

Meaning and Linguistic Variation

The Third Wave in Sociolinguistics

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 **CAMBRIDGE**
UNIVERSITY PRESS

He deserved better. After graduation I went home to New York to find myself and a nine-to-five job. I ended up as a bilingual secretary at Rockefeller University (then The Rockefeller Institute) to Belgian Nobel Laureate Christian de Duve. De Duve was a wonderful person, a great boss and friend, but it was soon clear to both of us that I didn't want a nine-to-five job, that it was time to bite the bullet and become a linguist. I applied to Columbia but didn't get in. Uriel Weinreich advised me to take courses and try to prove myself, and reapply. So I got a job teaching high school and moonlighted taking linguistics courses at Columbia: two semesters of morphology and syntax taught by Bill Labov (a new Assistant Professor), and Romance Philology taught by Mario Pei. It was a very full year, and I loved both the linguistics and being in the high school. It was being around teenagers that I really liked, not so much the teaching, and I hated dealing with classroom discipline. When I left the high school at the end of the year, I told myself that I would find a way to come back. Little did I know that it would be under such great circumstances.

When I arrived at Columbia, Bill Labov was the coolest act in town. His MA thesis, the Martha's Vineyard study (1963), had been published, his dissertation, the New York City study (1966), was about to be published, and he was into his Harlem study. He was young, politically engaged, casual, outgoing, with boundless energy and excitement. Bill has been a central presence in my life ever since. He has been a mentor, an inspiration, on occasion an adversary, a frustration, and always a beloved friend. And he kept me alive through graduate school, where I was continually terrified and felt I didn't belong.

I never asked a question or volunteered an idea in class or even in conversation, for fear of saying something stupid. When I had a question in class, rather than asking it, I rushed off to the library to find the answer. I wasted huge amounts of time poring over books looking for answers to questions that I could have gotten in a second if I'd only asked. And of course I didn't always find the answers either. I didn't think I was stupid, just clueless. I loved collecting and working with data, and I knew I was good at it, but I always thought I didn't – or couldn't – really understand theory. Years later, after hearing me give a talk on the impostor syndrome at the LSA, my classmate Benji Wald told me he'd thought I never said anything because I was too cool. I'd felt anything but cool, but I'd probably tried to seem cool just to get by. For all I know, my defense may have intimidated other insecure people. Nowadays, talk of the impostor syndrome is everywhere, but back when I was in graduate school it felt shameful and private.

1 Gascon

I became a dialectologist in Marvin Herzog's course on Yiddish dialectology, during which I began a lifelong relationship with the French linguistic atlas (Gilliéron 1902–10). I have never revered books – I like reading them, but their object-hood has never meant much to me. I'm not one of those people who loves the touch and smell of books. This atlas, though, gives me the shivers. I couldn't and still can't get enough of it. The sheer wonder and eternal value of the work that went into it is overwhelming, as is the pleasure I've gotten from tracing sound changes as they wander and interact across the countryside. The paper I wrote for Herzog's course turned into my master's thesis, on morphological constraints in the raising of Latin unstressed *a to [o] in southern France. I found the phenomenon in the intersections of the spread of this change with the spread of the deletion of the plural marker. I thought it was interesting, but Bill had to point out its relevance to current theory. I didn't publish it (Eckert 1985) until sixteen years later, when its theoretical message was no longer timely.

My work with the atlas made me want to hear the southern dialects I'd been focusing on, and an exploratory trip in the summer of 1968 gave me a taste not only of what the dialects sounded like, but of the stigma attached to them. I'd never been a Francophile, so stigmatized peasant dialects were just what I needed to be comfortable with France at the time. I put an ad in the New York francophone newspaper *France Amérique*, hoping to find a speaker of one of these dialects. I got a response from a man who told me dialects didn't exist, and one from a young guy who figured I was trolling for a French boyfriend and claimed to speak all dialects. But sitting in a laundromat on Broadway one day, I met a woman who had seen my ad but hadn't responded because she'd thought it sounded suspicious – after all, what normal person would want to study a peasant dialect? She was Anna Cau, from Ercé, in the Gascon-speaking Pyrenees of Ariège, and she became my wonderful consultant for the months leading up to my fieldwork.

Ercé was the source of many of New York's French restaurants and restaurant workers. And lying in the midst of the isogloss bundle that separates Gascon from Languedocien to the east, it had the added distinction of sporting

a particularly stigmatized dialect. Since Madame Cau had also lived for some time in the Languedocien dialect area, she often provided me with forms in both dialects, and it was clear that she thought the Languedocien versions were “better.” It also became clear that some of the words she provided on the first pass were nonce borrowings from French. The Gascon equivalent she gave for the French word *fleuve* ‘river that flows into the ocean’ was *flobe*. Later as I read through my word list to check my phonological analysis, she balked at that one, and said she’d never heard that word and that main rivers and tributaries were both called *ribero*. There were several other items that she rejected on similar grounds, and it became clear that her bilingual competence included borrowing rules that essentially reconstructed several hundred years of sound change. This nonce borrowing, I decided, would be the topic of my dissertation.

In the fall of 1970, I landed in Toulouse with a Nagra and 100 five-inch reels of Scotch recording tape. In my early days in Toulouse, I found a warm welcome among participants in the regional Occitaniste movement. I was introduced to people in a community near Agen who were working to revitalize the language, and they arranged for me to live with a family with three generations of speakers – the only family I ever met with children growing up speaking Occitan. I was touched by these people’s commitment, friendliness, and generosity, but I was interested in the dynamics that had given rise to language loss, not the potential cure. So I thanked them and headed south into the Pyrenees, in search of a rougher situation – a language without hot running water, so to speak. My search for a field site is to be told elsewhere, but I ultimately landed in Soulan, one valley and a couple of isoglosses over from Ercé.

Soulan is a commune of six villages arrayed over the south side of a mountain. I lived in St. Pierre, the main village of the commune, with a population of about eighty people. I lived with the family that owned the café, benefiting both from a family life and from a built-in excuse to hang out in the café, which was also the house’s living room and kitchen. People came to the café not only to drink and socialize, but to buy wine, milk and cigarettes as well, so it was the ideal place to see the world go by. And André (Pépi) Vidal, the very colorful old man who had run the café for a generation, was a local, even regional, gossip clearinghouse. Pépi owned the physical café, but in order to collect his pension, he had to give up the café license. Joseph Rumeau, a plasterer from the higher village of Boussan, had bought the license from Pépi and moved in with his wife and three children ranging from two to fourteen years old. The older generations are gone now, but the three kids, Gisèle, Bernard and Patricia Rumeau, now middle aged, are like close family to me.

During my year and a half in Soulan, I maintained my friendships and connections among the Occitanistes, but felt increasingly at odds with their

ideology. The stigma of “patois,” and the greater stigma of the patois of the region around Soulan, was manifest in all things, and only exacerbated by the work of the Occitaniste movement. The movement was infected with the purism that had led to the language shift that they were trying to reverse, as the need to establish a standard language added a layer of stigma to actual spoken varieties. Kids from Soulan who took Occitan in high school learned only that their parents’ language was not “Occitan” (or I should say not *even* Occitan). And while the Occitanistes celebrated my ability to speak Occitan, they thought the dialect I spoke was bizarre. Even Pierre Bec, the revered Occitan dialectologist whose book (Bec 1968) tracing the isoglosses in the region of Soulan was my bible, couldn’t help correcting my Gascon to make it sound more “standard” – even though he himself had documented the very forms he was rejecting.¹

Turning a peasant language into a regional standard required a lot of ideological work, and speakers of local dialects were being asked to cleave to a polity that had little meaning or advocacy for them. I was annoyed that the Occitanistes often referred to peasants with the condescending phrase *les braves paysans* ‘the good peasants’. It had a similar ring to the common bourgeois way of referring to a fully adult woman who cleans your house: *petite portugaise* ‘little Portuguese’. I put my thoughts about this some years later into the following article.

THE PARADOX OF NATIONAL LANGUAGE MOVEMENTS

Introduction

A political movement that seeks to unify a large and diverse population needs to elaborate the construct of unity within and of the common threat from without, and to convince each segment of the population to identify its own experience and interests with that construct. The popularity of the movement depends not only on the severity of the problems it is designed to confront, but on its success in presenting the common interest of the entire population in such a way that all segments of the population can identify their own situation with it. A fundamental paradox arises when these considerations are put into the

¹ Specifically, he corrected the past participle in *n'ai cap comprenuch* ‘I didn’t understand’ to *compreish*. (This was as if I’d said in French *je n’ai pas compris*, and he had corrected me to *compris*.) He said that while he knew that the Soulatan form was *comprenuich*, it was ugly and that the least I could do was say *comprenut* – the pronunciation of the next commune to the east (closer to Languedocien).

practical context of a regional or national movement. To aspire to any form of autonomy, a region needs to be large and diverse enough to comprise a viable economic unit. At the same time, the movement must be able to point to an underlying common heritage to justify unification of the region and its separateness from a larger political unit from which it desires to achieve autonomy. This is usually effected through the elaboration of a cultural, historical and/or linguistic heritage common to the diverse population of the region. But since the uniformity imposed by this elaboration will tend to be at the expense of local or sub-regional differences, the process of regional standardization may very well be reminiscent of the kind of external oppression that the movement is designed to counteract. A paradox arises, therefore, when the needs of unification require the submersion of authentic local or sub-regional differences. To the extent that the submersion leads to the belittling of local characteristics, segments of the population will not identify with the movement. This problem arises particularly in areas that are far enough from the regional center that there are extreme cultural and linguistic differences from what is considered the regional standard.

The following discussion will illustrate just such a case in a community removed culturally and linguistically from the center of a regional movement that intends to represent the community. The case in point is in Occitania (southern France), and illustrates not inadequacies in the movement, but the pitfalls in even the most carefully considered regional movement. For the force of this paradox is more a result of the conditions that the movement exists to counteract than of any serious oversight or elitism on the part of the movement. This community's alienation from the regional movement arises from the very problems that should create its solidarity with it. But the very problems that give rise to the movement become acute sooner in the poorer and more isolated areas of the region, and make such an area subject to apparent regional as well as extra-regional oppression. The symbols of the regional movement can bear, for a marginal area, meanings reminiscent of existing external domination. The discussion will focus on language, since language is the clearest and most powerful symbol in the movement. However, insofar as cultural variability affects geographically marginal areas in a way similar to linguistic variability, any discussion of local cultural features in relation to the regional movement will follow closely.

Occitania and Occitan

Fishman has pointed out (1973) that for language to be an effective symbol of a nationalist movement it must be the current common language of its population, or one must be able to trace that language back to an era when the population was united. Fishman's criterion of authenticity is ideally

answered in Occitania and the language is perhaps the clearest issue in the movement.

That Occitania is a clearly defined linguistic region has been long established in the literature of Romance linguistics. The north and south of France are separated by a concentrated bundle of isoglosses running west from Bordeaux and fanning out to the east to define the region known as Franco-Provençal. The area to the south of this bundle of isoglosses is Occitania. Several bundles of isoglosses divide Occitania, in turn, into a number of regions, but the differences between regions within the South are not nearly as great as those that separate the south as a whole from the north. Dialect variability within the South has always been considered a source of richness, and pan-dialectal comprehension has traditionally been an important part of linguistic competence in this region. As a result, one does not have to go back in history to find authenticity for Occitan. But history does enrich Occitania's claims. The different regions of Occitania have yielded great rich literary traditions (d'Artagnan from Gascony, the troubadours of Provence) and the political and economic importance at various eras of different parts of Occitania contrast sharply with the region's current dependence on the north.

But Occitan's most important claim to linguistic authenticity is the fact that it remains to this day the predominant language among older people in rural villages, and an important linguistic presence throughout the South. It has only been in the past thirty to forty years that French has supplanted Occitan as the native language of most children in rural areas of Occitania, and virtually all of these younger people have at least a passive competence in Occitan. Occitan is symbolic of their villages, their families, their families' way of life. It is the language that surrounded them in their childhood, a language that has been absorbed by much of southern French popular culture, and many of whose expressions and exclamations they have incorporated into French. The language, therefore, is still alive enough for all Occitanians to be a prime symbol of solidarity throughout the region. But over the past hundred years, as the abandonment of the region and the acquisition of French has been the main means to economic survival for individuals in Occitania, Occitan has also become symbolic of the poverty and isolation of these villages. One cannot talk about the two languages of Occitania, Occitan and French, without invoking their opposing social connotations: connotations that have developed over the years of language shift.

The oldest Occitan speakers in many areas were the first speakers of French in their communities, and they have seen the replacement of Occitan by French as the predominant language in the course of their lifetime. This transition was not usually gentle, and the disgrace suffered at the hands of French national education (to say nothing of northern visitors) is an important bond among the wide population. Perhaps Occitan unity is based as much on common linguistic

experience as on common language. In fact, the Occitan movement bases much of its appeal on this common experience. The appeal of common linguistic experience stems from the process of language shift.

Language Shift in Occitania

While French was introduced as the administrative language in Occitania in the sixteenth century, there was no official desire to introduce it as a standard language until after the revolution of 1789 (Brun 1923). At that time, French became symbolic of democracy and national unity, and a long campaign ensued to rid the country of non-French dialects, considered to be a major barrier to mobility, unity, and participatory democracy. Free national education, actually implemented in rural areas of Occitania 100 years later, became a powerful agent of centralization and of the eradication of non-French varieties. As centralization and industrialization pulled the population out of Occitania and into the north, increasing numbers of Occitanians learned French in order to escape the increasing poverty of their region. In recent years, as forces in Occitania have mobilized against domination from the north, this abandonment of the Occitan language has served as a powerful symbol. Part of its power stems from universal and very personal experience of stigmatization of Occitan culture through its language.

The introduction of French into Occitania followed a pattern of gradually evolving diglossia, whereby French replaced Occitan in increasing numbers of domains progressing from the periphery to the center of community and private life.² In this process, French gained dominance, with the need for economic mobility as the main force, and through the interplay between the social statuses of the languages themselves on the one hand and of the domains they represented on the other. As a result, Occitan was not simply replaced in an increasing variety of domains; it was shamed out of existence in domain after domain, reaching from outside the village eventually into the home and into relations within the family. Linguistic shame was exercised in a series of social oppositions associated with the domains of the languages: French was the language of the outside, the rich, the educated; Occitan was the language of the home, the poor, the uneducated. This series of oppositions eventually entered the Occitan language itself, leading to considerable borrowing from French in a constant effort to make Occitan "more acceptable" (Eckert 1978). In the course of language shift, the dialects of Occitan became increasingly localized. One of the earliest social oppositions between French and Occitan stemmed from their

² The process of language shift in one Occitan community is described in Eckert (1980a).

association with the outside and the inside respectively, as the strangers who entered the villages tended to be Francophone and to be representatives of the government or of French institutions. Therefore, as French became the language for dealing with the outside, Occitan dialects retreated into local obscurity, to be used only with natives of one's own village. Thus people stopped thinking of their native language as the language of the region and began to think of it as a "local" language. This localization had several major effects on regional solidarity: It decreased awareness of the unity of the various varieties of Occitan, and the traditional pan-dialectal competence of the speakers throughout the region, and it quite simply transferred all extra-local communication into the French domain. This localization of Occitan was intensified by the establishment of French as the written language: For the size of the Occitan-speaking population, Occitan has been virtually invisible in public media. The dialects, therefore, lost prestige not only insofar as they were politically subordinated to French, but also insofar as they were fragmented and reduced in status from a gradual dialect continuum to a miscellany of apparently disconnected local varieties. Because of the clear genetic relation between French and Occitan, it has been easy for the dominant, French, society to label all non-French Romance varieties as "dialects of French." The popular notion that the various forms of Occitan are "perversions of French" is still widespread. The considerable regional and local variability of varieties of Occitan is invoked as evidence of a process of decay, and the comparative homogeneity of French is taken as proof of that language's superiority.

The Occitan movement is comprised of efforts of various degrees to reverse the process of economic, linguistic and cultural colonization from the north. Since language is a key to the unity of Occitan, the language policy of the movement is of crucial importance – in fact, for some, language is the primary issue. As mentioned above, the great authenticity of Occitan's linguistic claims stems from three facts:

1. A considerable segment of the population still speaks Occitan.
2. The fundamental relation between all dialects of Occitan is overwhelmingly apparent.
3. The populations of Occitania have had similar experiences with linguistic oppression from the north.

The exploitation of this authenticity, however, presents many pitfalls, for the reintroduction of Occitan as the language of the region can be conceived of in one of two ways: It can be an undoing of the process of language shift that has accelerated over the past hundred years, and thus reinstitute Occitan in its original role, or it can simply replace French as far as possible with Occitan. The former assumes time and considerable means. The latter is more realistic

in a practical sense, but less realistic in its aims to establish authenticity in modern terms.

