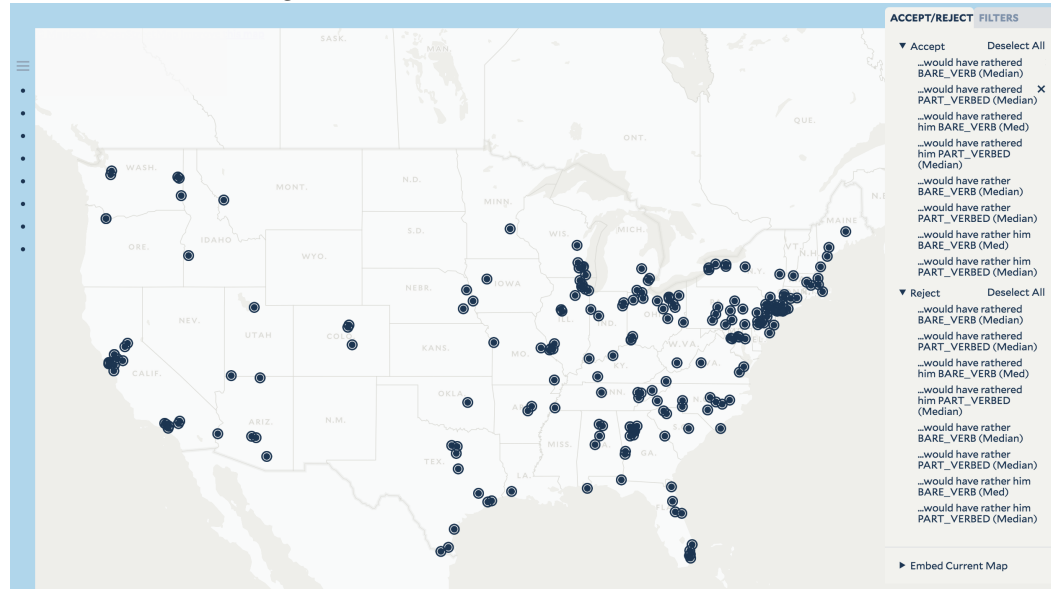(47) *** *I would have rather(ed) him go(ne) to a small school.***
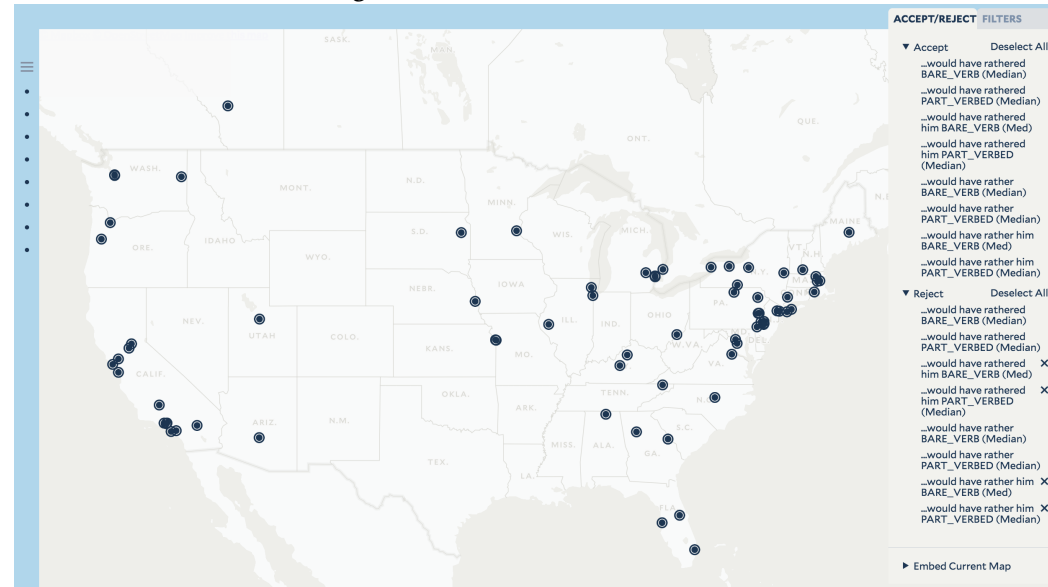
(48) ✓ *I would have rathered go to a small school*
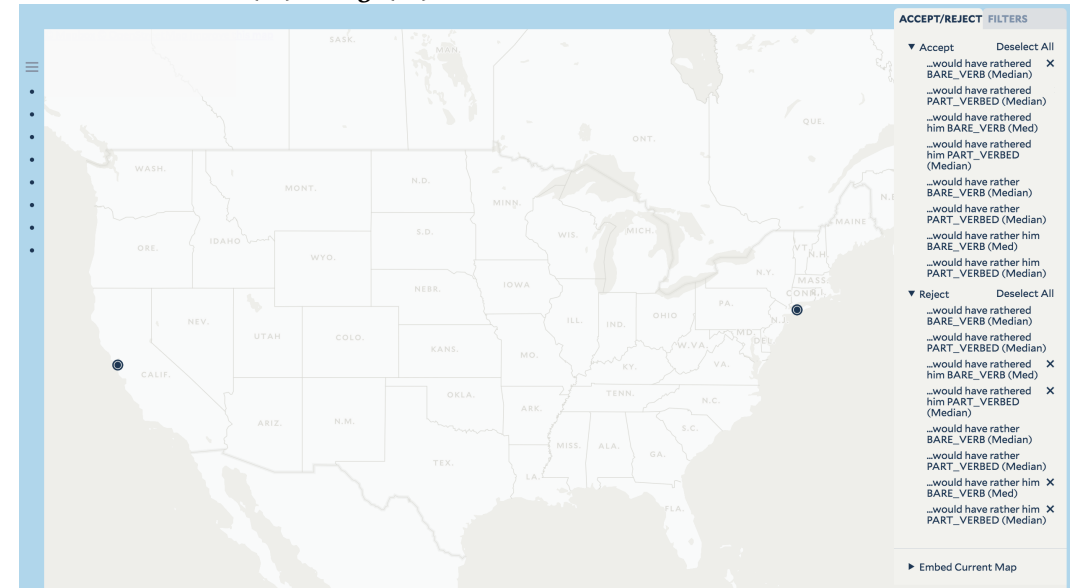

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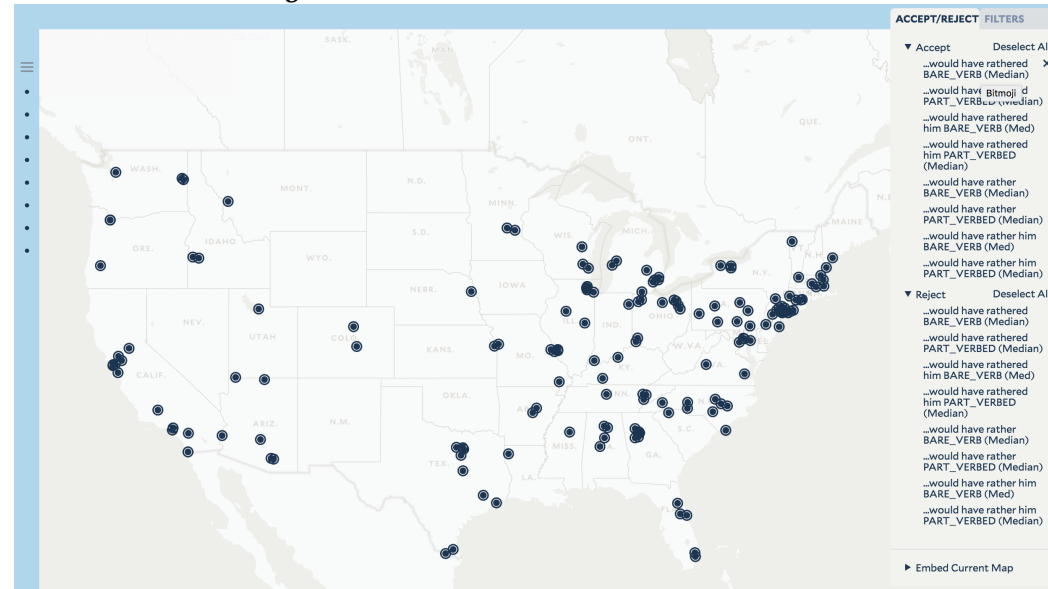
[12]On the assumption that *be* is one of the very few verbs that is not used as a participle. For speakers who use *rather* itself as a participial form, it is not clear what predictions we make, although see the next subsection for one possibility.