The Need for Standardization

Fishman has pointed out the contradiction in the claims of authenticity and the need for standardization. For although the pragmatic and symbolic functions of the regional language are closely interconnected, they can also be contradictory. For Occitan to replace French in its public domains requires:

1. Putting Occitan into intraregional communication. This must be done through the selection and imposition of a standard variety or the reestablishment of global pan-dialectal competence.
2. Putting Occitan into written communication through the extension of French orthography to Occitan, or through the development of a standard Occitan orthography.
3. Putting Occitan into technological and educational use, through broad-based lexical innovation. This can be done either through regular borrowing from French, or through the development of new Occitan vocabulary.

In cases 2 and 3, the first option is the one taken informally over the past generations as speakers of Occitan have adapted to technological development in its bilingual context. These "natural" options, insofar as they are responses to, and institutionalizations of, French domination, are symbolically unacceptable for a regional language movement. The other options, though, however appropriate they may be for the movement, create other difficulties, for establishing the regional authenticity of a language and connecting that language to the speech of individuals are frequently separate problems.

The original, authentic linguistic unity of Occitan lay in the gradual differences of its geographic varieties (and in the speakers' corresponding pan-dialectal competence) and in the common differences between these varieties on the one hand and French on the other. For several reasons, however, it is difficult for a regional movement to exploit this "unity in common diversity." First of all, native pan-dialectal awareness is one of the aspects of Occitan that has been damaged to some extent in the process of language shift. But far more important, as a symbol, Occitan must be a language that can be opposed to French and that can compete with French on the latter's own terms. For French, as the current standard, has acquired the right to set the requirements for "language-hood" even for the regional language. One such requirement is homogeneity. The association of variability with "irregularity" has dominated linguistic thought over the years, and has had its role in the denigration of Occitan varieties. Particularly in the purist climate associated with French, a symbol cannot be variable. The compromise has been to establish several

regional standards, each chosen from the cultural and linguistic center of the region, providing a standard that is fairly close to every living dialect.

Given the proximity of dialects within the sub-regional scheme, the development of a pan-dialectal orthography can help to reduce dialect differences in the written language. In the earlier days of bilingualism, it was common to write Occitan in French orthography. The spelling was completely phonetic – thus localized – and cumbersome, but available to all who are literate in French. This orthography is felt to be unacceptable for these and for symbolic reasons, for needless to say, the subjection of the language to a relatively unsuitable French orthography is reminiscent of French domination.

By the same token, the more difficult solution to the third problem – the development of new Occitan vocabulary – is the only acceptable one. Habitual borrowing from French is not only a constant reminder of French domination, but it is indeed part of the process of disintegration of the division between the two languages. Lexical revitalization, therefore, must be accomplished independently of French.

It must be emphasized that all these decisions taken about codification of a regional language are necessary, given the role of this language in a political movement. The paradox to be discussed below, therefore, is a true one; it is not created by the linguistic decisions themselves, but by the very exigencies of a political movement. Establishing the regional authenticity and usefulness of a language, and connecting the revitalization of that language to the current speech of the region can involve contradictory strategies.

The Regional Periphery

Regional centers have maintained linguistic and cultural traditions through institutional means, and speakers in these centers have been able to identify their own speech with that of a nameable and identifiable (if extinct) power. But in the outlying areas, people enjoy no such association between their local varieties and those "mythical" prestige varieties of Occitan. It is important to remember the differences between central and peripheral areas in discussing regional movements, for the two experience these movements in quite different ways.

It is worthwhile, therefore, to consider the Occitan movement from the point of view of a rural community far from the regional center.³ This community, located in the Pyrenees of Ariège, is an ideal target for sympathy with

³ The following discussion is based on eighteen months of sociolinguistic fieldwork in this community, supported by a dissertation grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF-GS-3211).

the regional movement, for the economy of the area was seriously damaged by centralization policies of the post-revolutionary government. The sheep herding economy of the region was destroyed when the post-revolutionary government withdrew peasants' grazing rights on domain lands in the Pyrenees (Chevalier 1956). Subsequent battles against the French authorities (Baby 1972) set a strong tradition of revolt against the central government, and resistance to government efforts to install a new economy indicates a long-lived alienation (Chevalier 1956). Local dialects of Occitan are still relatively vital in this area: People over the age of fifty still regularly speak Occitan among themselves, and younger people have at least a strong receptive competence. A few people currently in their twenties still speak it as their first language.

Situated within the isogloss bundle that forms the transition between the Gascon and Languedocien dialect areas, the dialect is contextualized by significant local variability. Differences among the dialects of surrounding valleys are internalized and part of the speakers' everyday competence. Speakers can enumerate and place lexical, grammatical and phonological isoglosses in the dialects of the surrounding area. It is significant that while linguists consider the dialect of this community to be unequivocally Gascon, the speakers are unaware of any relation. For according to local dialectological beliefs, there is an age-old distinction between central (named) dialects and "patois." The named dialects (Gascon, Languedocien, Provençal) possess a status close to "language," dignified by codification, literary tradition, and history. The (unnamed) dialects of non-central regions, however, are "irregular," as witnessed by intense local variation, and bear only a poor and degraded relation to the named dialects. There is a general feeling that rural people living closer to regional centers are culturally and linguistically "nobler." This is reinforced by the tendency, which predates the current Occitan movement, to consider the language and culture of regional centers as what is "Gascon," "Provençal," etc. A kind of elitism and purism characterizes virtually all efforts to publicize traditional culture, as one variety – a variety that has long had the means to elaborate art forms – is selected to represent a region. Thus people on the periphery of regions have always known that they are linguistically and culturally subordinate.⁴ Rather than viewing central varieties as part of a continuum, they have come to see the center as homogeneous and systematic, and the periphery as a continuum.

⁴ This sense of linguistic and cultural inferiority is immediately obvious to a fieldworker entering such a community, for residents cannot understand why a more central community was not chosen. It was frequently pointed out to me that if I really wanted to study the language, I should be in an area where they "speak better."

The Reperipheralization of the Periphery

The current and last generation of Occitan speakers in this community are self-consciously transitional. They have chosen to raise their children as Francophones, to provide them with the means to economic mobility, and to save them the disgrace of being speakers of "patois." At the same time, insofar as they comprise the population that did not emigrate, their loyalty to the region, their home and their language is considerable. This transitional generation is closest to the issues on which the regional movement is established, and they are the true link between Occitan history and the Occitan movement. In regional centers, this generation has been recruited to some extent. There are families that have decided to raise their children as Occitanophone after all, and there is a proliferation of public use of Occitan. But for a variety of reasons, this is more difficult in peripheral areas.

The Occitanophone generation in the peripheral community under consideration is aware of its transitional nature in two senses: The language of the community is and always has been transitional among Occitan dialects, and the language of the young generation is "bilingually" transitional insofar as it has been heavily influenced by French. This provides two sources for feelings of inadequacy in relation to the Occitan movement, for speakers in peripheral areas have little access to the accepted form of the language. It must be kept in mind that there are rewards within the French system for the revival of Occitan. The Occitan movement has managed to introduce Occitan in the schools as a means of satisfying the language requirement. Thus parents in the regional centers can for once teach their children their native language for educational reward rather than punishment. But in marginal areas, the parents' language is different enough from the standard that the parents' linguistic skills are considered (as always) to be only marginally useful in school. Thus the transitional nature of the local dialect in relation to other Occitan dialects is once again stigmatized.

But even if the local dialect were closer to the standard, intense French influence in the current generation's speech makes much of their speech unacceptable by movement standards, as well as by general standards within the community. Over the past century, speakers have come to rely increasingly on French for vocabulary, and have reached a point where they borrow lexical items from French that already have local Occitan equivalents. But while this French influence is valued neither by the community that implemented it nor by the Occitan movement, it remains an important part of local linguistic habits. Rejection of borrowing is in fact a rejection of the language in general precisely because borrowing is so pervasive. Lexical purism simply adds another source of stigma to the local language. The denigration of local language skills, therefore, is almost an automatic

outcome of the standardization and purification of Occitan. The development of a standard Occitan thus creates a situation parallel to the one that existed between French and Occitan, but with a new, regional norm adding a new level to the local linguistic hierarchy. Now the local "patois" is inferior not only to French but to Occitan.

Conclusion

A political, and even a purely linguistic, movement is faced with some important choices. Different areas of a region will not only speak different regional varieties, they will show different relations to these varieties. Language shift occurred earlier in urban areas of Occitania, and many people that the regional movement represents are second and third generation Francophones. Very different linguistic measures are required to provide them access to the regional language. Insofar as nationalist movements generally rely heavily on an urban educated elite, it is important to provide this access. But the tailoring of a language to be accessible and useful to such an elite will alienate other segments of the population both linguistically, insofar as the language will be disconnected from their own linguistic base, and politically, insofar as an urban elite – Occitan or not – evokes the French urban elite that it endeavors to supplant. This is particularly true of the relation between the movement and the remaining native Occitanophones. They have already suffered enough linguistically, and for any linguistic revival to appeal to them it would have to effectively roll back the stigmatization process of language shift, and provide them with the confidence and motivation to resume public use of their native dialect. Their Francophone children pose a related but different problem, since they have inherited knowledge of the linguistic stigma, but have not personally suffered for it. These people have a strong emotional attachment to their parents' native language, and many of them experience deep regret at having to leave their villages to find work. Although these young people are prime targets for the movement, there is no direct link between standard Occitan and their parents' language as they know it. This is not just because of geographic difference, but because the movement, with its elaboration of standard Occitan in its politicized context, tends to stress the language as a vehicle of intellectual, political, and artistic communication. The language is, therefore, not the language of these people's personal experience, but a symbol of that language. It is paradoxical that while the real thing is more accessible to these people, only its symbol has value.

2 Stigma and Meaning in Language Shift

I had developed a rudimentary competence in the dialect of Ercé in my time with Madame Cau, and switching to Soulatan was not particularly difficult. What was difficult was getting people to speak it with me on a regular basis, because it was completely anomalous for them to speak patois with anyone they hadn't grown up with, and certainly with someone as young as I was. People cooperated, though, and I settled in to do my own version of sociolinguistic interviews. Since there were practically no Soulatan speakers under the age of forty, I was able to center my interviews on how life in Soulan had changed in their lifetime. And since it had changed a lot, the interviews were lively and interesting, and I developed a good sense of the social changes that had brought about language shift. The population of Soulan in the seventies represented the entire process of language shift: The members of the oldest generation had been the first to acquire French as a second language, and those born after World War II were the first monolingual French speakers.

The diglossia paper that follows grew out of a conversation with Bill Labov at the time of the Ann Arbor Black English trial in 1979. It was common wisdom for many linguists that encouraging African American kids to use standard language in school and AAVE (African American Vernacular English) "where it's appropriate" would result in competence in, and respect for, both dialects. It had become clear to me in Soulan, though, that diglossia sets up an opposition that stigmatizes the vernacular and the situations in which it is spoken. Bill told me I'd better publish the idea right away because, as he said, he would talk about it and people would think it was his idea unless he could cite me. I wrote it in a weekend, and gave it as my first ever conference talk at NWAV (New Ways of Analyzing Variation) in Montreal.

DIGLOSSIA: SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL

Terms such as code switching and diglossia are now becoming part of the vocabulary of politics, as the issue arises with increasing insistence in America

and abroad, of the accommodation or non-accommodation of government and institutions to vernacular languages. It is becoming increasingly noticeable, for instance, that sociolinguists hesitate to take a position on the issue of teaching standard English to speakers of non-standard dialects in the American public schools, and on what role English should play in bilingual education programs. Many people contend that the school should provide minority children with the linguistic means (standard language instruction) to enter the power structure, and concern for the loss of the solidary function of vernacular languages in the minority culture is allayed by a resort to well-known notions from the field of bilingualism. The most important of these notions is *diglossia*, introduced into American linguistics by Charles Ferguson (1959).

Diglossia refers to the use in one community of two languages: a superposed variety, referred to as the "high" language, which is reserved for use in more public, formal and learned domains; and a vernacular, or "low," language, used in more popular and intimate domains. Ferguson describes situations (in Arabic, Greek, Haitian and Swiss German communities) in which the high is spoken by an elite as a second language, but points out that the term could be applied in a wider range of situations. In its loosest sense, diglossia is an organizing principle in bilingual and bi-dialectal communities: a linguistic division of labor whereby each language is limited to its own domain. In current usage, the term *diglossia* is indifferent to whether or not the entire population commands both languages, and in most modern situations at least a portion of the general population does. These individuals organize their own bilingualism around the principle of diglossia: The individual bilingual is a microcosm of the community's linguistic organization. The notion of diglossia brings language choice into the framework of structural linguistics by providing a structural-functional account of behavior at the community level. Complementary distribution of the coexisting languages virtually eliminates the possibility of random choice, and structures behavior of the community and discourse level by means similar to those at work in the grammar of each language. It is generally assumed (e.g. Fishman 1971:87) that this division of labor allows the speakers to keep the two linguistic systems separate, and thus to retain the structural integrity of each language. Talk is frequently seen, therefore, as a structured means of reserving the vernacular for in-group use while speakers use the standard language for entrance into the wider society. In this perspective, therefore, diglossia appears to be a force of stability. It is important at this point to consider the full implications of phenomena like diglossia in relation to certain social questions: Is diglossia, in fact, an effective means of language maintenance?

Ferguson has pointed out that diglossia can be extremely stable, but only on the condition that the high language be restricted to a literate elite. In other words, this stability is dependent on rigid social stratification. In the

subsequent literature, however, the notion of diglossia has been expanded to include a wider variety of complementary arrangements, and to be seen as not just a result, but a contributing force of stability.¹ Diglossia in its more general definition might be seen therefore as a democratic arrangement insofar as it allows the vernacular to coexist with a high language. The question must be raised, though, whether linguistic domains so defined can be separate but equal. It is this question that I will discuss in the next pages, and I will maintain that diglossia can be not only the very means of elimination of vernacular languages, but also a serious threat to the self-image and solidarity of the community.

The twentieth century has witnessed a trend for rapid language shift, generally accompanying two kinds of political development: the imposition of foreign languages by colonial powers, and the reversal of this action through the imposition of revived national languages in postcolonial situations. In either case, nation-building virtually always involves language legislation:

An expanding state, e.g., a colonizing power, will tend to impose one language on all its new subjects, whereas at the time of independence the ex-colonies take their revanche and do likewise as regards the newly appointed national language: it is supposed to supersede the local languages. (Knappert, 1978:72)

The modern notion of one nation/one language focuses standardization on intra-linguistic regional and ethnic differences as well as on actual bilingualism or multilingualism, and in a broad sense the sociopolitical issues involved are the same no matter how great the difference between the vernacular in question and the standard language. Under rapid industrialization, the promise of socio-economic mobility has led masses of laboring people to abandon their vernacular languages in favor of the standard language associated with those in control of the means of production. Fishman characterizes a community undergoing this process of language shift as non-diglossic, since the social change has been too quick to allow linguistic accommodation on a community level:

Under circumstances such as these no well-established, socially recognized and protected functional differentiation of languages obtains in many speech communities of the lower and lower middle classes. (Fishman 1971:87)

According to Fishman, this transitional situation can follow a period of diglossia (with or without bilingualism), but it is functionally separate from diglossia. This shift, therefore, generally results in the impoverishment and death of the vernacular. However, it might be well to consider the relation between diglossia and this kind of rapid shift. Are these developments so separate from

¹ This is my interpretation of Wexler's statement, "By stability, Ferguson probably means the resistance of diglossia to attempts to resolve it" (Wexler 1971:331, fn. 2).

the diglossia that precedes or are they a logical outcome of diglossia under certain (most current) sociopolitical conditions?

Martinet (1963) chooses to distinguish between community and individual diglossia, referring to linguistic complementarity within the community as *diglossia*, and within the linguistic habits of the individual as *bilingualism*. Whatever, community diglossia with bilingualism cannot exist unless the bilingual individuals themselves experience diglossia in their own speech habits. The fate of an individual's bilingualism, then, is closely tied up with that of the community, and diglossia has a very personal effect on bilingual individuals. The question of concern here is what happens to a community that is characterized at least in part by the sharing of the vernacular language, when that language is supplanted by the language of the wider society. The breakdown of diglossia in a community is associated with differing abilities among members of the community to enter the wider society, and the question of the importance of diglossia stems from concern for the community that remains. Insofar as it is desirable to retain the vernacular as an important component of the life of a solidary group within a larger community, we must examine with care the extent to which the loss of the vernacular can result in the loss of community.

Diglossia does not arise; it is imposed from above in the form of an administrative, ritual or standard language. By virtue of its political and economic status, this language becomes requisite for access to power and mobility within the society. Therefore, diglossia cannot be socially or politically neutral, and it is clearly in view of this that Ferguson (1959) refers to the languages in a situation of diglossia as "high" and "low." It is the availability of the high language to the masses (through free public education) that renders a language standard and thus democratic; but this does not render diglossia neutral. While the availability of the standard may provide opportunity for the individual who can master it through formal education, it has a different effect on the vernacular-speaking community as a whole. The functions of the standard language exist in opposition to those of the vernacular, and this opposition can operate as a powerful force of assimilation, by interacting with and reinforcing social evaluation of the domains in which the two languages are used.

The very existence of a high implies a low, and the imposition of the standard language creates an immediate social opposition between the standard and the vernacular. This sets up a situation that one might think would remain stable, but that under most circumstances will become dynamic through a continual redefinition of the standard and the vernacular, and of their domains. The notion of diglossia is probably as satisfactory to linguists as it is because it corresponds closely to our models of linguistic structure. This analogy can be taken a good deal further, for structure is both a force that allows speakers to store the system and a force that gives rise to shifts within the system over

time. Structuralist studies of linguistic change attribute paradigmatic shifts to pressures within the paradigm (Martinet 1952). The same can be said of the structure of linguistic interaction governed by diglossia. This will be illustrated in the following pages by a historical account of a situation in which diglossia was a stage in total and rapid language shift, and in which one can say that diglossia actually organized the shift.

Until the turn of the century, the majority of the rural population in France still spoke non-French varieties as their only or first language. These varieties were either Celtic (in Brittany), Basque (on the southwestern border with Spain) or indigenous Romance varieties. Romance varieties spoken in the southern half of France (Occitania) are commonly referred to as Occitan varieties, or dialects of the *Langue d'Oc*. These Occitan varieties comprise a continuum of dialects, all mutually incomprehensible with French. This language group, which provided the earliest (from the twelfth century) of the Romance literary languages, are all now stigmatized as "peasant" dialects. Their literary and general public function has been taken over by French, the language of centralization. Although these varieties are all clearly separate languages from French, by any criteria, their inferior social status, combined with their clear genetic relationship to French, has given rise to a common belief that they are "dialects of French."

French was officially introduced into Occitania in 1539 with the edict of Villers Cotterets, which required that all official documents be written in French. Lafont's (1971) characterization of this development as the beginning of diglossia and the end of Occitan autonomy is only too apt. From this moment forth, French became the language of writing, and this early characterization of French and Occitan as respectively "written" and "spoken" has never been overcome. This has led to a powerful characterization of the ideas expressed in the two languages: one worthy and the other unworthy of publication. The official limitation of literacy to French has served in turn as an important barrier to intraregional communication.

Until the revolution of 1789, there was no official desire to teach French to the peasants; on the contrary, it was understood that if the rural population learned French they would be able to leave the land, where they were needed to guarantee the food supply of France. In the cause of the French economy, village schools were often discouraged (Brun 1923:432 ff.). With the revolution came the resolve to teach French to the entire population in the interests of democracy, to encourage popular participation in government. As part of the ideology of liberation through standard language, the local dialects were seen as symbols and agents of oppression, and as such were to be eliminated — supplanted rather than supplemented by French. The suppression of non-French varieties in France has been dramatically accelerated over the past century of rapid industrialization. Political and economic centralization has

forced workers to leave their regions in pursuit of socioeconomic advancement, and has thus made the French language a necessary means to advancement and has denigrated regional languages in the linguistic marketplace. Regional languages, therefore, have become symbols of regionalist movements, which see the suppression of their languages as both a tool and a result of the "colonization" of the provinces of France by the central power structure. The history of the introduction of French into the large southern region of Occitania shows this to be true: language shift has been a means as well as a result of social change. Lafont (1971) has pointed to diglossia as the ultimate Occitan compromise, and it is clear that the effectiveness with which the shift has occurred can be attributed at least in part to the diglossia with which it began.

The French language was a "presence" for some time before it was actually introduced as a spoken language. It penetrated the region through the top of the social hierarchy, and through large communities, from which it then spread to rural areas. In the nineteenth century, rural dwellers encountered French when they went outside the village and when outsiders came into the village. But the average rural person was not called upon to use French, and one needed only Occitan to function and live inside the village. The language of the village (Occitan) was simply opposed to the language of the outside (French). But the outside was clearly where the power flowed from, and this association would serve in subsequent years to pull French into an increasing range of uses.

The following is a sketch of the advance of French in one Occitan community. This sketch has been reconstructed through interviews and discussions with the current population of the community.² Since practically the entire shift from Occitan to French has occurred during the lifetimes of the oldest current inhabitants, whose parents were monolingual Occitan speakers and whose grandchildren are monolingual French speakers, the history of this shift can be reconstructed on the basis of these people's recollections. The community in question is located in the Pyrenees of Ariège, within the bundle of isoglosses that separate the two Occitan dialect areas of Gascony and Languedoc. The language of the community is classified as Gascon (and I will refer to it as such from now on) because it shares features traditionally diagnostic of Gascon.³ It is significant, however, that the speakers are not aware that their language is a Gascon variety. The stigmatization of the dialect of this area is no doubt heightened by the area's cultural and linguistic distance from central Gascony – a distance that renders their language and culture "non-standard" in relation to the accepted norms of the center of the region.

² These observations were made during eighteen months of participant-observation in this community in 1970–72, in the pursuit of a study of sociolinguistic variation. The research was supported in part by National Science Foundation dissertation grant NSF-GS-3211.

³ *f > [h] (L. *focus* > *huk* 'fire'); Latin *-ll- > [r] (L. *bella* > *bero* 'pretty' fem.); the use of the affirmative particle *ke* (*ke boli aigwo* 'I want water').

The community, a small community made up of six villages, lost its main economic base after the revolution, when the government took over the domain lands for forestry – and thus denied the region its essential grazing land (Chevalier 1956). This resulted in a long period of guerrilla warfare (Baby 1972) but the ultimate result was the impoverishment and swift depopulation of the entire region. The total population of the villages that make up this commune has fallen to about 300, from a population of 2,000 a century ago. The remaining population consists of older people subsisting on a small number of cows, and those younger people who have either amassed larger amounts of land or who have found alternative livelihoods (in particular skilled and unskilled labor in the surrounding area). The adult population of the commune is consciously transitional – they have encouraged their children to leave the region to find work, and in preparation for this they have raised them as monolingual French speakers.

The elimination of Gascon was part of the elimination of the peasant economy; thus very directly, French has long been the means of economic mobility and Gascon has been stigmatized as both a barrier to mobility and a symbol of peasant poverty. The practical necessity of leaving the village led the population to stress school and acquisition of French for their children. The speed with which this has led to total language shift is striking, and attributable to the social relation between the two languages in the community. The following description of the evolution of this relation is intended as an illustration of the dynamics that a structured relation can give rise to. The structured coexistence that characterizes diglossia can create the dynamics for change as well as a means of stability. Particularly, since the languages are put into contact through social change, language choice can become a term in a paradigm defined by social roles. Within this paradigm, social and linguistic roles evolve in relation to each other. If we consider the community organization of language use in terms of speech events as put forth by Hymes (1972), diglossia can be roughly defined as the assignment of each language to its own set of events. The events of the community, then, are defined partially by the language they occur in, and each language in turn is defined by its events. Language shift, then, can involve the gradual encroachment of one language on the events of the other.

Setting up an Opposition

To some extent a high language brings its own speech events with it when it is introduced into a low-speaking community. These events, in turn, become part of the official justification for the imposition of the high on the population. The high is the language of its speech events, and participation in these events is seen as necessarily requiring the use of the high.

French actually penetrated the community in question in its own situations. Its major step in the community was with free public education, where it was the only language of the classroom. As the language of the classroom and of the government that had set up the school, French remained very much an outside language. For school comprised not only a small number of speech events, it affected a relatively small portion of the population at the start. But as social change brings in the speech events (school, conversations with outsiders, official consultations) it also eliminates old ones. Along with these events disappear the verbal genres that characterize them. Ghost stories lost currency along with the long events of communal work that had provided their setting, and ranking songs disappeared as their setting – the café – lost its intimacy and became an increasingly frequent setting for encounters with outsiders.

Even in its marginal capacity, French entered a structural relation with Gascon. With the introduction of French in its own domains, Gascon ceased to be adequate for all situations within the village. It became “inappropriate” in the school, and schoolteachers instilled in their pupils emotionally loaded constraints on the use of Gascon in school situations. This is typical of situations where the high language is being introduced in the schools, and it is not normally done by gentle means. Punishments for speaking the low language in school frequently embody the establishment’s characterization of that language. In Occitania a common practice was to tie a wooden shoe (an albatross of peasantry) around the offender’s neck. In U.S. schools, children have been punished for speaking American Indian languages with whipping, having their mouths washed out with soap, and even (as recently as 1970) having their heads flushed in the toilet.⁴ There can be no ambiguity in such messages. While the children are learning the appropriate use of the high in the classroom, there is no reverse temptation: no tendency to use the high in low situations. Any supposed onus on the inappropriate use of the high and low domains in such a situation is a purely theoretical construct. The low is in actuality the “trespasser,” and this notion of linguistic trespassing puts the low always in the wrong.

Corollary to the inappropriateness of Gascon in the school situation is the popular notion of its “inadequacy.” French teachers were trained to believe that a person limited by a peasant dialect could not pursue logical, abstract thought. This is similar to arguments put forth by Bereiter and Engelman (1966) in America for the necessity of teaching standard English to preschool speakers of the Black English vernacular. This notion of linguistic “inadequacy” can become somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy insofar as the disuse of the language in any domain will result in at least lexical impoverishment. Since the

⁴ Gary Witherspoon, personal communication.

original domains of high, furthermore, are frequently new domains to the community, the low sets out in its relationship with the high with a built-in lexical deficit.

Bringing the Opposition into the Community

When the high and the low languages interact at the periphery of community life, the social oppositions associated with the opposition between the two languages are relatively simple and immaterial to the life of the community. It is when the high enters the actual life of the community that it enters into a more meaningful opposition with the low. The economic and educational association of the high makes the low uneducated and poor by comparison. As language differences come to be associated with social differences with increasing frequency and in an increasing variety of situations, the social meanings associated with each language become increasingly complex. This complexity is always along the same general lines – the high being opposed to low as powerful to powerless, and the social detail that accrues to this opposition only serves to bring this closer to home.

Where the community in question had been defined by its own language, the introduction of French events established an opposition within the community between French and Gascon events. From that moment, an opposition began to arise between individuals who had the means (whose parents could afford to free them from agricultural production) to participate in these events and those who had not. As education became more universal in the community, the community became more bilingual. This had the highly significant result that one no longer needed to speak Gascon to live and function in the community, and the government and the church could send representatives there who spoke only French. French thus entered certain public events that had previously been in the Gascon domain. The increasingly frequent participation of outsiders in daily life came to redefine many public conversations as French, and to make public places potential settings for French. The opposition between French and Gascon thereby moved from “outside/inside” to “public/private,” and as those oppositions were encountered in more speech events, the social oppositions between the French- and Gascon-speaking participants were increasingly exercised in conjunction with language choice. French became associated with the widening variety of contacts with mainstream society, emphasizing the concomitant retreat of Gascon to events associated with decreasing power.

Bringing the Opposition Home

As members of the low-speaking community become more mobile, they find that they associate some of their own traits and aspirations with the high

domains. Because of the linguistic division of labor, they cannot develop an adequate self-image in terms of the low, and they come to incorporate the high into their self-image. Thus the need to express different aspects of their own personalities in different languages leads to code switching. In this sense, code switching is an internalized diglossia.

As villagers armed themselves with French, they left the community with increasing frequency to join the economic mainstream. They themselves became associated with French in the minds of the villagers, and they returned to visit the village with monolingual French-speaking spouses and children. This led those still in the village to compare themselves on a daily basis with people once close to them who had become distanced through their use of French and their associated mobility. This moved the opposition between "outside/inside" people and "public/private" events to very personal oppositions based on differences between people who had "succeeded" and those who had been "left behind." Through constant juxtaposition in ever more intimate domains, the community continued to redefine the opposition between French and Gascon. French, always moving from above, brought with it its lofty connotations, and gradually replaced Gascon in its own loftier functions, leaving Gascon increasingly impoverished not only in use but in reputation. As the use of Gascon was associated with increasingly modest domains, the very use of French began to have the power of dignifying situations. This led eventually to code switching: an indication that the individual self-image had come to incorporate both languages. At this point, people began to raise their children entirely in French, so that they would themselves be associated with the positive values of that language.

The experience in Occitania is just one of many examples that show how diglossia can not only provide the means of organizing chronic bilingualism, but can actually organize language shift. The association of certain domains with dominant values creates a situation in which one language must disappear for the community to retain a positive self-image. The decision as to which language that will be is heavily weighted by economic considerations. In the case of this Gascon community, regional poverty had become so great that the adoption of French was seen early on as a simple survival mechanism, and only later as a relinquishing of local prerogatives. French was extended as the sole requisite for socioeconomic advancement, but as it turned out, acquisition of a second language from outside could not take place without the concomitant acquisition of the outsider's view of the community itself. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the vehicle for the acquisition of a new self-image was the very division of linguistic labor that facilitated the entry of French into the community.

The process that this community underwent was a logical outcome of the assumption that use of a high language will provide access, acceptance and

adequacy in the wider society. When a group speaking low is eager for socioeconomic advancement, and the group in charge of the means of production uses the high as a means (or barrier) to that advancement, the path of least resistance is to accept the high language along with the high speech events. Those speakers who have more opportunity to participate in these events will tend to be the more successful, and the opposition between their personal qualities and those of the rest of the low-speaking population will become associated with the social meetings of the two languages. The next step is for the speakers of high to extend the need for high into previously low events. This is concurrent with a growing tendency for speakers of low to elevate these very events by using high in them. This in turn reflects negatively on the events that remain low: The low gradually retreats into increasingly powerless domains, and, more insidiously, stigmatizes these domains by their association with the low language.

There is a wide variety of situations of diglossia throughout the world, each with its own particular history, and some apparently more stable than others. The abandonment of vernaculars is clearly a survival strategy employed with an intensity that varies from case to case according to a wide range of social and economic factors. But in any given situation in which linguistic labor is divided according to domain, any gain for the high must be, by structural definition, loss for the low. It is clear, then, that the only circumstances under which the use of two languages within a community can be "separate but equal" is when equal means the same domains, not the same number of domains. If the language of the community does not serve all the needs of that community, and express all the interests of its people, there is a serious danger of division and ultimate dissolution of the community.

* * * * *

Nonce borrowings surfaced regularly in my interviews as well as in everyday life and in elicitation, and they were commonly the result of a reconstruction of the differential phonological histories of Soulatan and French. The borrowings were often exactly what they would have been if they had emerged in Soulatan. I did sociolinguistic interviews with a variety of people, but I also spent a lot of time with a small number of people documenting the dialect, eliciting vocabulary and grammar. At some point I asked each of these people for the Gascon equivalents of a set of words that I was pretty sure had no Gascon cognates. The results suggest that borrowing had become more acceptable over time, and that in the process, conventions for this borrowing had set in. Table 2.1 compares the responses of speakers aged 76, 60 and 43 (the latter being one of the youngest speakers of Gascon). In the case of words clearly not part of traditional Soulatan life, the oldest speaker simply said there was no equivalent, while the youngest speaker never failed to produce a borrowing. In the case of terms that had a non-cognate equivalent in Gascon, the older man

Table 2.1 French borrowings in Soulatan. Three speakers' responses to word list

	French	Local Pronunciation	76 years	60 years	43 years	Gloss
1	vulgaire	vylgɛr			bylgari	vulgar
2	biographique	biografɛ			biografio	biography
3	antarctique	antarɛk			antarkiko	antarctic
4	ébène	eben			ebenu	ebony
5	anthologie	antoloʒi			antologio	anthology
6	encyclopédie	ansiklopedi			ansiklopedio	encyclopedia
7	ambre	ambɛ		ambre	ambre	amber
8	écluse	eklyz		eklyzo	eklyzo	canal lock
9	annuaire	anyɛr		anyari	anyari	phone book
10	écran	ekran		ekran	ekran	screen
11	humeur	ymœr	maw karatʃ	ymu	ymu	mood
12	salair	salɛr	pago	salari	salari	salary
13	crémeux	kremœ	ka ʒ hloc de pinto	kremus	kremus	creamy
14	itinéraire	itinerɛr	kami	itinerari	itinerari	itinerary
15	supérieur	supericɛr	defʃɛ de nuz awti	syperiɛr	syperiɛr	superior
16	accueil	akœj	pla resebyʃ	bun akɛʃ	akyʃ	welcome
17	épineux	epinœ	kespigon	epinus	epinus	thorny
18	populeux	popylœ	puplatʃ	pupylus	pupylus	populous
19	honneur	onœr	awnu	unu	unu	honor
20	ancêtres	ansetɛr	bjeʃi	vjeʃi	ansetɛr	ancestors
21	écrivisse	ekrɛvis	rekylajro	ekrebiso	rekylajro	crayfish
22	éteindre	etendrœ	amurta	amurta	amurta	extinguish
23	emphysème	anfɛzœm	anfɛzœm	anfɛzœm	anfɛzœm	emphysema
24	embouteillage	ambutejaʒ	ambuteʃadʒe	embuteʃadʒe	embuteʃadʒe	traffic jam
25	pronostic	pronostik	pronostik	pronostik	prunustik	prognosis
26	suppositoire	sypozitwar	sypozitwar	sypozitwar	sypozitwar	suppository

gave the equivalent, while both of the younger speakers provided a borrowing in ten (11–19) out of thirteen cases, and only one of them in two cases (20, 21). Both younger speakers gave the Gascon term *amurta* (22), which is very much an everyday word since fireplaces were still the main source of heat in the home. (It would also be difficult to provide an authentic-sounding borrowing for this word.) In the case of more common terms (24–26) that probably had no Gascon equivalent, everyone provided borrowings. The younger speakers, particularly the youngest, were more consistent in their reconstructions, having opted for one way of dealing with ambiguous correspondences. The youngest did more phonological adjustment, applying the Gascon rule that raises /o/ to [u] in word-internal unstressed and in post-nasal position with some consistency, applying Gascon morphology (e.g. 1, 13, 26) etc.