(49)   √ *I would have rathered gone to a small school*

– If a speaker's grammar allows $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+\text{Asp}]$ without allowing $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+\text{HAVE}]$, we expect:

  ► Some form of *rathered* would be acceptable.

  ► All ECM uses would be unacceptable.

• The next maps in (50) and (51) show the participants who accepted one of the two non-ECM uses of the participle *rathered*, but rejected all ECM uses of verbal *rather*.

– As we can see, very few participants had this judgment pattern. Moreover:

  ► Neither of the participants in (50) fully rejected all ECM (as a 1).

  ► Only two of the participants in (51) fully rejected all ECM (as a 1).

• Thus, we see that by and large, speakers who have $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+\text{Asp}]$ (accept *rathered*) also have $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}[+\text{HAVE}]$ (accept ECM).

(50)   √ *I would have rathered go to a small school.*

       * *I would have rather(ed) him go(ne) to a small school.*

(51)   √ *I would have rathered gone to a small school.*

   * *I would have rather(ed) him go(ne) to a small school.*


10
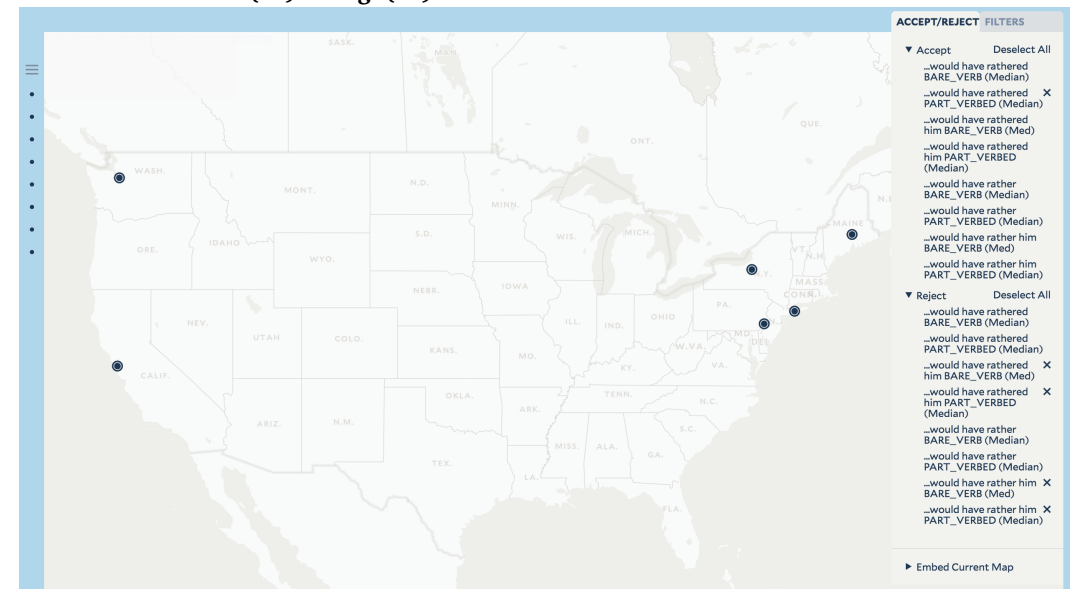
What about the exceptions?

- We might speculate that some speakers judge the ECM cases as degraded because they prefer finite CP complements.

- If this is true, it bears on the question in the previous section as well, where I proposed that speakers who accept *I would have rather go...* have a participle in the structure not reflected in the morphology.

– If so, we predict that these speakers, too, accept ECM uses: and this turns out to be generally true.

(52) √ *I would have rather go to a small school.*

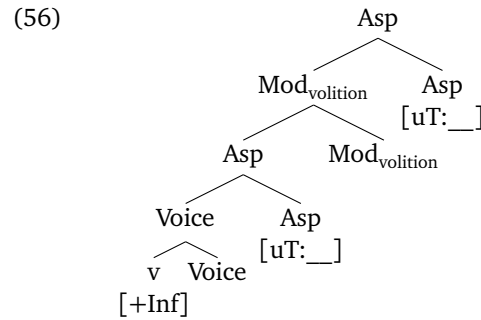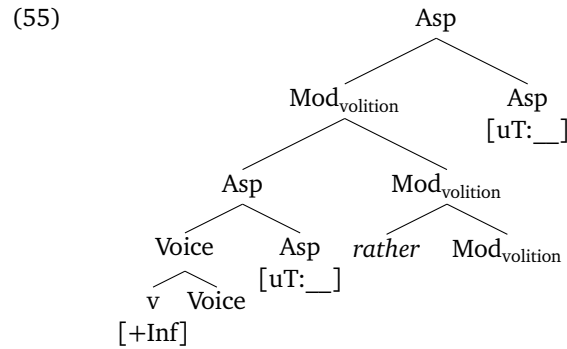   * *I would have rather(ed) him go(ne) to a small school.*
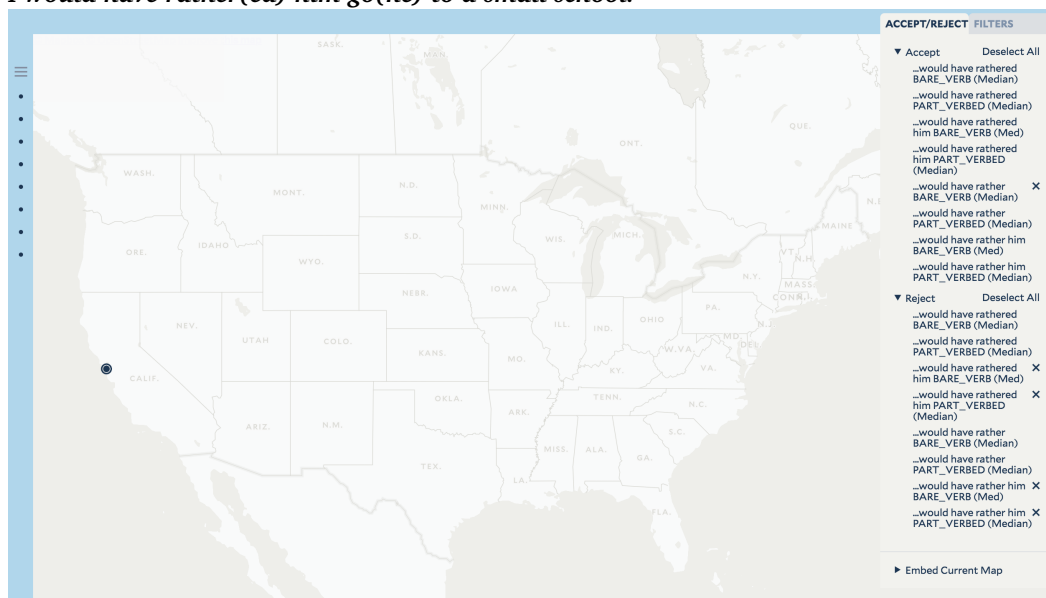
- Now we can ask why. Why is it that as soon as $Mod_{volition}$ projects Asp (i.e., becomes a verb), silent HAVE is immediately available?

– The answer, I propose, comes from a combination of the syntactic combinatorics and the licensing of silent elements.

- Suppose that $Mod_{volition}$ takes an AspP complement in all verbal *rather* cases embedding a verb phrase.

(53)
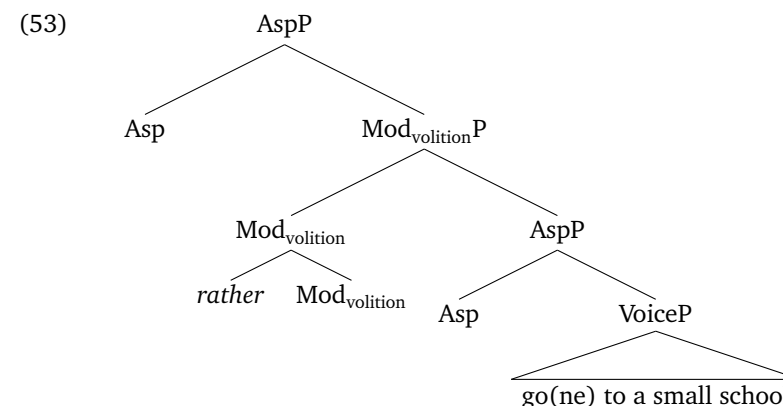
– To say that $Mod_{volition}$ "is" [+Asp] is to say that it projects AspP...

   – which is to say that $Mod_{volition}P$ combines with an Asp head...

   – which is to say that the grammar allows Merge($Mod_{volition}$,Asp)

- Without saying any more, we expect that the head of the AspP complement can head-move to $Mod_{volition}$.

– Before the higher Asp head merges, Merge($Mod_{volition}$,Asp) can apply to the lower Asp head.

- This, in principle, the lexical verb (which raises to Asp) could raise to $Mod_{volition}$, forming a complex head such as the following:

(54)
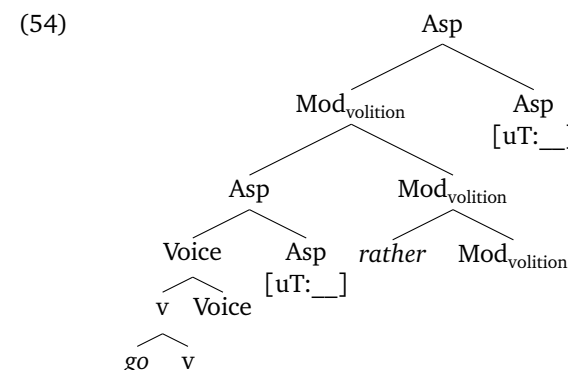
- Now suppose that if Asp adjoins to Mod$_{volition}$, it cannot be pronounced. Why?

  - ✎ Perhaps the generalized doubly-filled COMP filter (when *rather* is in SpecMod$_{volition}$P)?
  - ✎ Perhaps a PF constraint against multiple prosodic words within a single complex X-head?
  - ✎ Perhaps it is trapped in a "phasal blindspot" where spellout cannot see it (Kayne 2006)?
  - ✎ Perhaps it is not linearizable when *rather* is already adjoined to Mod$_{volition}$?

- Whatever the reason, we say that if Asp raises to Mod$_{volition}$, any verb that raised to Asp cannot be pronounced.

– As far as we can tell, however, this result is generally ungrammatical: nothing in the syntax or semantics suggests that lexical verbs can generally be non-overt with verbal *rather*: possibly just *have*.

(55)

```
                    Asp
            _____|_____
        Mod_volition         Asp
       _____|_____          [uT:__]
     Asp      Mod_volition
   ___|___      ___|___
 Voice   Asp  rather  Mod_volition
 __|__  [uT:__]
 v  Voice
[+Inf]
```

(56)

```
                    Asp
            _____|_____
        Mod_volition         Asp
       _____|_____          [uT:__]
     Asp      Mod_volition
   ___|___
 Voice   Asp
 __|__  [uT:__]
 v  Voice
[+Inf]
```

- Why can only "have" do this? I would suggest that the reason is likely do to some notion of recoverability. For a verb to be silent, it must be possible to recover from surrounding structure what verb it is.

– "Have" is special in this sense: it is generally considered to be a meaning component of volition, and it is frequently proposed that transitive "want" contains a silent "have" in its complement (Harves 2008).

– As a bonus, we might also explain why ECM "have" gets only the experiencer reading, and not the causative or engineer reading: only stative uses of "have" are possible, and the experiencer reading is helped along by the fact that Mod$_{volition}$ already has an experiencer meaning.

– If "have" is overt, the engineer or causer reading becomes available, along with any other lexical verb.

In sum

▶ As soon as Mod$_{volition}$ can combine with Asp, the head of its AspP complement can raise to it.

▶ This, however, leads to the verb being silent, which is only acceptable when its content is recoverable.

▶ In the context of volition, only *have* is recoverable.

4.3　If you HAVE one you HAVE all the HAVEs

- Recall that there are four distinct varieties of silent HAVE:

  (57)　a.　　HAVE {[+Asp],[+Inf]}　　　　　c.　　HAVE {[+Inf]}
  　　　b.　　HAVE {[+Asp]}　　　　　　　　d.　　HAVE {}

- Since HAVE is silent, we directly detect the presence or absence of the [+Asp] property.

- We can, however, tell whether [+Inf] is present or not.

- [+Inf] is unambiguously missing in sentences like (58); if it were present, the embedded verb would have to be *go*, not *gone*.

  (58)　HAVE without [+Inf]
  　　　a.　　I would have rathered him ~~HAD~~ him **gone** to a small school.
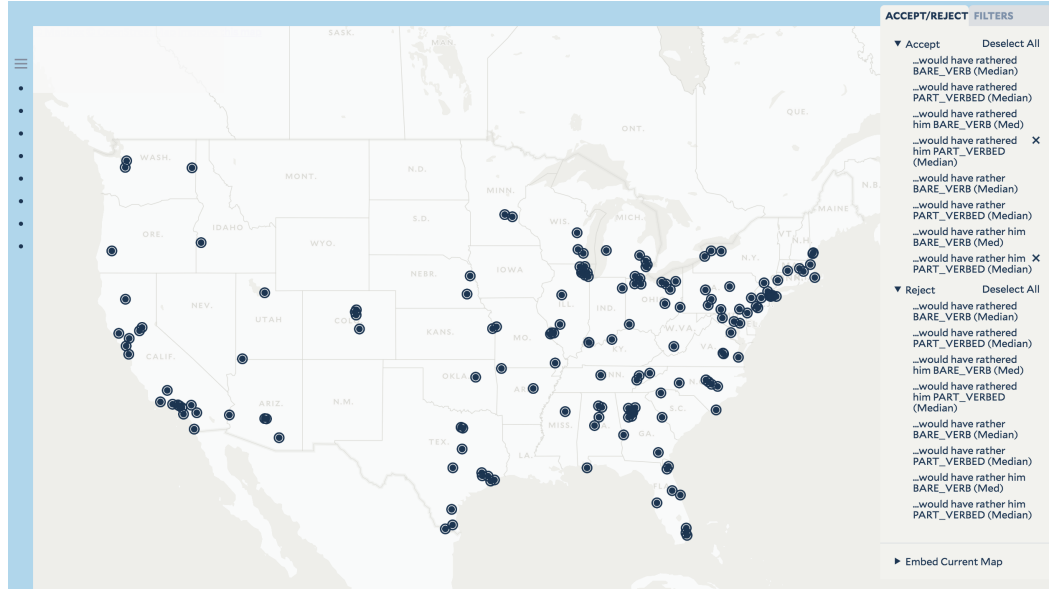 　　　b.　　I would have rather him ~~HAD~~ him **gone** to a small school.