But what was even more striking was evidence that the peasant stigma had entered the lexicon itself, producing pairs of words that differed only in social connotations. I heard two words for barn – [bordo] and a clear borrowing from French, [granʒo]. When I asked the difference between the two, I was told that a *bordo* is a peasant barn, while a *grangeo* is a nice barn, like the baron's barn. I heard two words for rag – [tʃifun] and [pejot]. The *chiffun* is a nice rag that one washes and uses again while a *pejot* is a distasteful object – whether a terrible piece of clothing or the nasty stiff rag that hangs under the sink.

Before I pursued the actual use of borrowings, though, I had to have a clear way of identifying them. But since Soulan is located right in the isogloss bundle that separates Gascon from Languedocien, many Gascon sound changes died out as they were passing through the area. So several of the changes that differentiate Gascon from French (e.g. the deletion of intervocalic *n, and *f > h) affected only part of the lexicon. These two changes would have changed **fina* 'fine f.' to [hio]. So how could I be sure that the actual modern form, [finu], was a borrowing from French *fine*, or a native Gascon word that had not yet undergone either of these changes? It was clear that in order to identify borrowings, I would have to reconstruct the phonological history of the dialect, with particular attention to the internal constraints on those sound changes that had stalled at the Gascon–Languedocien border. I worked on this reconstruction while I was still in Soulan, while I continued to gather data, intending it to be the first chapter of my dissertation.

The speech community was, and to some extent remains, a foundational concept in sociolinguistics. It has always been a problematic concept for me, perhaps because I've been floating around in linguistic atlases and the linguistic continua they represent. I have always believed that the speech community is a convenient, even necessary, fiction – a population that analysts carve out to encompass the social distinctions that they're studying. But there is no such thing in the wild. If there were, Saint Pierre de Soulan would be a classic example – nice and bounded and geographically separate from surrounding communities. But was each village a speech community or were the six villages of the commune one speech community? Some of the villages were less than a kilometer apart, and as people moved and intermarried among them, one person might have houses, barns, meadows and fields in more than one village. People from all the villages attended the same school and the same church, the men hung out at the same café and people bought groceries at the same two stores. But Buleix, at the foot of the mountain, butts right up against Castet d'Aleu, a village in the next commune, which extends up the next mountain over. There were little rivalries among communes and villages, and each village had its own character, and the longer I stayed, the clearer it became that it was differences among villages within and beyond the commune that yielded the orderly heterogeneity that was supposed to define a single speech community. This is not that different from the suburban context.

In my own suburban adolescence in Leonia, New Jersey, I developed a strong local identity, neatly disciplined by my Jocky participation in Leonia High School. But an important part of the local was Leonia's place in the broader suburban area, and particularly the suburb immediately to the south, Palisades Park, whose kids attended Leonia High School. When the kids from less affluent and largely Italian-American Palisades Park joined us in high school, class, ethnicity and geography came together, and Jersey phonology took on more meaning. I liked the fast Italian boys from Palisades Park, and I associated Jersey phonology with the things that made them preferable to the more vanilla Leonia boys – and with girls who snapped their gum and were less goody-goody than me. I associated Jersey phonology not just with

social qualities but with the bodily styles that went with them – adornment, movement, posture, facial expressions, actions. Although Leonia and Palisades Park are contiguous in a vast suburban sprawl, we were all acutely aware of the boundary between the two towns. But for the purposes of indexicality, Leonia was meaningless in isolation from the social continuum it was part of. So if any aspect of my dialect had anything to do with identity as a Leonian, it was the less “vernacular” end of my stylistic repertoire. Like Bergen County, New Jersey, the Detroit suburbs constitute a socioeconomic if not an ethnic continuum, and many of the dynamics I encountered in the spread of change there were certainly at work in my own high school.

Lesley Milroy (e.g. 1980) viewed strong local networks as maintaining a stable vernacular, and further argued with Jim Milroy (Milroy & Milroy 1985), that change moves into these networks through extra-local weak ties. Importantly, they emphasized that those weak ties needed to be numerous. Burnouts did not go individually to Detroit, and Jocks did not go individually to interscholastic events. These activities were part of their group practice, and their interpretation of what they encountered in those places, and of the things they heard there, took place jointly. A single individual going to the city and picking up an urban feature will not be able to bring the feature “home” unless it can be made sense of collectively. It is unlikely to spread from individual to individual, but one individual with sufficient meaning-making rights could bring it into his or her group. The one In-between girl at Belten who bought the new fashions the minute they appeared in *Seventeen* magazine was an object of ridicule, as were the small group of people who were into punk. The issue is not simply that they didn't have the status to innovate, but that as a result of their lack of status, their innovative acts could not become community practice. When the *Seventeen* fashions and punk did eventually make it into the mainstream, it was via some larger collective contact and if anything despite these early adopters. I put these thoughts together in a paper I wrote years later for a retirement conference in honor of the very inspiring, wonderful and kind Ronald Macaulay.

VARIATION AND A SENSE OF PLACE

I began my research career in linguistic geography, asking myself how change spread from person to person and village to village across Gascony. But the “across Gascony” part lived in maps and atlases – in isoglosses and areas – while the “person to person” part lived in the worldly relations among the inhabitants of the village of Soulan, sitting on the south side of a lovely Pyrene. Linguistic geography and sociolinguistic variation have remained surprisingly

distant, even though in the eyes of most, they are inextricably connected. In this chapter, I will argue for the embedding of the study of variation within its sociogeographic context, most particularly, for the examination of the borders of communities in search of the articulation of social meaning between the local and the extra-local. At the same time, I will reflect on another aspect of method and personal trajectory – what did I learn from this work that would lead (has led) me to do the next study differently?

At the heart of the study of sociolinguistic variation is the social and geographic placement of the speaker. Different analysts (or the same analysts at different times) approach social location in different ways, sometimes focusing on broad categorizations such as the class system (Labov 1966; Macaulay 1977; Trudgill 1974b) and/or ethnicity (Labov 1972b; Wolfram 1969), and/or gender (Eckert 1989c; Labov 1990), sometimes focusing on smaller social configurations such as networks (Milroy 1980) or peer groups (Cheshire 1982; Eckert 1989a; Labov 1973). These social locations are in turn located within a geographic unit – a speech community – which serves to define the dialect and circumscribe the population under study. The local community, in other words, is treated as a microcosm of the wider society – a kind of free-floating microcosm at that. While the speech community is viewed as being located within dialect space, it is rarely treated as socially connected to anything beyond its boundaries.

Class, ethnicity, race and gender are seen as global categories that function to create distinctions in orientation to local practice. These distinctions are defined in abstraction from the community, but seen as applying similarly across communities. Perhaps because they are conceived of as global categories, they are treated as disconnected, with little attention paid to the connections that facilitate the flow of influence among them. Networks and groups, on the other hand, are seen as kinds of configurations that are defined locally, but that are common to all speech communities. The potential that such configurations offer for the study of connections is explored in Milroy and Milroy (1985), which considers the role of weak ties in the spread of linguistic change through local areas. But weak ties and strong ties are, once again, disembodied – and apparently distinct – abstractions, and as we take up the Milroys' suggestions, one of the first questions we need to ask is: What is the relation between weak and strong ties? Our focus on the social life of variation on categories and communities amounts to a focus on centers, and on the "typical" inhabitants of those centers – of local networks, of neighborhoods, of socioeconomic strata, and of peer groups. We recognize the influence of other communities, but the communities are disconnected entities, and the influence is hence disembodied. Yet people move about, and linguistic influence flows in and out of communities, as well as through them. And to understand the

social function of variation and the spread of linguistic change, we need to know more about the connections – to know what happens at the boundaries of places and categories.

What I have to say is not new – only the application of old insights to data on variation. Mary Louise Pratt (1988) observed some time ago that the focus on speech communities indicates a preoccupation with linguistic utopias – that in constructing such entities, linguists are putting into action a theoretical ideology in which normative speakers are monolingual, monodialectal, and core members of communities. Subcommunities are treated separately, but rarely in virtue of their relations. I take my inspiration from Pratt, who argued that linguists should be focusing not on centers, but on borders – that we should move from a linguistics of community to a linguistics of contact. John Rickford (1986a) has argued that norms within speech communities cannot be conceived of as consensual – that conflict may be central to the organization of linguistic behavior within a community. I will take Rickford's argument one step further, and argue that the speech community itself cannot be consensual – that there is no consensual sense of place. In doing so, I embrace Barbara Johnstone's argument in this volume that place is as much ideological as it is physical – or more accurately, that place is an idealization of the physical.

Our focus on speech communities has led us to view the borders of communities as boundaries – as a cutoff between two places where different things are happening, rather than a transitional place where still more things are happening that are inseparable from what happens on either side. Rather than constituting some kind of envelope for the linguistic behavior of its inhabitants, the community is a contested entity that is differentially constructed in the practices and in the speech of different factions, as well as different individuals. When we focus on bounded categories, networks, and groups, and when we analyze linguistic variability within the community in these terms, we tacitly assume a homogeneity of orientation – a kind of consensuality about the boundaries of the community itself. Crucially, although members of a population defined as living in the same community may all agree that they live in a particular area or political unit, they do not orient in a homogeneous way to that area or unit, or its surroundings. Different people in a given community will view the boundaries differently, use different parts of the community, and participate in the surroundings differently. These differences will result in different patterns of contact, which have implications for linguistic influence. They will also relate to different interpretations and ideologies, and will enter into the patterns of diversity within the community. Categories, groups and networks may, as a result, embody differences in spatial orientations and practices, with important consequences for patterns of linguistic variation.

The Detroit Suburbs

A variety of studies (e.g. Blom & Gumperz 1972; Gal 1979; Holmquist 1985; Labov 1963) have shown the importance of orientation to the outside in explaining patterns of variation within speech communities. William Labov's (1963) study of Martha's Vineyard focused on speakers' orientation to the mainland in such a way that the local reversal of a sound change moving from the mainland signals an orientation away from the mainland tourist economy. In his study of the Spanish village of Uceda, Jonathan Holmquist (1985) argued that the lowering of word-final /u/ to [o] under the influence of Castilian is an expression of movement away from the mountain-farming way of life, to more modern farming and ultimately to work in the factories in town. In both of these cases, the connection between the geographic outside and social issues inside the community brings a synergy between the local and the extra-local.

My ethnographic and sociolinguistic work with adolescents in the Detroit suburbs (Eckert 1989a, 2000) has demonstrated that exploring how these connections are actually made can bridge the space between communities, between the local and the extra-local, and eventually between the local and the global. In the following pages, I will use data from this study to show how the "outsides" are articulated with the "insides" of communities and how language, along with other semiotic resources, brings the "outside" in and the "inside" out. I hasten to point out that I did not begin the study with this insight. My focus was on the internal mechanisms of variation in a variety of communities, possible similarities and differences among them, and their relation to the flow of linguistic change in the Detroit conurbation. What I did not anticipate was the particular way in which local and extra-local practice would explain the spread of linguistic innovation.

For the purposes of this study, I selected five public high schools as discrete and representative speech communities. It is the terms *discrete*, *representative*, and *speech community* that I wish to problematize here. I chose to work in public high schools because these institutions normally bring together the entire social range of the towns they serve, constituting an adolescent microcosm of the town. I looked, therefore, to the adolescent age group, the town, the school catchment area, and the school building itself to constitute the boundaries around my speech community. And indeed, within the school, I looked to the school's age-grading system for an even closer age boundary, focusing on one graduating class. In constructing these boundaries, I did not necessarily assume that there were important linguistic differences on the other side of any of them, but I did assume that there was greater cohesion within than across the boundaries. And I made the implicit claim that the meaning of variation was constructed within those boundaries – possibly in response to the boundaries themselves and whatever was on the other side, but constructed within

nonetheless. What I discovered is that what I was thinking of as boundaries – as some kind of social or geographic space around the community – were in fact borders that link the community in heterogeneous ways to the area around it. Relations to the "outside" were built into relations on the "inside" as local factions aligned themselves with respect to each other and the larger world, orienting to, interpreting, and appropriating the world around them.

The Local Social Order and the Conurbation

In this discussion, I will focus on the issue of borders and boundaries not between groups or categories, but between schools/towns in the Detroit conurbation. It will be apparent, though, that the borders between groups and categories within these schools interact with the borders between schools. The Detroit conurbation consists of Detroit City – a largely poor and African American, urban center – and an array of suburbs that become increasingly affluent and increasingly white as one moves away in any direction from the urban center. Each community, and each high school that serves it, is self-consciously located within the social geography of the conurbation, constructing a local identity in relation to it. The social order that forms within each high school articulates individual identities with local identities. And it is in this articulation that the social meaning of variables is constructed as they spread across the conurbation.

Because societal norms define legitimate adolescence by participation in secondary school, adolescents' identities are closely linked to orientation to school – even those who do not attend at all. The U.S. public high school strives to dominate the lives of students both when they are in school and when they are out. It encourages students to stay after school to participate in extra-curricular activities – clubs, athletics, student government – and to devote much of their time outside of school to homework. It also expects students to develop friendships in school, particularly within the age-graded social system of the school. From grade one, students are expected to confine their friendships to others in their own graduating class and to time their social development according to prevailing institutional norms. Hanging out with older or younger kids is taken as a willful rejection of adult expectations for development.

Those who participate enthusiastically in what the school sets down for them as legitimate activities and practices are in a position to gain access to resources and a certain kind of control over the institutional environment. Those who reject such participation are marginalized from the institutional perspective. Such marginalization can be inconvenient and at times unpleasant, but it is not always unwelcome because school participation is a highly ideological arena and there are positive reasons for both participation and non-participation.

In U.S. high schools, an opposition commonly develops between kids who enthusiastically embrace the institution as the center of their social lives,

and those who adamantly reject it. The adverbs point to the fact that there are plenty of kids who are neither enthusiastic nor adamant and who emerge as "In-between" in this opposition. In the high schools of the largely white Detroit suburbs, the opposition constitutes two social categories – the *Jocks*, who embrace the school as the center of their social lives and the *Burnouts*, who reject it as such. The Burnouts do not reject the school as a curricular center, but their mistrust of the institution extends to their often feeling that the school is not fulfilling their curricular needs.¹ The categories are class-based, and are a major vehicle for the reproduction of class. The Burnouts come by and large from the lower portion of the local socioeconomic range, whereas the Jocks come by and large from the upper portion. Although the parents' class does not determine category participation, the status of the Jock and Burnout categories do constitute middle- and working-class cultures respectively, and these categories and their class significance take center stage in the school.

The differences in orientations of the Jocks and the Burnouts, while aimed at the school, are played out among the students themselves. The Jocks and the Burnouts construct themselves in mutual opposition, and with considerable separation and even hostility. The hostility emerges from differences in values – in norms that govern friendship and peer relations more generally, as well as relations with adults. And as the Jocks embrace the school's authority, they submit to school adults and at the same time benefit from the power that those adults accord them within the institution. The Burnouts view the Jocks' acceptance of this arrangement as undermining adolescent autonomy and solidarity, while the Jocks view the Burnouts' non-acceptance as compromising what they see as a profitable arrangement with the school.

Regardless of its general socioeconomic makeup, each school in the Detroit suburban area has its Jocks and its Burnouts, who by and large represent the lower and the upper ends of the local socioeconomic hierarchy. This local socioeconomic scene is in turn located within the larger socioeconomic continuum of the Detroit conurbation. Residents locate themselves within this sociogeographic continuum – as residents of particular suburban areas, towns, and neighborhoods. They attribute a particular character to the area, the town, and the neighborhood (or subdivision), and orient themselves as groups and individuals to this character. Each community is a piece of this socioeconomic continuum, with the neighborhoods becoming wealthier as one moves away from the city. The schools that serve the different catchment areas of any town have clear socioeconomic characteristics, and these differences are manifested

¹ The Burnouts are overwhelmingly vocational students, and feel that the school neglects its vocational sector, and that they are not receiving training that will maximally help them in the job market.

in attitudes within and among the schools. This pattern is repeated across the suburban area. Schools are an important resource for adolescents to locate themselves within the larger area, as they develop a sense of local sociogeography by comparing the dominant social characteristics of the schools and the towns the schools serve.