– (60) shows the people who accepted the sentences in (58); (61) shows the people who rejected them.

- The people who reject (58) would seem to lack HAVE{} (with no [+Inf])—which might make sense, given that overt *have* always has the [+Inf] feature.

– However, to know that, we have to know that they have HAVE in the first place. In order to "count", they have to accept one of the sentences in (59).

  (59)　HAVE without [+Inf]
  　　　a.　　I would have rathered him ~~HAD~~/~~HAVE~~ him **go** to a small school.
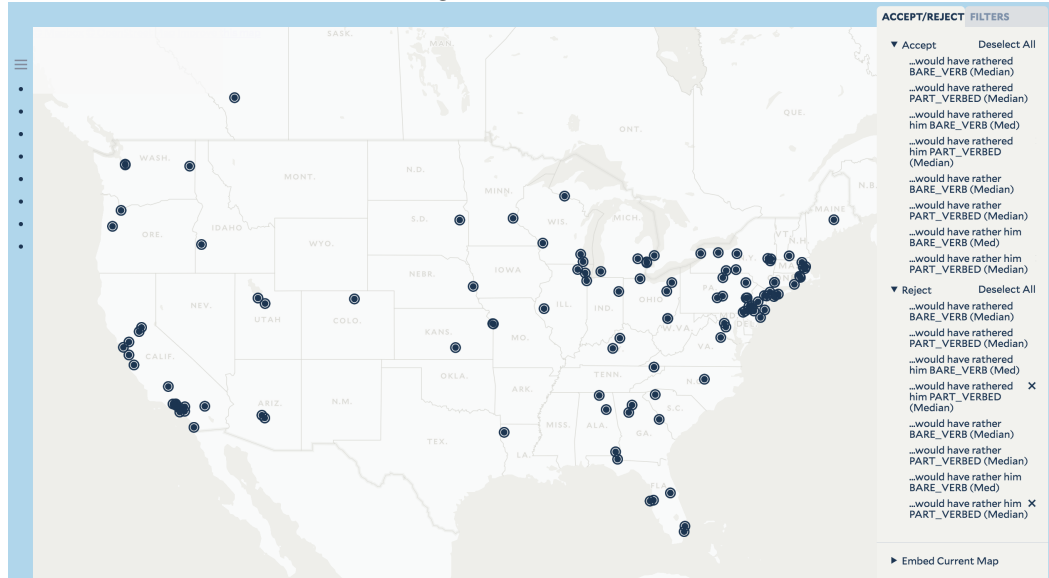 　　　b.　　I would have rather him ~~HAD~~ him **go** to a small school.

– This requirement reduces the number of speakers substantially, as shown in (62)–(63).

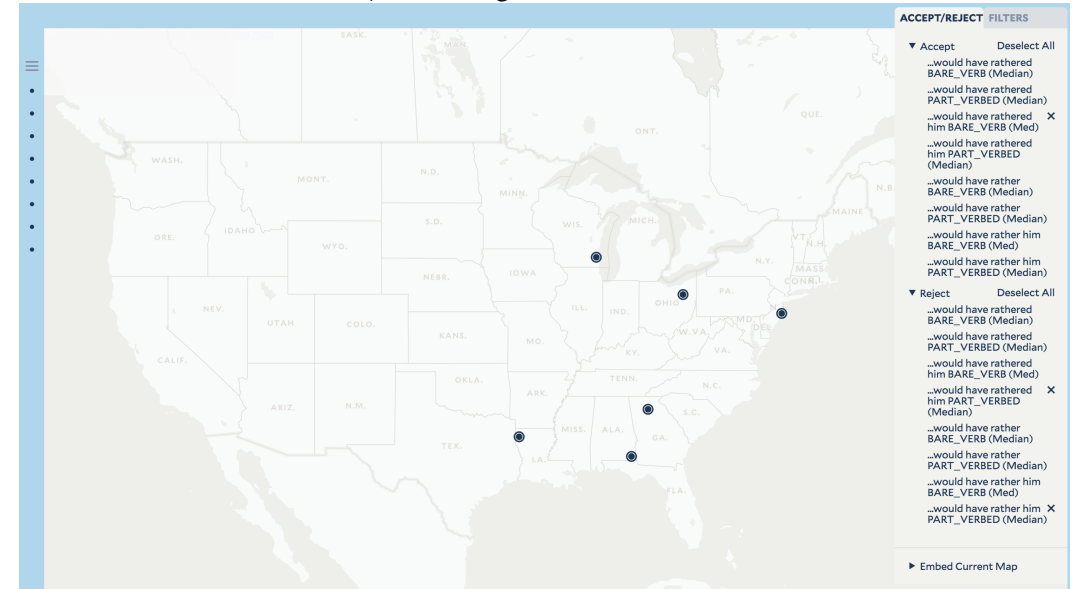(60)   √ I would have rather(ed) him H̶A̶D̶ him **gone** to a small school.

(61)   * I would have rather(ed) him H̶A̶D̶ him **gone** to a small school.

(62)   * I would have rather(ed) him H̶A̶D̶ him **gone** to a small school.

   √ I would have rathered him H̶A̶D̶/H̶A̶V̶E̶ him **go** to a small school.

(63)   * I would have rather(ed) him H̶A̶D̶ him **gone** to a small school.

   √ I would have rather him H̶A̶D̶/H̶A̶V̶E̶ him **go** to a small school.

– Still fewer "fully" reject (as 1) (58), and "fully" accept (as 5) (59).
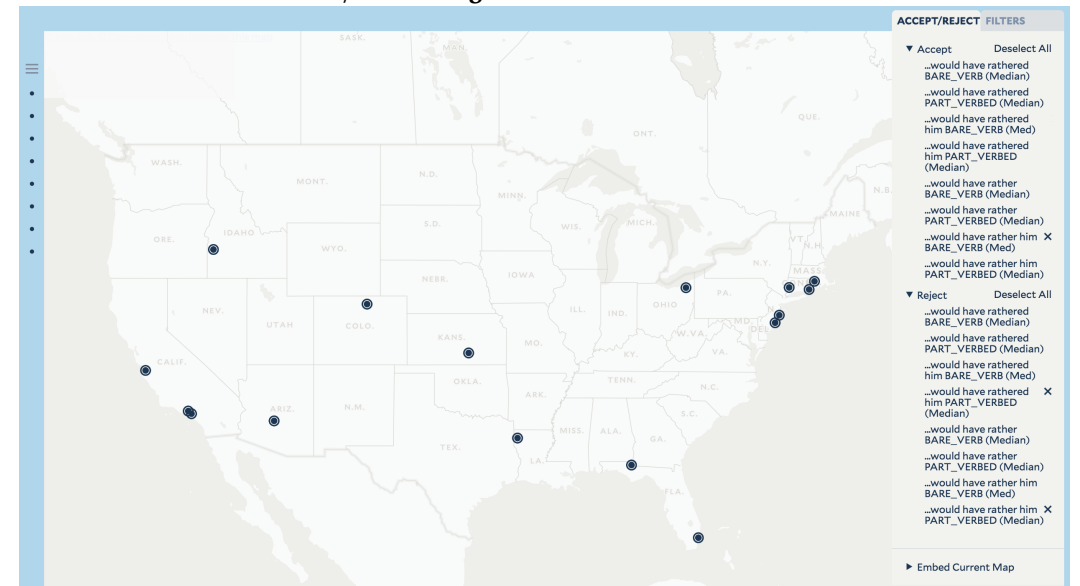
(64)   ** I would have rather(ed) him H̶A̶D̶ him **gone** to a small school.