Economic geography is built into Jock and Burnout practice as well. The Burnouts, headed for working-class workplaces in the Detroit area after high school, look beyond the school and into the larger urban-suburban area for access to work. They value, therefore, social networks that take them beyond their school and neighborhood and that give them access to the wider conurbation – particularly the "business" end of the conurbation, the places where things are happening. The Jocks, on the other hand, are on an institutional track, intending to leave high school for college, and to base their lives in the institution there just as they have in high school. Indeed, although they express prospective nostalgia for their high school friends, they expect to develop a new social network in college and to move away from the suburban area, at least temporarily. The Jocks, therefore, abstract themselves somewhat from the local area. They limit their main friendships to their own graduation cohort and to their own school, and they avoid the urban area except to participate in institutional activities such as attending professional sports games or visiting museums.

I wish in particular to emphasize the difference between a local and an institutional orientation. If one thinks of Belten High as the speech community in question, then it is the Jocks who are locally oriented. If one thinks of Westtown as the speech community, then the Burnouts are more locally oriented than the Jocks. But the Burnouts' local orientation is not to Westtown itself but beyond Westtown. In fact, many Burnouts express hostility to Westtown – there are no jobs there, there is nothing to do, and they don't feel that the local community is particularly hospitable to them. Rather, they look to the broader conurbation for a sense of place. They frequent parks either outside of or on the borders of Westtown. They strive to expand their networks to include people from other communities – people with access to other spaces, people, and opportunities – and they cruise the streets that lead towards Detroit. This does not go on just in Westtown, but in all the high schools around the suburban area. And the result is a network of arteries and meeting places where kids from all around the area explore the conurbation and seek each other out. It is not everyone who does this, only those who are looking for something outside of institutional life. Thus, although the Jocks and the Burnouts are salient and opposed social categories in each high school, they are also oppositionally inserted into the sociogeography of the conurbation.

If Burnouts meet people from other towns through friends, in parks, and on the street, Jocks meet them at interscholastic functions – athletic events, student

government workshops, and cheerleading camp. The Burnouts meet people as individuals, whereas the Jocks meet people in their institutional roles. And in these situations, respect and admiration tend to orient in opposite directions. Burnouts tend to admire people with street smarts, something that is generally attributed to urban dwellers; Jocks tend to admire people with institutional smarts, something that suburban students tend to have more access to.

In this way, social practice within each school merges with geography itself. One might simply say that each school has the same social categories – that the Jocks and the Burnouts constitute a microcosm of the larger socio-economic system. This is certainly true. However, the Jocks and Burnouts are somewhat distinct from school to school, and this distinctiveness is a function of the sociogeographic location of each school. Jocks in less affluent schools somewhat resemble Burnouts from more affluent schools and may even consider Burnouts in very affluent schools to be Jocks. A Jock in a high school next to the boundary of Detroit told me that she was concerned that, when she reached college, she would not be able to compete in extracurricular activities with the Jocks from more affluent schools. Attending multischool events of various sorts, she had had plenty of evidence that her school's Jock culture was different from that of more affluent schools and that she was not gaining the same exposure to such things as parliamentary procedure and large projects. Students moving from the urban periphery to more distant and affluent suburban schools report having to upgrade their wardrobes. One such student told me that although he had been a Jock in his original school, he did not fit in with the Jocks in his new school, and he eventually became a Burnout. This is not simply because he didn't look and act like a local Jock, but also because the Burnouts are more inclined than Jocks to value "urban immigrants" for their knowledge and contacts. The issue of looking like a Jock or looking like a Burnout leads us to the role of semiotics in the articulation of the local with the extra-local.

Semiotics, the Local, and the Extra-Local

Sue Gal and Judith Irvine (1995) have argued that our speech communities and the languages associated with them are ideological constructs – ideological with respect to linguistic theory and, more generally, with respect to language and society. They outline three semiotic processes by which we construct languages and speech communities out of unconstructed social and linguistic material. These processes are useful in understanding how the social order of each school produces and reproduces the wider sociogeography within which each school is located. According to Gal and Irvine, we create boundaries around dialects, languages, places, and categories through a process of *erasure* by which we make certain differences salient by downplaying,

or erasing, certain others. So, for example, a new racial category in the U.S. – Asian American – has been constructed by erasing the enormous differences among Koreans, Chinese, Laotians, Japanese and so on and focusing on differences between all of these and other racialized groups such as European Americans and African Americans. We reinforce the oppositions by nesting them inside the categories they create, a process that Gal and Irvine refer to as *recursivity*. Thus, for example, the construction of a "black" and a "white" race is reinforced by evaluating people assigned to each group according to such things as relative darkness of skin color and hair texture, with the hierarchical relations between the two categories being mirrored in the cline of color within each category. And finally, we assign meaning to our categories through a process of *iconization* – attributing social stereotypes to linguistic practices themselves as a way of constructing a "natural" bond between a linguistic variety and the people who speak it. The common evaluation over the past century of peasant dialects in Europe as illogical and irregular – the products of ignorant and lazy minds – is a famous case in point.

The Jock-Burnout opposition is played out not only in activities within and attitudes towards the school, but in a wide array of interacting semiotic practices that range from territory to eating habits to hair styles. The issue of boundaries and borders is central to these practices, as Jocks continually symbolize their institutional affiliation and the Burnouts continually symbolize their urban orientation. Perhaps the most obvious is their use of territories – gathering places during down time in school. In schools across the United States, the equivalents of Jocks regularly occupy central areas of the school – gyms, offices, front hallways, and activities spaces. The equivalents of Burnouts, on the other hand, demonstrate their "just visiting" status in school by occupying peripheral areas – areas that touch on the outside such as courtyards, front steps and loading docks. In cold weather, Burnouts wear their outdoor jackets in school, whereas Jocks lock their outerwear in their lockers. The lockers and the outerwear, meanwhile, have similar significance. The Jocks signal their residence in the school and their institutional status with the use of lockers as a home away from home, the use of the cafeteria, and the territorial appropriation of extracurricular activity areas. Burnouts' mistrust of the school is itself part of the ideology of rejection, and they signal their rejection of the school's *in loco parentis* role by, say, not eating cafeteria food ("it's unsafe") and not leaving their coats in their lockers ("they aren't secure"). And the jackets with which Burnouts signal their "visitor" status frequently signal urban status as well; popular among Burnouts are jackets with Detroit or auto factory logos. These jackets simultaneously invoke class and geography, and Burnouts who do not wear jackets with insignia often wear the popular working-class jeans jackets over hooded sweatshirt jackets. The Jocks, meanwhile, commonly wear school

jackets – varsity jackets, cheerleader jackets, or just jackets with the name of the school. In general, the Jocks' institutional orientation is manifested in a clean-cut collegiate style² – designer clothes in bright and pastel colors, school team jackets and sweaters, straight-leg jeans, short hair for boys and short or feathered hair for girls, candy-colored makeup for girls. The Burnouts' anti-institutional orientation, on the other hand, is manifested in an urban working-class style – dark colors, dark eye makeup for girls, long hair for both boys and girls, bell-bottom jeans, rock concert tee shirts, wallet chains, and studs. Students talk about schools in terms of their general character – most particularly, characterizing schools as “Jock” schools, “Punk” schools, “Burnout” schools. These also fit into a larger semiotic whole with such things as clothing. A Belten student, commenting on a local school with a predominantly working-class student body, characterized the school as having “bell-bottoms this wide.”

In this way, the sociogeographic setup has a recursivity that builds social geography into each town and into each school. The Jock and Burnout social categories are reified by virtue of their insertion into social geography. This opposition reflects not just local but also regional character. In some schools outside of Baltimore, for instance, the opposition between *Jocks* and *grits* in the high schools echoes the larger opposition between urban and rural, northern and southern. In the southwest, the opposition between *Jocks* and (shit-)stompers echoes the larger opposition between townie and rancher.

These material symbols blend with linguistic variation to yield a similar recursivity, as the disposition of linguistic variables within the school map onto the same variables in urban-suburban geography. The current stages of the Northern Cities Shift (Labov 1994; Labov et al. 1972) appear to be spreading outward into the suburbs from the urban periphery. With few exceptions, the backing of (ɛ) to [ʌ], the backing of (ʌ) to [ɔ], and the lowering and fronting of (ɔ) to [a] are more advanced in the schools closer to the urban periphery than in the more distant, suburban schools. Further, the backing and raising of the nucleus of (ay) to [ɔy] is more advanced in the urban schools as well. (See Eckert 2000 for a more thorough discussion of these variables.) Within each school, the Burnouts generally lead the Jocks in the use of the innovative variants of these variables. Figures 5.1 and 5.2 show the percentage of innovative forms of the most salient urban variables, (ay) and (uh), comparing urban and suburban schools to the north and to the west of Detroit. As these figures show, the correlations with social category generally conform to the geographic correlations.

² These styles are the ones that were current in the early eighties, when the fieldwork for this study was carried out.

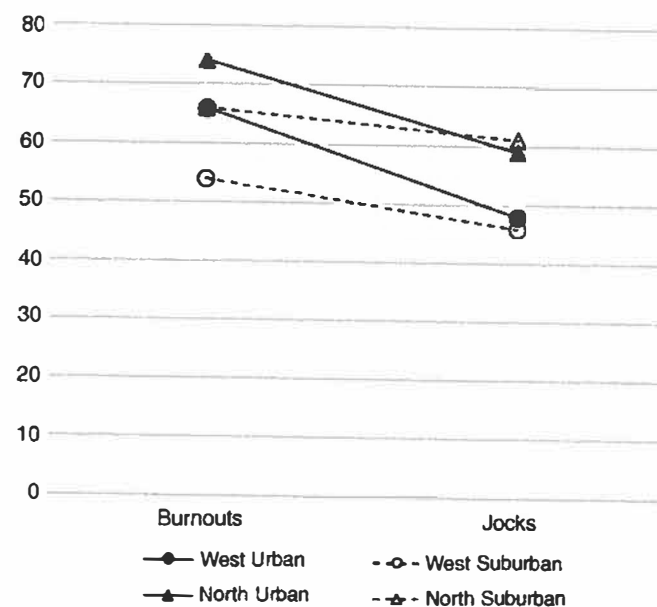


Figure 5.1 Backing of (uh) by Jocks and Burnouts in urban and suburban communities.

If we seek the key to social meaning in variation, the answer is not to be found in oppositions within the community (e.g. Jocks–Burnouts) or in oppositions among communities (e.g. urban–suburban) but in the merger of the two. It is in this way that the geographic and the social spread of linguistic change are one. Although one could say that an urban pronunciation of a vowel is associated with “those people out there,” the implication is that local speakers are imitating, or aspiring to, extra-local people or characters. This is where the difference between the study of boundaries and the study of communities is theoretically meaningful. Qing Zhang (2001) has made this point in her study of Beijing yuppies' use of the nonmainland full tone feature. While critics see this use as a kind of “aping” of Hong Kong speech, Zhang argues that the nature of the contact between the mainland and nonmainland dialects of Mandarin has made this tone feature a common resource. Its use does not simply refer outward to nonmainland communities, but also effectively creates a category of Beijingers who span communities and, in the process, expand the relation between Beijing itself and those communities. In other words, the use of linguistic variables does not take place over a static social landscape but effects change in that landscape.

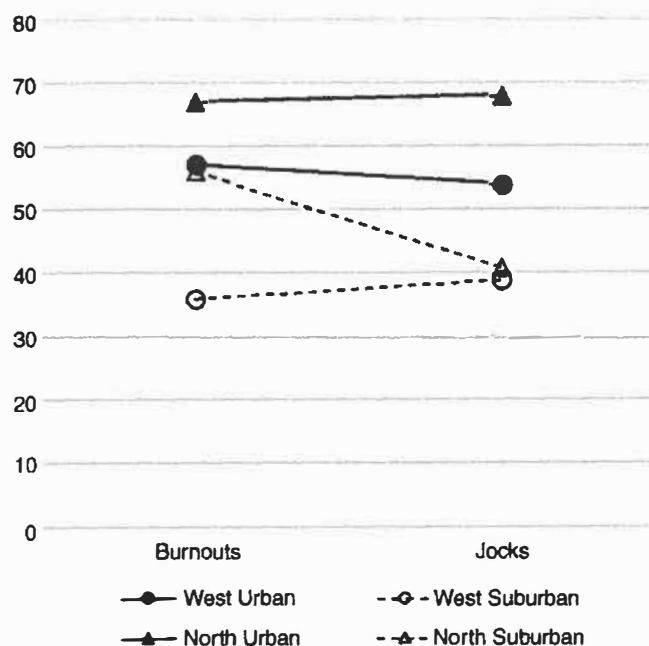


Figure 5.2 Raising of the nucleus of (ay) by Jocks and Burnouts in urban and suburban communities.

A Question of Method

During the two-plus years I spent in these schools, and as it became apparent that social categories in each school were simultaneously based in class and in urban-geography, I was able to shift strategies somewhat. But ultimately, my research design was category-based. I went into the schools looking for the adolescent version of the social class that had been our primary metaphor for explaining sociolinguistic variation. And, indeed, I found conflicting working- and middle-class categories based not on adult class, but on an adolescent social order; and based, not on birth, but on speakers' own construction of their places in that social order. But I was so focused on these categories that they took over in many ways. Thinking categorically, I did not give enough thought to the ways in which these categories served as foci for ideologies and practices across and beyond the community. The correlations shown in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 between urban variants and the Jock-Burnout categories spring not from the status of these variants as markers of category affiliation but from their indexical value (Ochs 1991) based on their urban associations. This value holds across the school population, and the same correlations that

I found between Jocks and Burnouts can also be found across the school population – In-betweens, as well as Jocks and Burnouts – as a function of urban orientation. Urban cruising, for example, is a key Burnout activity; it is also an activity engaged in by many In-betweens, as is smoking dope and cutting school. Also, cruising correlates with the use of urban variables across the In-between population, as well as between the Jocks and the Burnouts. Although my ethnographic work made this clear, my discovery of the categories led me to focus on category members at the expense of deepening my understanding of the structuring of diversity among the In-betweens. Moreover, it kept my gaze on the school rather than on the borderlands inhabited by the Burnouts and other people who do not base their lives in school. The methodological argument that I have made here – that studies of variation should examine the relation between the local and the extra-local – originated in view of both as given rather than as emerging in practice.

This chapter is intended as a contribution to method, which leads me to think not only about how we do our research but also about how we deal with the holes and shortcomings once it's done. I believe that it would benefit us all if we savored and discussed our shortcomings as much (or almost as much) as we savor and trumpet our successes. It is in this spirit that I say that the most important part of the research I've reported on here is not what I did but what I learned to do next time.

The Belten project was a turning point in my career, first because I hadn't realized as I embarked on this ethnographic study that it would lead me so far from the received wisdom in the field. Agency and social meaning had been part of the discourse of variation from the start, but not part of the theory. Ethnographic work held the promise of developing this discourse, but the focus in variation circles on macro-social categories and the development of statistical models was putting the "big picture" increasingly at the center. Martha's Vineyard was fading into the discursive distance. Not that my colleagues didn't think what I was doing was interesting, but it seemed that many considered it valuable only to the extent that it answered to the big-picture view. And the more I delved into the social and engaged with social theory, the more difficulty I had accepting the big picture as primary. This was also unfolding in the context of a broader hegemony of big numbers across the social sciences, as explanation seemed to give way to correlation.

Macro-social correlations are essential to the understanding of variation. The macro-social categories are well established, easily replicable, and essential to tracing the broad societal patterns of variation and the path of linguistic change. But in themselves, they only point to the lives and language use of the people who make up the categories. Social exchange tends to be about more nuanced things than being or not being working class, female or African American. This is not to say that First Wave theorizing about class and variation was wrong. On the contrary, it benefited from a deep tradition of social science research on social class. But we owe our understanding of class not so much to survey researchers as to ethnographers such as those in the Chicago School of Sociology. Nonetheless, survey researchers across disciplines commonly claim the scientific high ground on the basis of the replicability of their methods, viewing ethnographic results as hopelessly particularistic. And if the analysis of class variation was based on a strong tradition of social theory, this could not be said of gender. Feminist theory was not only new but apparently out of bounds for my male colleagues, and common ideology – women's supposed properness, status consciousness, and upward mobility – stood in for a theory of gender. I found that the more I talked about gender, the more I was

ignored, so my search for explanation put me fairly early on in a somewhat countercultural position within the field of variation. And of course, given my predilection to feminist anger, I imagine I got abrasive.

The Belten project was a turning point in another way, as it pretty much precluded tenure. I threw myself into fieldwork when I should have been cutting up my dissertation into a series of articles. I could make up a bunch of stories about why I couldn't do both, but the bottom line is that I was too scared to publish. The first article I sent off was from my dissertation chapter on intervocalic *n deletion, and I received a very courteous and potentially helpful rejection letter from the journal editor. But I put it in a drawer and never looked at it again. The only paper I published from my dissertation was on the back vowel chain shift (Eckert 1980b), which Bill wanted for his volume on sound change.

Skip Rappaport, Conrad Kottak and Rob Burling, my mentors in the Anthropology department, warned me that I was following a dangerous path by diving into a new study, but they also supported me and the project. In the end, although the Anthropology department put me up for tenure, I was shot down at the dean's level. This is never a good experience, but my department fought for me for two years, so I didn't feel rejected by anyone whose opinion I valued.

Tenure was a kick in the stomach. But while I felt alone and scared, I never thought this was the end, and above all, I felt for the first time that nobody owned me – that I was doing my work purely for myself. I also felt tremendous support from my field. Paul Chapin at NSF picked up my salary so that I could finish the Belten project, my department continued to support me in every way they could, and I got lots of support at NWAV. None of my colleagues could help me out with the practicalities of unemployment once the NSF money ran out – that kind of support I got from the janitor, a great guy with an Olympic bronze medal in rowing. The academic job market doesn't correspond to the unemployment agency's sense of timing, but although I had to stand on line for my check every week, there was some leeway in reporting job applications in the early months. I applied for some academic jobs, and I half-heartedly explored setting up a consulting business with a woman I'd met in the schools. But that felt totally wrong.

Another opportunity came up when NICHD¹ approached me about applying for a grant to study adolescent smoking. This came from that agency's emerging interest in funding ethnography, and from a short paper I'd published on adolescent smoking in the *American Journal of Public Health* (Eckert 1983). While doing my fieldwork at Belten, I had been inspired to write this paper

¹ National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

because it was clear to me that the schools' anti-smoking campaigns were counter-productive, since they failed to recognize the indexical significance of smoking in social polarization. The journal published the paper as a commentary rather than a scientific article since it was based on qualitative research. (I was insulted at the time but I'm over it.) NICHD invited me to Washington, where they sent me to talk to the National Cancer Institute's expert on adolescent smoking. A big numbers guy, he mansplained to me that my ethnography had stumbled upon the important fact – that kids who smoke have friends who smoke. Duh. I submitted my proposal, but since I didn't know that I had to specify that it should go to NICHD, it went to NIDA² instead. NIDA apparently thought the proposal was interesting enough to warrant a site visit, at which a bunch of numbers guys grilled me about my dependent and independent variables. They shut me down when I pointed out that those would be determined on the basis of ethnography. This was apparently NOT SCIENCE. So much for that grant.

Meanwhile, I was invited to replace John Rickford at Stanford for the spring quarter while he was on sabbatical. I arrived at Stanford on New Year's Day 1985, found a place to live, and settled in to teach the introduction to sociolinguistics and a seminar on ethnography and variation. Within a week, Ivan Sag and I began to hang out, and we got married less than a year later. This was pretty reckless, but neither of us had ever been in the habit of being otherwise. While at Stanford, I snagged a tenure track job at the University of Illinois at Chicago, so moved back into regular employment and into a commuter marriage.

Needless to say, I found it difficult to settle in to my job in Chicago, and my first year there I applied for a job in the UC Berkeley School of Education. I didn't get that job, but it turned out that psychologist Jim Greeno was among the people who attended my job talk, and he invited me to come speak at the new Institute for Research on Learning (IRL) in Palo Alto. IRL was a nonprofit research institute that was just getting under way at Xerox Palo Alto Research Center. It was a small interdisciplinary community of anthropologists, psychologists, computer scientists and linguists dedicated to developing a socially viable theory of learning. Among this group were anthropologist Jean Lave and computer scientist Etienne Wenger, and we bonded from the very first moment. My talk led to an offer, and for a couple of years I spent the fall and spring quarters in Chicago, and the winter and summer quarters at IRL. In 1989, I gave up tenure and moved to California and to full time at IRL.

Giving up tenure was another of my reckless decisions, but like the previous, it was a great one. Between the collaborative and truly interdisciplinary

² National Institute on Drug Abuse.

atmosphere of IRL, and Ivan's and my IRL colleagues' unflagging enthusiasm for my ideas, I began for the first time to feel as if I had the right to take up space. It helped to be in an interdisciplinary environment, where I didn't feel as if I should already know everything, and for the first time I understood that my ignorance was an opportunity rather than a death sentence. IRL was an exciting round of reading groups, seminars, and interaction labs, with a lot of space for thought and engagement with social theory. Jean's theoretical intensity and energy had a particularly profound influence on me. She and Etienne were working on their book (Lave and Wenger 1991) on situated learning, and Jocks and Burnouts became part of the discussions. It was in these interactions that I began to think about variation, and language more generally, as practice, and about the implications of thinking of Jocks and Burnouts as communities of practice rather than as social categories.

Communities of Practice

The macro-social approach offers no systematic connection between macro-social categories and practice on the ground, other than resorting to generalizations about the people who make up those categories. Lesley Milroy's (1980) focus on the class-based nature of social networks was a big step in the direction of explanation, connecting the density and multiplexity of networks to class on the one hand, and to linguistic focusing on the other. The community of practice zooms in on the network clusters and the practice that brings those clusters together. All the macro-social parameters that dominate variation studies – class, gender, ethnicity, age – structure the conditions under which each of us lives. And communities of practice emerge in response to the needs, interests and desires that arise under those conditions: car pools, bowling leagues, crack houses, bridge clubs, extended families, sororities, research groups. Every individual participates in a variety of such communities, which are not equally central to the individual's life, nor do they have equally distinctive linguistic practices. What is important is that practices, including linguistic practices, emerge in the course of the community's engagement in their joint practice, which includes not only establishing relations within the community but establishing a joint sense of the community's relation to the wider social context.

The community of practice gains meaning in a larger theory of social reproduction. Anthony Giddens (1979:2) sums up social reproduction simply in his theory of structuration: "In and through their activities agents reproduce the conditions that make these activities possible." In other words, structure conditions, but does not determine, social agency. Pierre Bourdieu (1977)

posited the *habitus* as the means by which this takes place on an individual basis, and below the level of awareness. The *habitus* is the individual's internalization of the social, a set of beliefs and dispositions molded through early and long-term experience in a particular place in society. The *habitus* is "society written into the body" (Bourdieu 1990:63), shaping the individual's understandings, beliefs, and actions. The Jock and Burnout communities of practice emerged in response to differing places in the class system, and can be traced to children's life in the neighborhood.

My interviews at Belten generally began with the question "Do you remember your first friend?" and then traced the interviewee's friendships and activities up to the present. The Jocks, coming primarily from middle-class families, had parents who managed their pre-school social lives by arranging play dates. Many of them came from neighborhoods with few children, and while some played with a neighbor or two, their social lives were dominated by play dates with children of their parents' friends outside the neighborhood. The Burnouts grew up primarily in a couple of neighborhoods where there were a lot of kids, and they were expected to play with others in the neighborhood, usually in the care of older siblings. The ready-made network in the neighborhood provided autonomy, and the age heterogeneity provided the support, resources and information for which the Jocks had to rely on their parents. The age heterogeneity also exposed kids earlier to the prerogatives that come with age, which became a source of friction with adults, particularly in school.

These different social backgrounds brought kids into different relations with the school from the very start. School provided Jocks with their first opportunity to make their own friends, while it isolated the Burnouts from their neighborhood network. The Jocks' new freedom to make friends was shaped by their classes in school, so that their friendships supported the institutional age-graded structure. The age-heterogeneity of the Burnouts' friendships, meanwhile, put them at odds with the school's norms from the outset. Based as they were in the institution, the Jocks' relationships were potentially temporary and competitive, while Burnouts' friendships were long-lasting and supportive. These early differences, among others, led to different world views, ideologies and emotional makeups – *habitus* – which supported the differences in Jocks' and Burnouts' functioning in school and later in life. The communities of practice that structured these experiences – families, neighborhood friendship groups, school classes, Jocks, Burnouts – disposed Jocks and Burnouts to act differently, to see the world differently, to react differently to situations. Normal human agency, then, is not the same as free will. Our capacity to act, to make choices, is shaped by the *habitus*. And these acts are not necessarily conscious or intentional; many of them are quite automatic,

part of the give and take of everyday life. But dominant ideology, particularly that of the school, overwhelmingly attributes them to the choices of individual parents, kids, and families.

There was some pushback on the community of practice construct, and I have heard the critique that while there is a procedure for discovering social networks, and for assigning speakers to macro-social categories, there is no procedure for identifying the boundaries of communities of practice. This seems to suggest that the construct is inadequate in some way, but I would begin by referring to Chomsky's (1957) critique that American structuralists confused theory with discovery procedures. It takes ethnography to identify a community of practice and to ascertain individuals' forms of participation in it. And while there is no cookbook for doing ethnography, a good ethnography yields empirical facts supported by principled accounts of analytic practice. Not everyone has the time or the inclination to do ethnographic work, but not everyone has to study communities of practice. They have only to recognize their role in a theory that links local practice to macro-social structures. Of course, if you can assign people to places in social networks, you can assign them to communities of practice. Every network is based on some thing people do together – work, friends, leisure activities, church, etc. – and communities of practice are clusters that form among these ties. The important part, though, is understanding the practice that makes the cluster a community, because it is in that practice that variation and style take on meaning.

Liberated by Gender

Although I'd been involved with feminist activism since the sixties, the burgeoning field of language and gender hadn't interested me much, since it was all about interaction and I was quite narrowly focused on sound change. However, I wasn't wild about the way variationists were talking about gender. Graduate students Alison Edwards and Lynne Robins and I gave a talk at NWAV in 1985 on the problems with using biological categories in variation. I wish I could remember what we said (Lynne can't remember either), but it got me thinking about the issue. And as the data emerged in my high school study, it became clear that there was a fundamental problem in looking for gender explanations in a male–female binary, and expecting that binary to have a single effect on variation across society. Emboldened by my new IRL sense of entitlement, I began saying stuff out loud, and David Sankoff, as editor of the brand new journal *Language Variation and Change*, asked me to write about gender for the journal's second issue. I suspect it was his intention to stir something up.

THE WHOLE WOMAN: SEX AND GENDER DIFFERENCES IN VARIATION

The tradition of large-scale survey methodology in the study of variation has left a gap between the linguistic data and the social practice that yields these data.³ Since sociolinguistic surveys bring away little information about the communities that produce their linguistic data, correlations of linguistic variants with survey categories have been interpreted on the basis of general knowledge of the social dynamics associated with those categories. The success of this approach has depended on the quality of this general knowledge. The examination of variation and socioeconomic class has benefited from sociolinguists' attention to a vast literature on class and to critical analyses of the indices by which class membership is commonly determined. The study of gender and variation, on the other hand, has suffered from the fact that the amount of scientific attention given to gender over the years cannot begin to be compared with that given to class. Many current beliefs about the role of gender in variation, therefore, are a result of substituting popular (and unpopular) belief for social theory in the interpretation of patterns of sex correlations with variation.

Sociolinguists are acutely aware of the complex relation between the categories used in the socioeconomic classification of speakers and the social practice that underlies these categories. Thus, we do not focus on the objectivized indices used to measure class (such as salary, occupation, and education) in analyzing correlations between linguistic and class differences, even when class identification is based on these indices. Rather, we focus more and more on the relation of language use to the everyday practice that constitutes speakers' class-based social participation and identity in the community. Thus, explanations take into consideration interacting dynamics such as social group and network membership (Labov 1973; Milroy 1980), symbolic capital and the linguistic marketplace (Bourdieu & Boltanski 1975; Sankoff & Laberge 1978; Thibault 1983), and local identity (Labov 1973, 1980). The same can be said to some extent of work on ethnicity and variation, where researchers have interpreted data on ethnic differences in variation in terms of complex interactions between ethnicity, group history, and social identity (Horvath & Sankoff 1987; Labov 1972b; Laferriere 1979). The study of the sociolinguistic construction of the biological categories of age and sex, on the other hand, has so far received less sophisticated attention (Eckert, Edwards & Robins 1985).

³ This work was supported by the Spencer Foundation and the National Science Foundation (BNS 8023291). I owe a great debt of thanks to David Sankoff for his very generous and important help with this article. The value of his suggestions for strengthening both the conception and the presentation of these arguments is immeasurable.

The age continuum is commonly divided into equal chunks with no particular attention to the relation between these chunks and the life stages that make age socially significant. Rather, when the full age span is considered in community studies, the age continuum is generally interpreted as representing continuous apparent time. At some point, the individual's progress through normative life stages (e.g. school, work, marriage, childrearing, retirement) might be considered rather than, or in addition to, chronological age. Some work has explored the notion of life stage. The very apparent lead of preadolescents and adolescents in sound change has led some researchers to separate those groups in community studies (Macaulay 1977; Wolfram 1969), and some attention has been focused on the significance of these life stages in variation (Eckert 1988; Labov 1972b). There has also been some speculation about changes of speakers' relation to the linguistic marketplace in aging (Eckert 1984; Labov 1972a; Thibault 1983). Most interestingly, there have been examinations of the relation of age groups to historical periods of social change in the community (Clermont & Cedergren 1978; Laferriere 1979). But taken together, these studies are bare beginnings and do not constitute a reasoned and coherent approach to the sociolinguistic significance of biological age.

Like age, sex is a biological category that serves as a fundamental basis for the differentiation of roles, norms, and expectations in all societies. It is these roles, norms, and expectations that constitute gender, the social construction of sex. Although differences in patterns of variation between men and women are a function of gender and only indirectly a function of sex (and, indeed, such gender-based variation occurs within, as well as between, sex groups), we have been examining the interaction between gender and variation by correlating variables with sex rather than gender differences. This has been done because although an individual's gender-related place in society is a multidimensional complex that can only be characterized through careful analysis, his or her sex is generally a readily observable binary variable, and inasmuch as sex can be said to be a rough statistical indication of gender, it has been reasonable to substitute the biological category for the social in sampling. However, because information about the individual's sex is easily accessible, data can be gathered without any inquiry into the construction of gender in that community. As a result, since researchers have not had to struggle to find the categories in question, they tend to fall back on unanalyzed notions about gender to interpret whatever sex correlations emerge in the data and not to consider gender where there are no sex correlations.

Gender differences are exceedingly complex, particularly in a society and era where women have been moving self-consciously into the marketplace and calling traditional gender roles into question. Gender roles and ideologies create different ways for men and women to experience life, culture, and society. Taking this as a basic approach to the data on sex differences in

variation, there are a few assumptions one might start with. First, and perhaps most important, there is no apparent reason to believe that there is a simple, constant relation between gender and variation. Despite increasingly complex data on sex differences in variation, there remains a tendency to seek a single social construction of sex that will explain all of its correlations with variation. This is reflected in the use of a single coefficient for sex effects in variable rule or regression analyses of variation. This perspective limits the kind of results that can be obtained, since it is restricted to confirming the implicit hypothesis of a single type of sex effect or, worse, to indicating that there is no effect at all. Second, we must carefully separate our interpretation of sex differences in variation from artifacts of survey categories. I would argue that sociolinguists tend to think of age and class as continua and gender as an opposition, primarily because of the ways in which they are determined in survey research. But just as the class effect on variation may be thought of in terms of the binary bourgeois-working-class opposition (Rickford 1986b), and just as there is reason to believe that the age continuum is interrupted by discontinuities in the effects of different life stages on people's relation to society and, hence, on language, variation based on gender may not always be adequately accounted for in terms of a binary opposition.

Interpretations of Sex Differences in Variation

There is a general misconception among writers who do not deal directly with variation that women's speech is more conservative than men's. Indeed, women do tend to be more conservative than men in their use of those vernacular forms that represent stable social variables. On the other hand, the very earliest evidence on variation (Gauchat 1905) showed women leading in sound change, a finding that has been repeated in Labov's work in New York City (1966) and Philadelphia (1984), in Cedergren's work in Panama (1973), and in my own work in the Detroit suburbs. If these trends were universal, the coefficient of the sex variable (1 = female, 0 = male) in a variable rule or regression analysis of variation would always have positive sign for changes in progress and negative sign for stable variables.