   ✓✓ I would have rathered him H̶A̶D̶/HAVE him **go** to a small school.

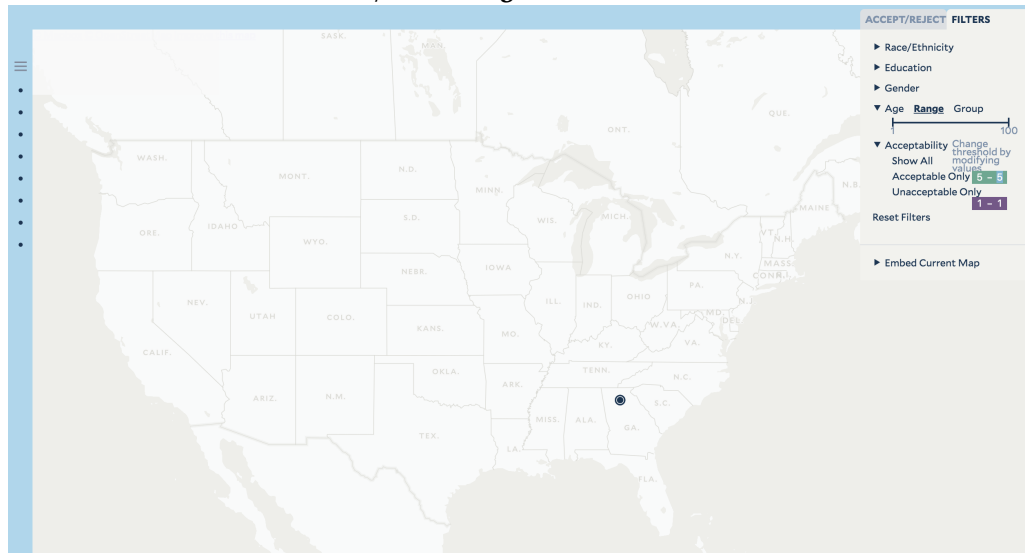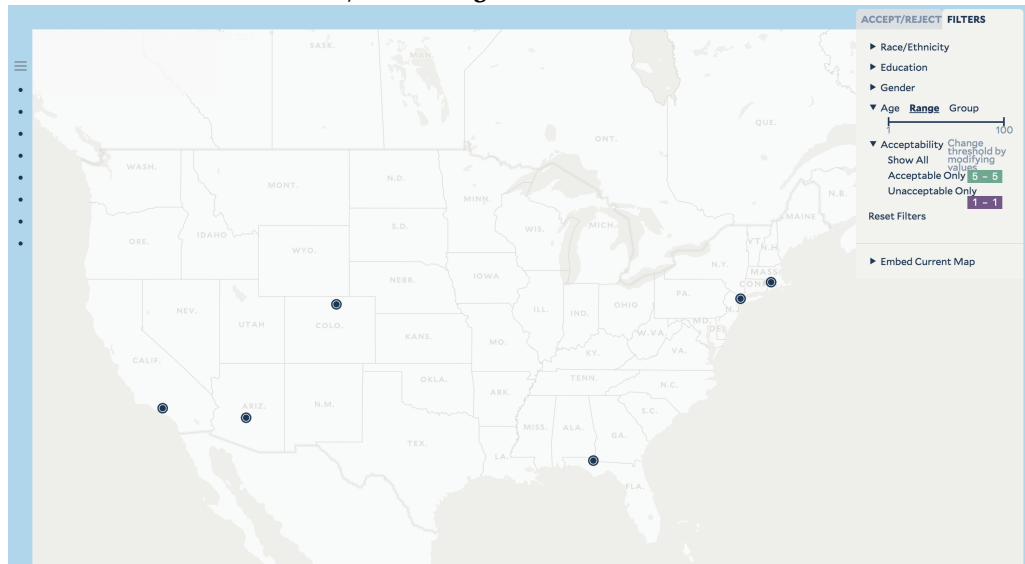(65)   ** I would have rather(ed) him H̶A̶D̶ him **gone** to a small school.

   ✓✓ I would have rather him H̶A̶D̶/H̶A̶V̶E̶ him **go** to a small school.

► For now, we will say that most participants who accepted any ECM sentences allowed HAVE{} (with no [+Inf]). We will return to the exceptions below.

• Turning to HAVE[+Inf], we can see that [+Inf] is unambiguously present in sentences like (66); if it weren't present, the embedded verb would have to be *gone*, not *go* (assuming *...*would have rather go...*).

   (66)   HAVE with [+Inf]

      I would have rather H̶A̶D̶ him go to a small school.

– Sentences like (67) are ambiguous; the infinitive could come from Mod$_{volition}$ or from HAVE.

   (67)   HAVE ambiguous, may or may not have [+Inf]

      I would have rathered H̶A̶V̶E̶/H̶A̶D̶ him go to a small school.

• However, for speakers who do not allow Mod$_{volition}$ to assign [+Inf], (67) unambiguously involves HAVE[+Inf].

– (68) shows the speakers who accepted both ECM sentences with a bare infinitive; (69) shows the speakers who rejected them.

(68)   ✓ I would have rather H̶A̶D̶ him go to a small school.

   ✓ I would have rathered H̶A̶V̶E̶/H̶A̶D̶ him go to a small school.
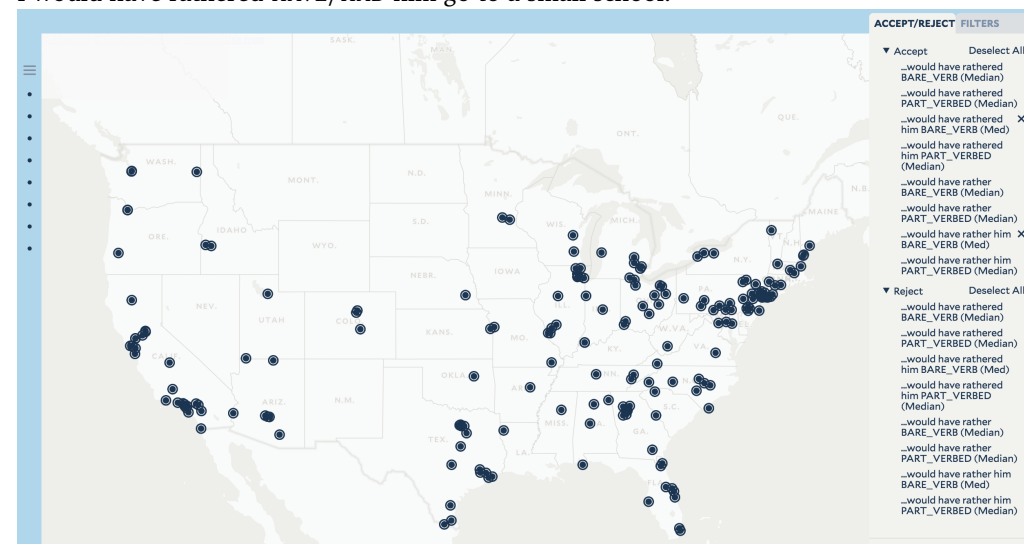
(69)   * I would have rather H̶A̶D̶ him go to a small school.