But the picture is not quite as simple as this generalization suggests. First of all, men do lead in some sound changes. Trudgill (1972) found men leading in most changes in Norwich, and Labov found men leading in some changes in Martha's Vineyard (Labov 1963) and Philadelphia (Labov 1984). Thus, there is every reason to assume that sex differences may vary from one variable to another. As Labov argued (1984), one might expect different sex correlations with old or new changes, for instance. This could still all be represented by a single sex effect in a statistical analysis, but the sign of the effect would depend on the particular variable. Second, sex does not have the same effect

on language use everywhere in the population. Women's overall lead in the population could hide a variety of complex patterns among other social parameters, the simplest of which would be a sexual crossover along the socioeconomic hierarchy. Labov (1984) found just such a pattern in Philadelphia, for several vowels, with women leading at the lower end of the socioeconomic hierarchy and lagging at the upper end. Statistical analyses in these contexts require more than a single sex effect; either an interaction should be included or separate analyses done for women and men. Not only is it a mistake to claim that women are more or less innovative than men, but at this point in our research it is a mistake to claim any kind of constant constraint associated with gender. It is, above all, this mistake that characterizes much current work on sex differences in variation. It is commonplace for sociolinguists to allow the gender categories that they use to classify speakers (i.e. male vs. female) to guide their thinking about the effects of gender in variation. In particular, men and women are perceived as categorically different, indeed opposite and opposed, in their use of linguistic variables.

Hierarchy

Labov's (1966) original findings in New York City clearly lined up socioeconomic class, style, sound change, prestige, and evaluation on a single axis. The hierarchical socioeconomic continuum is also a continuum of linguistic change, wherein extent of historical change correlates inversely with socioeconomic status. At any place along this continuum, speech style reproduces this continuum, with each speaker's stylistic continuum from more casual to more careful speech reflecting a segment of the socioeconomic continuum. A causal connection between the two is based on the assumption that speakers look upward in the socioeconomic hierarchy for standards of correctness and feel constrained in their formal interactions to "accommodate" upward. Thus, there is a folk connection between old and new, formal and informal, better and worse, correct and incorrect. The notion of conservatism in language, then, takes on a simultaneously historical and social meaning. Finally, responses to matched guise tests confirm that members of the community associate the use of linguistic variables with individuals' worth in the marketplace. With this overwhelming stratificational emphasis in the study of variation, sex differences in behavior placed along this continuum are seen in relation to it; hence, when men and women differ in their use of sound change, this tends to be explained in terms of their different orientation to class.

Labov and Trudgill have both emphasized a greater orientation to community prestige norms as the main driving force in women's, as opposed to men's, linguistic behavior. Trudgill's findings in Norwich led him to see women as overwhelmingly conservative, as they showed men leading in most change.

Furthermore, women in his sample tended to over-report their use of prestige forms and men tended to under-report theirs. He therefore argued that women and men respond to opposed sets of norms: women to overt, standard-language prestige norms and men to covert, vernacular prestige norms. Overt prestige attaches to refined qualities, as associated with the cosmopolitan marketplace and its standard language, whereas covert prestige attaches to masculine, "rough and tough" qualities. Trudgill (1972:182-3) speculated that women's overt prestige orientation was a result of their powerless position in society. He argued that inasmuch as society does not allow women to advance their power or status through action in the marketplace, they are thrown upon their symbolic resources, including language, to enhance their social position. This is certainly a reasonable hypothesis, particularly since it was arrived at to explain data in which women's speech was overwhelmingly conservative. However, what it assumes more specifically is that women respond to their powerlessness by developing linguistic strategies for upward mobility, that is, that the socioeconomic hierarchy is the focus of social strategies. There are alternative views of exactly what social strategies are reflected in women's conservatism. An analysis that emphasizes the power relations implicit in the stratificational model was put forth by Deuchar (1988), who argued that women's conservative linguistic behavior is a function of basic power relations in society. Equating standard speech with politeness, she built on Brown's (1980) and Brown and Levinson's (1987) analyses of politeness as a face-saving strategy, arguing that the use of standard language is a mechanism for maintaining face in interactions in which the woman is powerless.

I would argue that elements of these hypotheses are correct but that they are limited by the fact that they are designed to account for one aspect of women's linguistic behavior only: those circumstances under which women's language is more conservative than men's. Based on the multiple patterns of sex, class, and age difference that he found in Philadelphia sound changes in progress, Labov (1984) sought to explain why women are more conservative in their use of stable variables but less conservative in their use of changes in progress and why women lead men in some changes and not in others. Although his data do not show women being particularly conservative, he based his analysis on the assumption that women's linguistic choices are driven by prestige. What he sought to explain, therefore, are cases where women's behavior is not conservative. Based on his Philadelphia data, Labov argued that women lag in the use of variants that are stigmatized within the larger community, that is, stable sociolinguistic variables and changes in progress that are sufficiently old and visible as to be stigmatized within the larger community. Women's behavior in these cases, then, is driven by global prestige norms. At the same time, women lead in changes that are still sufficiently limited to the neighborhood and local community to carry local prestige without having attracted a stigma

in the larger Philadelphia community. In this case, Labov argued, women's behavior is driven by local prestige norms. If this explanation accounts for the Philadelphia data, it does not cover the New York City cases of (aeh) and (oh) (Labov 1966), where women led in sound changes that had grown old and stigmatized. But more important, I can see no independent reason to seek explanations for women's behavior in prestige.

It is important to note at this point that three kinds of prestige have been put forth so far: (a) global prestige, based on norms imposed in the standard language marketplace; (b) covert prestige, based on opposition to those norms; and (c) local prestige, based on membership in the local community. Although the notion of covert prestige has come under attack, and conflated by some with local prestige, I have argued that all three of these forces play a role in variation (Eckert 1989b). Later in this article, I suggest that not prestige but power is the most appropriate underlying sociological concept for the analysis of gender-based linguistic variation.

Sex Differences as Opposition

If the focus on class as a continuum has led to the interpretation of sex differences in speech as differences in orientation to the class hierarchy, the focus on sex as a two-way opposition has led also to interpreting sex differences as sex markers. Brown and Levinson (1979) argued against the treatment of sociolinguistic variables as markers, pointing out that the correlations may well be masking intervening variables. Although much work on phonological variation does not explicitly refer to variables as markers, the view of variables as markers is implicit when linguists attribute individuals' use or non-use of a variable to a desire to stress or deny membership in the category with which it is being correlated at the moment. Related to the view of sex differences as markers is the oppositional view of gender differences in variation – a reification of a particular view of gender deriving from the ease of identifying individuals' sex category membership and reflecting the common expression "the opposite sex." Two instances can serve as examples in relation to gender.

Don Hindle (1979) examined one female speaker's use of variables in three situations: at work, at the dinner table with her husband and a friend (Arvilla Payne, the fieldworker), and in a weekly all-women's card game. Based on an assumption that speakers will implement vernacular sound changes more in egalitarian situations than in hierarchical ones, Hindle's initial hypothesis was that the speaker would show more extreme (vernacular) forms at the dinner table with her husband and a friend, because he believed social relations in that setting to be less hierarchical than in the other settings. As it turned out, she showed more advanced change in the card game. One might argue that this does not disprove Hindle's underlying assumption, that speakers show

more vernacular variants in more egalitarian situations, since there is reason to believe that relations among a group of women playing cards on a weekly basis are less hierarchical than those between a husband and wife – perhaps particularly in the presence of a third person. However, he chose to attribute the use of extreme variants in a change, in which women lead community-wide, to accommodation to the group of women.

The theory of accommodation depends on the notion of marker, and this explanation essentially asserts that the speaker's use of the change among women was an attempt to mark herself as a fellow woman. One might consider, however, that her enhanced use of this phonological change at the card game is related to an affirmation of – indeed, perhaps a competition among equals for – some aspect of social identity that has nothing at all to do with gender. In other words, that these women are together in a particular set of social relationships that happen among women encourages them to emphasize some aspect of their social identities.

Whereas Hindle has attributed this woman's extreme use of a sound change to accommodation to women, others have attributed similar behavior to differentiation from men. Tony Kroch has argued that the curvilinear pattern frequently found in the socioeconomic stratification of linguistic variables is due to male speech only. Specifically, he speculated that if the sexes are examined separately, women's speech will show a linear pattern, reflecting the regular spread of sound change upward from the lowest socioeconomic group. The curvilinear pattern, then, is the result of a sudden drop in the use of extreme variables by men in the lowest socioeconomic group in relation to the adjacent higher group. This drop, according to Kroch (personal communication. And see Guy, Horvath, Vonwiller, Daisley and Rogers 1986:38), is the result of an avoidance on the part of men in this socioeconomic group of what they perceive as a female speech pattern. Labov (1984) found the pattern that Kroch predicted for the raising of the nucleus in Philadelphia (aw) (Figure 6.1), and Guy et al. (1986) found it for the Australian Question Intonation (Figure 6.2).

If one were prepared to accept this argument, Guy et al.'s data are more convincing than Labov's. However, in both cases, one could argue that it is only the lower working-class men's divergence from a linear pattern that creates enough of a woman's lead for it to acquire significance. In the case of Philadelphia (aw), aside from the working-class men's sudden downturn in use, the men lead the women in change in all socioeconomic groups. In the case of Australian Question Intonation, although the women lead in the middle class, there is virtually no sex difference in the upper working class. The lower working-class men's perception of the pattern, then, would have to be based on the speech of women at a considerable social remove – a remove that itself could be as salient as the sex difference. I venture to believe that if the pattern

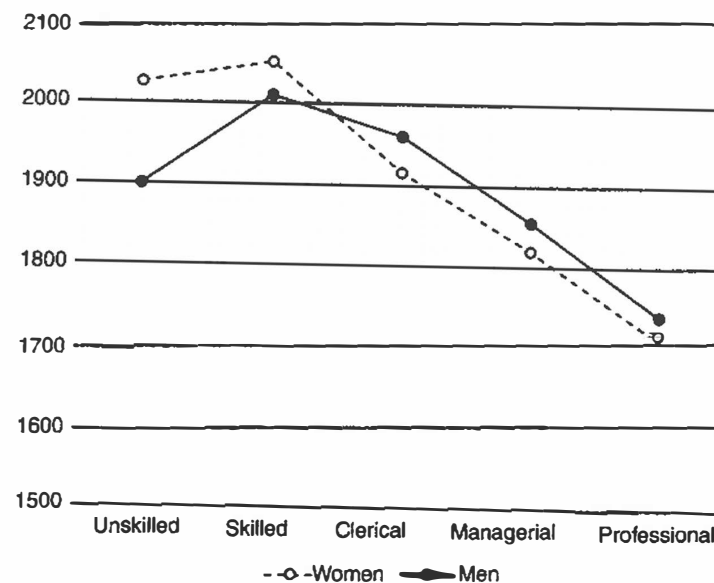


Figure 6.1 Occupation coefficients for F2 of (aw) for men and women in Philadelphia neighborhoods (from Labov 1984).

had been the other way around, with the lower working-class women showing the downturn, the typical explanation would have attributed their conservatism to prestige factors and upward mobility. I seriously doubt that these men's motivation for conservatism is upward mobility, just as I doubt upward mobility as an explanation for women's conservatism. But above all, it is problematic to seek the explanation of their behavior in simple differentiation from the "opposite" sex group.

I do not mean to argue that speakers never associate specific variables with gender, nor would I argue that there are no cases in which men or women avoid variables that they perceive as inappropriately gender marked. I would not even argue against the claim that men are more likely to avoid such variables than women, since there are greater constraints on men to be gender appropriate in certain symbolic realms. However, I believe that variables that function as something like gender markers must have some iconic value. The Arabic palatalization discussed by Haeri (1989) is a candidate for such a variable, although that case also points to intervening variables (Haeri, personal communication). But, as Brown and Levinson (1979) pointed out, a correlation with a particular social category may mask some other attribute that is also associated with that category. One that comes easily to mind in relation to gender is power. This

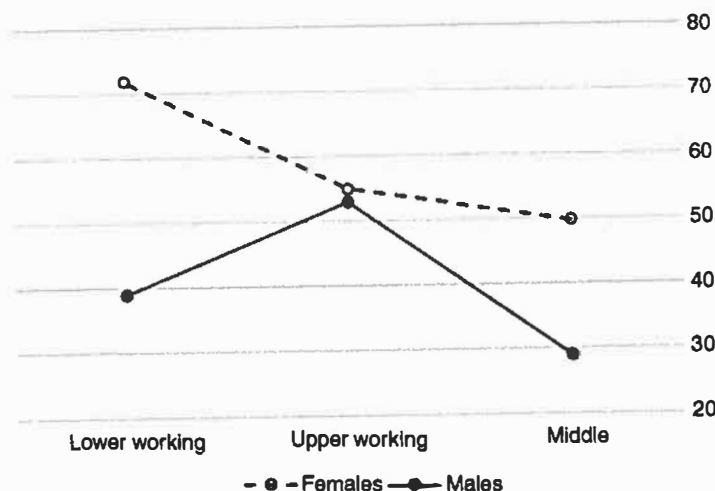


Figure 6.2 Probability of Australian Question Intonation use by class and sex (from Guy et al. 1986:37).

could clearly apply in the case of Australian Question Intonation. Guy et al. (1986) described this intonation pattern as a confirmation-seeking strategy, which one can assume is associated with subordination regardless of sex (Baroni & d'Urso 1984).

What I will argue is that gender does not have a uniform effect on linguistic behavior for the community as a whole, across variables, or for that matter for any individual. Gender, like ethnicity and class and indeed age, is a social construction and may enter into any of a variety of interactions with other social phenomena. And although sociolinguists have had some success in perceiving the social practice that constitutes class, they have yet to think of gender in terms of social practice.

There is one important way in which gender is not equivalent to categories like class or ethnicity. Gender and gender roles are normatively reciprocal, and although men and women are supposed to be different from each other, this difference is expected to be a source of attraction. Whereas the power relations between men and women are similar to those between dominant and subordinate classes and ethnic groups, the day-to-day context in which these power relations are played out is quite different. It is not a cultural norm for each working-class individual to be paired up for life with a member of the middle class or for every black person to be so paired up with a white person. However, our traditional gender ideology dictates just this kind of relationship between men and women. If one were to think of variables as

social markers, then, one might expect gender markers to behave quite differently from markers of class or ethnicity. Whereas the aggressive use of ethnic markers (i.e. frequent use of the most extreme variants) is generally seen as maintaining boundaries – as preventing closeness – between ethnic groups, the aggressive use of gender markers is not. By the same token, the aggressive use of gender markers is not generally seen as a device for creating or maintaining solidarity within the category. To the extent that masculine or feminine behavior marks gender, its use by males and females respectively is more a device for competing with others in the same category and creating solidarity with those in the other category, and aggressive cross-sex behavior is seen as designed to compete with members of the other sex for the attention of members of the same sex.

Two other things follow from the specialization of gender roles, which may apply also to other kinds of differences such as ethnicity.

1. To the extent that male and female roles are not only different but reciprocal, members of either sex category are unlikely to compete with (i.e. evaluate their status in relation to) members of the other. Rather, by and large, men perceive their social status in relation to other men, whereas women largely perceive their social status in relation to other women.⁴ Thus, differentiation on the basis of gender might well be sought within, rather than between, sex groups.
2. Men and women compete to establish their social status in different ways, as dictated by the constraints placed on their sex for achieving status. This is particularly clear where gender roles are separate, and in fact when people do compete in the role domain of the other sex, it is specifically their gender identity that gets called into question.

Power, Status, and Other Things

All of the currently leading hypotheses about the effects of gender on variation recognize, however implicitly, that linguistic differences are a result of men's and women's place in society at a particular time and place. What differs in

⁴ This is an oversimplification. Gender inequality imposes a canonical comparison, whereby higher and lower status accrue automatically to men and women, respectively. It is this inequality itself that leads to the tendency for intra-sex comparisons and for the different terms on which men and women engage in these comparisons. Men tend to compare themselves with other men because women don't count, whereas women tend to compare themselves with other women with an eye to how that affects their relation to male-defined status. (My thanks to Jean Lave for helping me work out this tangle.)

these hypotheses is the specificity and the depth of the causes in society and, hence, their changeability over time and from community to community.

Milroy (1980) traced sex differences in the use of vernacular variables to differences in the nature of men's and women's social networks – differences that are themselves a result of material factors. Based on the understanding that dense, multiplex, locally based social networks enforce the use of vernacular variables, Milroy argued that where economic circumstances allow women to form such networks, their speech takes on the characteristics of men's speech under the same conditions. In this case, then, the explanation for sex differences in variation does not lie in differences between men's and women's fundamental relations or orientation to society *per se*, but in the differences in the circumstances in which they normally find themselves. Closely related to the dynamics invoked by Milroy, particularly to the importance of work patterns on the nature of social networks and to social forces behind the use of vernacular or standard language, is the notion of marketplace. Nichols (1983) showed that differences between women as well as between women and men can be a function of their access to jobs that determine their participation in the standard language marketplace (Sankoff & Laberge 1978). Both Milroy's and Nichols' examples suggest that it is the configuration of contact and interaction created by economic conditions that ultimately determines individuals' linguistic patterns, and in both cases the linguistic patterns may be as changeable as the economic conditions that underlie them.