        * I would have rathered H̶A̶V̶E̶/H̶A̶D̶ him go to a small school.

- Once again, we need to look at the subset of (69) that accepts at least some ECM sentence.

(70)   * I would have rather(ed) H̶A̶V̶E̶/H̶A̶D̶ him go to a small school.
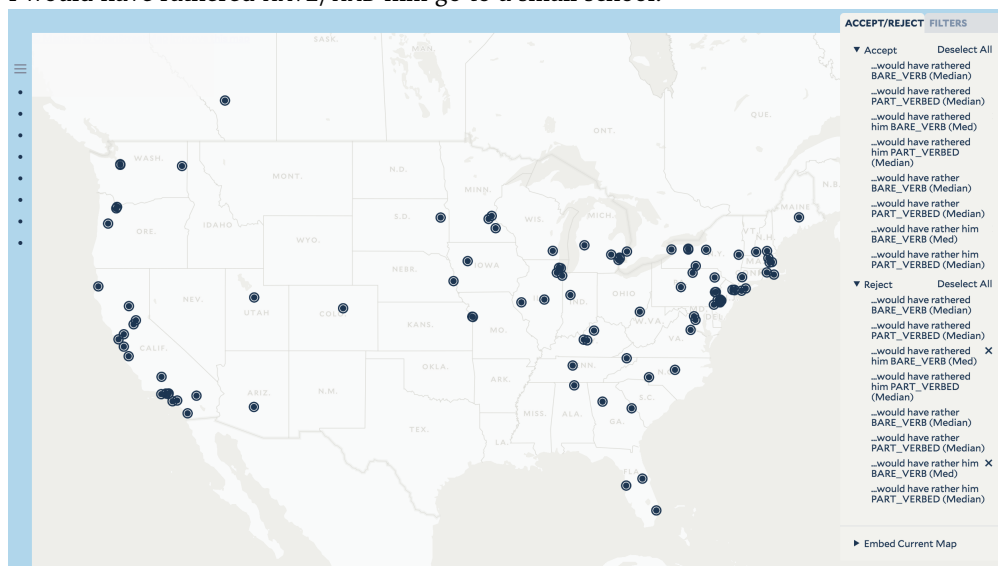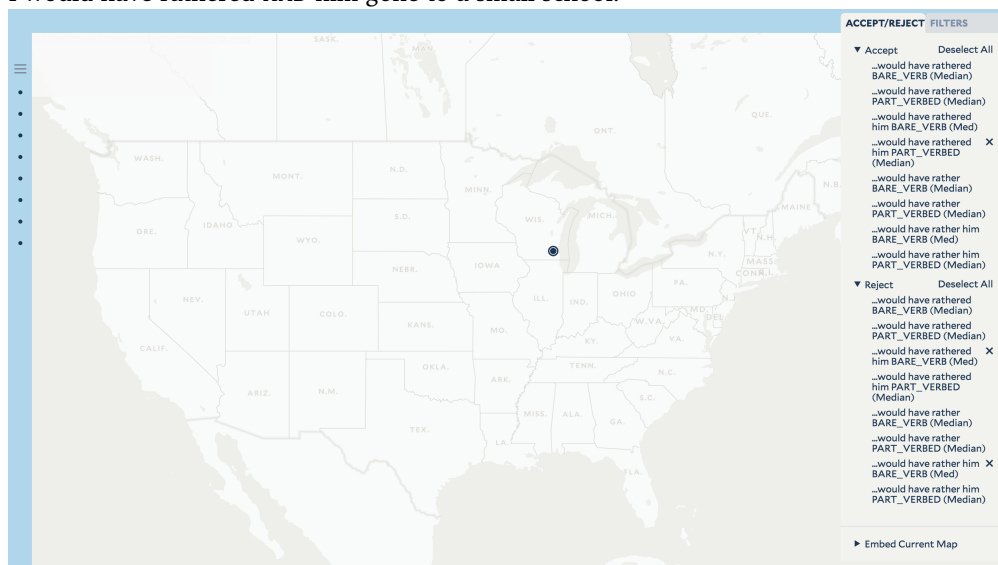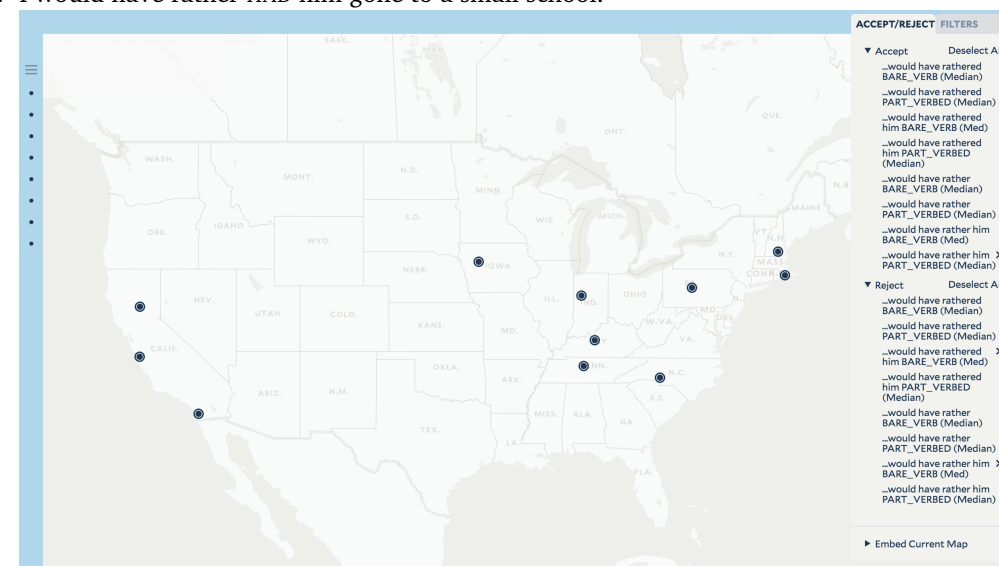
        ✓ I would have rathered H̶A̶D̶ him gone to a small school.

(71)   * I would have rather(ed) H̶A̶D̶ him go to a small school.

        ✓ I would have rather H̶A̶D̶ him gone to a small school.

- Among these speakers, only two people "fully" accepted (as a 5) the ECM sentence, and those two speakers did not "fully" reject (as a 1) the starred sentences.

▶ For now, we will say that most participants who accepted any ECM sentences allowed HAVE[+Inf]. We will return to the exceptions below.

    → Combined with the generalization from above, it appears that most speakers either allow HAVE{} and HAVE[+Inf], or they allow neither.

    → This is striking, especially in that we do not (to my knowledge) see overt ECM *have* without [+Inf].

- Why is it that once it is possible to license HAVE, all of the subvarieties of HAVE are available, even those that are not available with overt *have*?

- We can start with the following observation:

    – "Have" can lack the [+Inf] feature only when it is silent

- Which, given what we said above, means:

    – "Have" can lack the [+Inf] feature only when it raises to $\mathrm{Mod}_{\mathrm{volition}}$.

- Why? It has been claimed that the "parasitic" property (lacking [+Inf]) is a feature of restructuring constructions.

15

– Suppose that lacking [+Inf] isn't enough: the higher and lower verb must somehow be in the same phase domain in order to be valued by the same head.

– By head-moving to Mod$_{\text{volition}}$, the phase of HAVE is extended (Den Dikken 2006; Wood and Sigurðsson 2014). Without such movement, the higher Perf head would arguably be too far away to value the lower Asp.

– Wurmbrand (2015) in fact proposes that a special restructuring Voice head head-raises up to the higher v. This puts the lower VoiceP in the higher VoiceP's domain, and forces a control-like relation between the two predicates.

• So my tentative proposal is that overt *have* could perfectly well lack the [+Inf] feature, except that if it did, the lower predicate would not have its verbal feature valued.

– If overt *have* could occur with Wurmbrand's restructuring Voice, it would be fine—but English does not generally use this option.

– Therefore, instead, the whole lower verb has to raise, leading to its silence.

> **In sum**
>
> • Speakers have all the HAVEs because from a grammatical standpoint, they have all the overt *have*s too.
>
> • However, the "have" without the [+Inf] feature is only useable if the phase is extended, which requires head-movement, which causes "have" to be silent.

5   A note on *sooner*

• An interesting point of variation with verbal *rather* is the use of *sooner* in sentences like:

(72)   a. I'd **sooner them** make sure it's perfect than release buggy software.[13]

   b. I'd **sooner them police** the Apps better than make it a free for all.[14]

   c. Nothing will compensate me for losing this house. I'd **sooner them keep** the money. It's my house.[15]

– These clearly resemble the ECM uses of *rather*, and have the same kind of "experiencer *have*" interpretation.

[13] http://forums.crackberry.com/news-rumors-f40/rim-now-has-80-million-subscribers-up-2-million-last-quarter-746652/index4.html
[14] http://forums.crackberry.com/native-blackberry-os-apps-f152/rim-possibly-others-not-policing-their-app-stores-enough-589084/index2.html
[15] http://streetfightersproject.wordpress.com/multimedia/photofilms/a-kick-in-the-bricks/

• However, as far as I know, *sooner* never takes verbal morphology:[16]

(73)   * I would have soonered {go / gone} to a small school.

• This suggests that *sooner* can occupy SpecMod$_{\text{volition}}$P, and allow HAVE to head-move to Mod$_{\text{volition}}$.

– However, *sooner* cannot head-adjoin to Mod$_{\text{volition}}$, and so Mod$_{\text{volition}}$ cannot project Asp.

– This also clarifies why the correlation with Asp is not bi-directional: Mod$_{\text{volition}}$ can project Asp something can adjoin to it, and once this is possible, Asp can raise to Mod$_{\text{volition}}$. But just because something can raise to Mod$_{\text{volition}}$ doesn't mean Mod$_{\text{volition}}$ can project Asp, because the head adjunction is a crucial part of the process.

6   A note on the modal requirement

• So far, I have said nothing about why the modal is necessary.

– In fact, I do not have much to say at this time, except that it can't be direct selection, because the modal requirement holds past the Perf head.

(74)   a.   I would rather them leave early.

   b.   I would {want / prefer} them to leave early.

(75)   a.   * I generally rather them leave early.

   b.   I generally {want / prefer} them to leave early.

(76)   a.   I would have rathered leave early.

   b.   I would have {wanted / prefered} them to leave early.

(77)   a.   * In the past, I have always rathered leave early.

   b.   In the past, I have always {wanted / preferred} to leave early.

– It is not always *would*, but it usually is, and it is almost never a deontic modal.

(78)   a.   (?) I might rather go to a small school.

   b.   ?? I must rather go to a small school.

   c.   * I should rather go to a small school.

[16] Although I did find one attested example, online, from a person self-described as a 50-64 year old woman from Brentwood (CA?).

(i)   They offered us a free dinner but did not include any drinks - tbh we would have soonered that we got the room we paid for as our supplement was more than the free dinner.

- I would like to propose that the modal has some function in constructing the volitional meaning in the first place. To illustrate, consider how verbs like *like* or *love* have experiencer meanings in the present, past, and present/past perfect:

  (79)　a.　　I love to take long walks.
  　　　　b.　　I like to take long walks.

  (80)　a.　　I loved to take long walks.
  　　　　b.　　I liked to take long walks.

  (81)　a.　　I had loved to take long walks.
  　　　　b.　　I had liked to take long walks.

  (82)　a.　　I have loved to take long walks.
  　　　　b.　　I have liked to take long walks.

  – With a modal like *would*, however, the meaning can come much closer to 'want':

  (83)　a.　　I would like to go for a run, even though I do not like to run.
  　　　　b.　　I would love to eat healthy food, but I just don't love to eat healthy food.

  – So perhaps $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$ is not a primitive on its own, but is constructed from at least two modal heads.

  – This would entail that other volitional auxiliaries, cross-linguistically, might be syntactically more complex than they appear.

  – It might also explain what happened to English *will* over time: part of the complex structure was lost, leaving a future modal auxiliary where a volitional auxiliary once was.

7　Further microvariation

- Based on patterns of judgments for the eight sentences in (84)–(85), we have seen evidence for three broad generalizations.

  (84)　a.　　I would have rathered go to a small school.
  　　　　b.　　I would have rathered gone to a small school.
  　　　　c.　　I would have rathered him go to a small school.
  　　　　d.　　I would have rathered him gone to a small school.

  (85)　a.　　I would have rather go to a small school.
  　　　　b.　　I would have rather gone to a small school.
  　　　　c.　　I would have rather him go to a small school.

  　　　　d.　　I would have rather him gone to a small school.

  (86)　Generalizations
  　　❶　A grammar with $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}[+\text{Inf}]$ has $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}[+\text{Asp}]$
  　　❷　A grammar with $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}[+\text{Asp}]$ has $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}[+\textsc{have}]$.
  　　❸　A grammar with any $\textsc{have}$ has all of them.

- Based on the functional heads in (87)–(88), it was proposed that these generalizations motivated the sets of grammars in (89), which is an abbreviation for the "sets of heads" in (90)–(92).

  (87)　a.　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$ {[+\textsc{have}],[+Asp],[+Inf]}　　e.　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$ {[+Asp],[+Inf]}
  　　　　b.　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$ {[+\textsc{have}],[+Asp]}　　　　　f.　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$ {[+Asp]}
  　　　　c.　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$ {[+\textsc{have}],[+Inf]}　　　　　g.　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$ {[+Inf]}
  　　　　d.　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$ {[+\textsc{have}]}　　　　　　　　h.　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$ {}

  (88)　a.　$\textsc{have}$ {[+Asp],[+Inf]}　　　　c.　$\textsc{have}$ {[+Inf]}
  　　　　b.　$\textsc{have}$ {[+Asp]}　　　　　　d.　$\textsc{have}$ {}

  (89)　Sets of grammars (abbreviated)
  　　　a.　**Grammar A**: $\textsc{have}$\{(([+Asp]([+Inf]))\}, $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{([+\textsc{have}])\}
  　　　b.　**Grammar B**: $\textsc{have}$\{(([+Asp]([+Inf]))\}, $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{([+\textsc{have}]),([+Asp])\}
  　　　c.　**Grammar C**: $\textsc{have}$\{(([+Asp]([+Inf]))\}, $\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{([+\textsc{have}]),([+Asp]([+Inf]))\}
  　　　d.　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{}

  (90)　**Grammar A**
  　　　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{}
  　　　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{[+\textsc{have}]\}
  　　　$\textsc{have}$\{}　　　　　　$\textsc{have}$\{[+Asp]\}　　　　　　$\textsc{have}$\{[Asp],[+Inf]\}

  (91)　**Grammar B**
  　　　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{}　　　　　　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{[+Asp]\}
  　　　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{[+\textsc{have}]\}　　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{[+Asp],[+\textsc{have}]\}
  　　　$\textsc{have}$\{}　　　　　　　　　$\textsc{have}$\{[+Asp]\}　　　　　　$\textsc{have}$\{[Asp],[+Inf]\}

  (92)　**Grammar C**
  　　　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{}　　　　　　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{[+Asp]\}　　　　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{[+Asp],[+Inf]\}
  　　　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{[+\textsc{have}]\}　　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{[+Asp],[+\textsc{have}]\}　$\text{Mod}_\text{volition}$\{[+Asp],[+Inf],[+\textsc{have}]\}
  　　　$\textsc{have}$\{}　　　　　　　　　$\textsc{have}$\{[+Asp]\}　　　　　　$\textsc{have}$\{[Asp],[+Inf]\}

- However, we have also seen some exceptions to these, and there is further in fact microvariation beyond this. Let us take a brief look at where in the system this kind of variation might reside.

7.1   What kind of "have"?

- So far we have focused on ECM *have* with a bare infinitive complement.

– There is further variation in other "kinds" of *have* (my own judgments below).

  (93)　a.　　I would rather ~~HAVE~~ him arrested.

　　　　b.　　I would rather ~~HAVE~~ him in jail.

　　　　c.　? I would rather ~~HAVE~~ a puppy.

　　　　d.　?? I would rather ~~HAVE~~ a conversation.

　　　　e.　?* I would rather ~~HAVE~~ a good time.

　　　　f.　* I would rather ~~HAVE~~ to scrub the floor.

- This variation must connect to the licensing of silent HAVE.

- There a few possibilities for where this variation might fit into the current system:

  ✎ Speakers might have different structures for *have*, with only some of them feeding the appropriate head movement.

  ✎ Speakers might have different "identification" requirements on silent HAVE.

  ✎ Movement to $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ might be sensitive to the feature content of HAVE.

- This also connects to the issues discussed above. Recall that the generalization that speakers allowing HAVE allow all varieties of HAVE was not quite absolute.

– Speakers who seem to lack HAVE{} may lack HAVE{} entirely, since overt ECM *have* always has the [+Inf] feature.

– Still, it is unusual, since overt *have* in general (for example, possessive *have*) doesn't have to have a [+Inf] feature. So the grammar would have to specify specifically that the *have* that takes an AspP complement must have a [+Inf] feature. Perhaps this is why it is such a marked option, if it's an option at all.

– Speakers who seem to lack HAVE[+Inf] are more challenging—perhaps there is some reason that only a defective HAVE can move to $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$, or there is some preference to pronounce HAVE[+Inf].

– Still, speakers with this pattern of judgments are rare, so it is not clear how much we should modify our basic assumptions to account for them.

7.2   Variation in the modal requirement

- As mentioned above, some speakers do not require a modal; for them *rather* may be closer to an ordinary verb.

– Still, at least some of them also except some of the structures here (e.g. parasitic participles), so this might be worth looking at more closely. (Do we find parasitic past tense marking, for example?)

- Moreover, speakers vary in terms of the range of modals that may license verbal *rather*—and this needs to be better understood.

7.3   Adjunction to $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$

- All of the above is stated in terms of the functional head $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$, not *rather* itself.

– The claim is that for $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ to act like a verb—to project Asp—something must be adjoined to it (perhaps to be able to bear the Asp morpheme).

  → Notice, for example, that one could be a "Grammar A" with *sooner* but a "Grammar C" with *rather*.

- One could imagine that *rather* could be sensitive to the feature content of the $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ head it adjoins to.

– For example, one could imagine that *rather* may only adjoin to $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}\{[+\text{Asp}]\}$, but not to $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}\{[+\text{Asp}],[+\text{HAVE}]\}$. A speaker with such a system would accept *rathered*, accept ECM, but would not accept *rathered* with ECM.

  – In this case, only 3 speakers in our sample have this pattern of judgments, so it is not clear if it is a real reflection of their grammar.

– We could imagine the converse: *rather* may only adjoin to $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}\{[+\text{Asp}],[+\text{HAVE}]\}$, but not to $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}\{[+\text{Asp}]\}$.. A speaker with such a system would accept *rathered*, accept ECM, but would only accept *rathered* with ECM.

  – In this case, at least 13 speakers in our sample have this pattern of judgments. It is worth considering what this means for the account of HAVE.

- This leads us to Wood's (2013) "Grammar C", reflecting my own judgments, which were as follows:

  (94) a.   I would have rathered go to a small school.
        b.   I would have rathered gone to a small school.
        c.   I would have rathered him go to a small school.
        d.   I would have rathered him gone to a small school.

  (95) a.   * I would have rather go to a small school.
        b.   * I would have rather gone to a small school.
        c.   * I would have rather him go to a small school.
        d.   * I would have rather him gone to a small school.

- The survey data did not provide support for the existence of this grammar; only two participants shared my judgments.

– Part of the problem might be (95b), which is in fact possible me, but only under a sharply different reading, meaning 'instead'. This reading can be brought out with the use of a nonvolitional subject, as in:

  (96) a.   The kids' books would rather have been placed on a more accessible shelf.
        b.   The kids' books would have rather been placed on a more accessible shelf.
        c.   The bill . . . instead of reducing the price of books, would have rather increased it.

– Still, even accounting for this didn't help—only 2 people who accepted all the *rathered* sentences rejected the other 3 *rather* sentences.

- According to the present system, this makes sense. Nothing in the system should prevent $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}\{\}$ from hosting *rather* in its specifier, or force *rather* to adjoin to $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$.

- Nor would it make sense to say that my grammar lacks $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}\{\}$ entirely, and only has the more complex varieties.

- For one possibility, consider the fact that $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ is higher than Asp_{Perf} in the Cinquean hierarchy.

– The constructions discussed here involve $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ lower than Asp_{Perf}.

– This suggests that $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$ "resets" the extended projection, like a lexical verb would.

– Perhaps my judgments reflect a strong pressure to do this explicitly, by projecting Asp whenever it is lower than $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}}$.

– In some sense, this is saying that my grammar is not really unable to generate the sentences in (95), but rather that I have a very strong preference for the sentences in (94).

  ▶ Quite possibly, other "highly unusual" judgment patterns reflect preferences rather than options within the set of grammatical sentences.

8   Conclusion

- Despite a lot of microvariation, the present study has revealed a more restricted range of verbal *rather* grammars than we might have otherwise expected.

– Returning to the interesting syntactic properties we began with, the overall picture supports the following broader conclusions:

  ▶ Silent verbs can be licensed by head-moving to a modal head in the extended projection. This movement it freely available, but silence demands recoverability, which limits its application only to certain verbs, and certain uses/meanings of those verbs.

  ▶ Bare-infinitive–selecting verbs are nearly "closed class" because they have special syntactic properties that go beyond semantic or even syntactic selection: They must license the temporal verbal features of the embedded verb, or else provide a structural context for such licensing.

  ▶ Parasitic participles are possible only when the two unvalued Asp heads are in the same domain. This can be accomplished by:

    ∗ "Restructuring" Voice (not in English)
    ∗ Embedding an inflected auxiliary under another auxiliary (previously observed, but not for English).
    ∗ Moving the lower verb to the higher verb (extending the phase, but leading to the lower verb's silence) (novel observation).

  ▶ The restricted distribution suggests of *rather* suggests that volitional meaning is not a primitive, but is constructed from smaller primitives.

  ▶ The microvariation reveals a tight connection among logically distinct functional heads, suggesting that they are not acquired independently of each other, but interact in significant ways.

– Many questions remain, both about verbal *rather* and volition in particular and the issues above more generally.

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