The purpose of these analyses is to show that gender differences in variation are attributable to social forces that attach to women by virtue of their place in the economy. And whereas common sense supports this view, it is also evident that although employment conditions may change, the underlying relations of power and status between men and women can remain quite unchanging. So whereas economic explanations focus on the marketplace, they attribute gender differences in language to social forces that could presumably continue to operate on the individual speaker regardless of his or her personal relation to the economy. Since actual power relations between men and women can be expected to lag behind (indeed perhaps be orthogonal to) changes in relative positions in the marketplace, one can expect such a dynamic in language to outlive any number of economic changes. One might argue that the socio-economic hierarchy, in this case, is the least of women's problems, since their powerless position is brought home to them, in a very real sense, in every interaction. Women's inequality is built into the family, and it continues in the workplace, where women are constantly confronted with a double bind, since neither stereotypic female nor stereotypic male behavior is acceptable. Thus, one might expect that some gender differences in language are more resistant to small-scale economic differences. In particular, the common claim

that women are more expressive with language (Sattel 1983) resides in deeper differences than the vagaries of the local economy.

The domestication of female labor – according to Marx, one of the earliest manifestations of the division of labor – involves a strict division of roles, with men engaged in the public marketplace and women's activities restricted to the private, domestic sphere (Elshtain 1981; Sacks 1974). The man competes for goods and power in the marketplace in the name of the family and controls these within the family. Thus, although the woman is solely responsible for maintaining the domestic unit, she has no direct control over that unit's capital. Although a man's personal worth is based on the accumulation of goods, status, and power in the marketplace, a woman's worth is based on her ability to maintain order in, and control over, her domestic realm. Deprived of power, women can only gain compliance through the indirect use of a man's power or through the development of personal influence.

Since to have personal influence without power requires moral authority, women's influence depends primarily on the painstaking creation and elaboration of an image of the whole self as worthy of authority. Thus, women are thrown into the accumulation of symbolic capital. This is not to say that men are not also dependent on the accumulation of symbolic capital, but that symbolic capital is the only kind that women can accumulate with impunity. And, indeed, it becomes part of their men's symbolic capital and hence part of the household's economic capital. Whereas men can justify and define their status on the basis of their accomplishments, possessions, or institutional status, women must justify and define theirs on the basis of their overall character. This is why, in peasant communities as in working-class neighborhoods, the women who are considered local leaders typically project a strong personality and a strong, frequently humorous, image of knowing what is right and having things under control.

When social scientists say that women are more status conscious than men, and when sociolinguists pick this up in explaining sex differences in speech, they are stumbling on the fact that, deprived of power, women must satisfy themselves with status. It would be more appropriate to say that women are more status bound than men. This emphasis on status consciousness suggests that women only construe status as being hierarchical (be it global or local hierarchy) and that they assert status only to gain upward mobility. But status is not only defined hierarchically; an individual's status is his or her place, however defined, in the group or society. It is this broader status that women must assert by symbolic means, and this assertion will be of hierarchical status when a hierarchy happens to be salient. An important part of the explanation for women's innovative and conservative patterns lies, therefore, in their need to assert their membership in all of the communities in which they participate, since it is their authority, rather than their power in that community, that

assures their membership. Prestige, then, is far too limited a concept to use for the dynamics at work in this context.

Above all, gender relations are about power and access to property and services, and whatever symbolic means a society develops to elaborate gender differences (such as romance and femininity) serve as obfuscation rather than explanation. Whenever one sees sex differences in language, there is nothing to suggest that it is not power that is at issue rather than gender *per se*. The claim that working-class men's speech diverges from working-class women's speech in an effort to avoid sounding like women reflects this ambiguity, for it raises the issue of the interaction between gender and power. Gender differentiation is greatest in those segments of society where power is the scarcest – at the lower end of the socioeconomic hierarchy, where women's access to power is the greatest threat to men. There is every reason to believe that the lower working-class men's sudden downturn in the use of Australian Question Intonation shown in Guy et al. (1986) is an avoidance of the linguistic expression of subordination by men in the socioeconomic group that can least afford to sound subordinate.

For similar reasons of power, it is common to confuse femininity and masculinity with gender, and perhaps nowhere is the link between gender and power clearer. Femininity is a culturally defined form of mitigation or denial of power, whereas masculinity is the affirmation of power. In Western society, this is perhaps most clearly illustrated in the greater emphasis on femininity in the south, where regional economic history has domesticized women and denied them economic power to a greater degree than it has in the industrial north (Fox-Genovese 1988). The commonest forms of femininity and masculinity are related to actual physical power. Femininity is associated with small size, clothing and adornment that inhibit and/or do not stand up to rough activity, delicacy of movement, quiet and high-pitched voice, friendly demeanor, politeness. The relation between politeness and powerlessness has already been emphasized (Brown 1980) and surfaces in a good deal of the literature on gender differences in language. Although all of these kinds of behavior are eschewed by men at the lower end of the socioeconomic hierarchy, they appear increasingly in male style as one moves up the socioeconomic hierarchy until, in the upper class, what is called effeminacy may be seen as the conscientious rejection of physical power by those who exercise real global power (Veblen 1931) by appropriating the physical power of others.

The methodological consequence of these considerations is that we should expect to see larger differences in indications of social category membership among women than among men. If women are more constrained to display their personal and social qualities and memberships, we would expect these expressions to show up in their use of phonological variables. This necessitates either a careful analysis of statistical interaction, or separate analysis of the data from each gender group, before any comparison.

Gender and Adolescent Social Categories

In this section, I discuss some evidence from adolescent phonological variation to illustrate the complexity of gender in the social scheme of things. Adolescents are quite aware of the gender differences I have discussed, particularly since they are at a life stage in which the issue of gender roles becomes crucial. By the time they arrive in high school, adolescent girls (particularly those who have been tomboys) are getting over the early shock of realizing that they do not have equal access to power. One girl told me of the satisfaction it still gives her to think back to the time in elementary school when she and her best friend beat up the biggest male bully in their class and of the difficult adjustment it had been to finding less direct means of controlling boys. In fact, she was very attractive and was aware but not particularly pleased that her power in adolescence to snub troublesome males was as great as her past power to beat them up.

Whether or not they wielded any direct power in their childhoods, adolescent girls know full well that their only hope is through personal authority. In secondary school, this authority is closely tied up with popularity (Eckert 1989a, 1990), and as a result, girls worry about and seek popularity more than boys. And although boys are far from unconcerned about popularity, they need it less to exert influence. For a boy can indeed gain power and status through direct action, particularly through physical prowess. Thus, when they reach high school, most girls and boys have already accepted to some extent that they will have different routes to social status. In many important ways, boys can acquire power and status through the simple performance of tasks or display of skills. A star varsity athlete, for instance, regardless of his character or appearance, can enjoy considerable status. There is virtually nothing, however, that a girl lacking in social or physical gifts can do that will accord her social status. In other words, whereas it is enough for a boy to have accomplishments of the right sort, a girl must be a certain sort of person. And just as the boy must show off his accomplishments, the girl must display her persona. One result of this is that girls in high school are more socially constrained than boys. Not only do they monitor their own behavior and that of others more closely, but they maintain more rigid social boundaries, since the threat of being associated with the wrong kind of person is far greater to the individual whose status depends on who she appears to be rather than what she does. This difference plays itself out linguistically in the context of class-based social categories.

Two hegemonic social categories dominate adolescent social life in American public high schools (Eckert 1989a). These categories represent opposed class cultures and arise through a conflict of norms and aspirations within the institution of the school. Those who participate in school activities and embrace the school as the locus of their social activities and identities constitute, in the high school, a middle-class culture. In the Detroit area, where

the research I report on was done, members of this category are called "Jocks" whether or not they are athletes, and they identify themselves largely in opposition to the "Burnouts." Burnouts, a working-class culture oriented to the blue-collar marketplace, do not accept the school as the locus of their operations; rather, they rebel to some extent against school activities and the authority they represent and orient themselves to the local, and the neighboring urban, area. The Burnouts' hangouts are local parks, neighborhoods, bowling alleys, and strips. They value adult experience and prerogatives and pursue a direct relation with the adult community that surrounds them. The school mediates this relation for the Jocks, on the other hand, who center their social networks and activities in the school. The Jocks and the Burnouts have very different means of acquiring and defining the autonomy that is so central to adolescents. Whereas the Jocks seek autonomy in adult-like roles in the corporate context provided by the school institution, the Burnouts seek it in direct relations with the adult resources of the local area.

Within each category, girls and boys follow very different routes to achieve power and status. The notion of resorting to the manipulation of status when power is unavailable is in fact consciously expressed in the adolescent community. Girls complain that boys can do real things, whereas boys complain that girls talk and scheme rather than doing real things. By "real" things, they mean those things that reflect skills other than the purely social and that reflect personal, and specifically physical, prowess. Boys are freer in general. For example, Burnout boys can go to Detroit alone, whereas girls must go under their protection; this seriously curtails a Burnout girl's ability to demonstrate urban autonomy. The Jock boys can also assert their personal autonomy through physical prowess. Although it is not "cool" for a Jock boy to fight frequently, the public recognition that he could is an essential part of his Jock image. In addition, Jock boys can gain public recognition through varsity sports on a level that girls cannot. Thus, the girls in each social category must devote a good deal of their activity to developing and projecting a "whole person" image designed to gain them influence within their own social category. The female Jocks must aggressively develop a Jock image, which is essentially friendly, outgoing, active, clean-cut, all-American. The female Burnouts must aggressively develop a Burnout image, which is essentially tough, urban, "experienced." As a result, the symbolic differences between Jocks and Burnouts are clearly more important for girls than for boys. In fact, there is less contact between the two categories among girls, and there is far greater attention to maintaining symbolic differences on all levels – in clothing and other adornment, in demeanor, in publicly acknowledged substance use and sexual activity. There is, therefore, every reason to predict that girls also show greater differences than boys in their use of any linguistic variable that is associated with social category membership or its attributes.

I have shown elsewhere that the most extreme users of phonological variables in my adolescent data are those who have to do the greatest amount of symbolic work to affirm their membership in groups or communities (Eckert 1989b). Those whose status is clearly based on "objective" criteria can afford to eschew symbolization. It does not require much of a leap of reasoning to see that women's and men's ways of establishing their status would lead to differences in the use of symbols. The constant competition over externals, as discussed in Maltz and Borker (1982), would free males from the use of symbols. Women, on the other hand, are constrained to exhibit constantly who they are rather than what they can do, and who they are is defined with respect primarily to other women.

Phonological Variation

The following data on phonological variation among Detroit suburban adolescents provide some support for the discussion of the complexity of gender constraints in variation. The data were gathered in individual sociolinguistic interviews during two years of participant observation in one high school in a suburb of Detroit. During this time, I followed one graduating class through its last two years of high school, tracing social networks and examining the nature of social identity in this adolescent community. The school serves a community that is almost entirely white, and although the population includes a variety of eastern and western European groups, ethnicity is downplayed in the community and in the school and does not determine social groups. The community covers a socioeconomic span from lower working class through upper middle class, with the greatest representation in the lower middle class.

The speakers in the Detroit area are involved in the Northern Cities Chain Shift (Labov, Yaeger & Steiner 1972), a pattern of vowel shifting involving the fronting of low vowels and the backing and lowering of mid vowels (Figure 6.3). The older changes in this shift are the fronting of (ae) and (a), and the lowering and fronting of (oh). The newer ones are the backing of (e) and (uh).

The following analysis is based on impressionistic phonetic transcription of the vocalic variables from taped free-flowing interviews.⁵ A number of variants were distinguished for each vowel in the shift. Both (e) and (uh) have raised, backed, and lowered variants. Backing is the main direction of movement of both (e) and (uh). In each case, two degrees of backing were distinguished:

[ɛ] > [ɛʔ] > [ʌ]

[ʌ] > [ʌʔ] > [ɔ]

⁵ The transcription of these data was done by Alison Edwards, Rebecca Knack, and Larry Diemer.

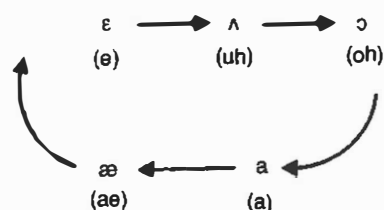


Figure 6.3 The Northern Cities Chain Shift.

Both variables also show lowering: [æ] for (e) and [a] for (uh). There are also some raised variants [ε[^]] and [ɪ] for (e) (the latter occurs particularly in *get*) and [ə] and [ʊ] for (uh). The lowest value for (ae) is [æ[^]]. The movement of the nucleus of (ae) has clearly been toward peripherality (Labov et al. 1972), as the higher variants show fronting:

[æ[^]] > [ε] > [e]

Two degrees of fronting were distinguished for (a):

[a] > [a[^]] > [æ[^]]

(a) also showed some raising to [a[^]] and [ʌ]. Finally, three degrees of fronting were distinguished for (oh):

[ɔ] > [ɔ[^]] > [a] > [a]

(oh) also fronted occasionally to [ʌ]. Extreme variants in the main direction of change were chosen for each of the variables to represent rule application. These extreme variants are:

(ae) nucleus = [e] or [ε], with or without offglide

(a) = [æ] or [a[^]]

(oh) = [a[^]] or [a[^]]

(uh) = [a] or [ɔ]

(e) = [ʌ] or [ʊ]

The two common social correlations for phonological variables in these data are with social category membership and sex. Sex and category affiliation are not simply additive but manifest themselves in a variety of ways among these changes. They interact in ways that are particularly revealing when seen in the context of the overall pattern of linguistic change. Table 6.1 contains a

Table 6.1 Percentage of advanced tokens of the five vowels for each combination of social category and sex

	Boys		Girls	
	Jocks	Burnouts	Jocks	Burnouts
(ae)	39.7 (n=531)	35.3 (n=286)	62.2 (n=392)	62 (n=287)
(a)	21.4 (n=548)	22 (n=350)	33.8 (n=450)	38.2 (n=350)
(oh)	7.4 (n=598)	10.2 (n=333)	29.8 (n=450)	38.7 (n=338)
(e)	26.2 (n=557)	33.2 (n=340)	23.8 (n=433)	30.9 (n=333)
(uh)	24.6 (n=496)	35.3 (n=184)	25.8 (n=364)	43 (n=249)

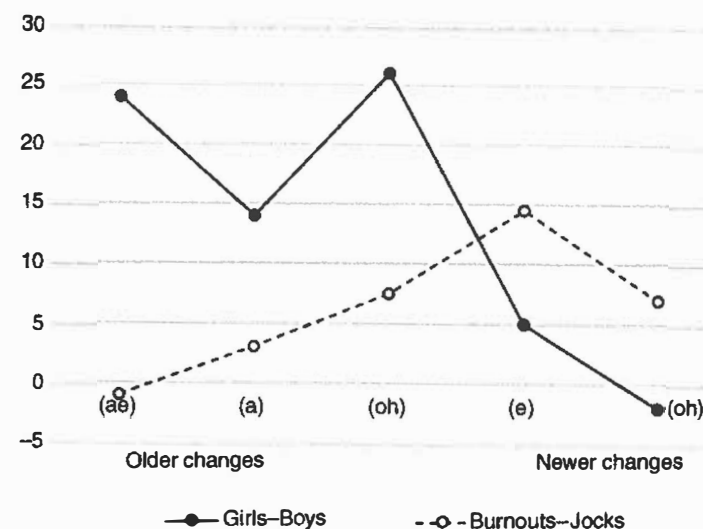


Figure 6.4 Contrast between girls and boys and between Jocks and Burnouts as differences in percentages when calculated for the combined data in Table 6.1.

cross-tabulation by social category and sex of the percentage of advanced tokens for each vowel. Differences in the percentages shown in Table 6.1 between boys and girls and between Jocks and Burnouts for each of the changes are displayed in Figure 6.4: one line shows the lead of the girls over boys, whereas the other shows the lead of the Burnouts over the Jocks, for each of the changes in the Northern Cities Shift. As Figure 6.4 shows, the girls have the clearest lead in the oldest changes in the Northern Cities Chain Shift whereas social category

Table 6.2 Significance (yes or no) of social constraints on the vowel changes that constitute the Northern Cities Chain Shift (p-values of log-likelihood test calculated for each constraint separately using variable rule program on data of Table 6.1)

	Sex	Social Category
(ae)	yes ($p < .001$)	no ($p < .77$)
(a)	yes ($p < .001$)	no ($p < .16$)
(oh) ^a	yes ($p < .0001$)	yes ($p < .001$)
(uh)	no ^b ($p < .04$)	yes ($p < .001$)
(e)	no ($p < .38$)	yes ($p < .004$)

^a Both constraints remain significant for (oh) when the effects of the other are taken into account.

^b The sex effect loses significance ($p < .19$) for (uh) when social category is taken into account.

differences take over in the later changes. Note that each line dips into negative figures once – at each end of the shift. The boys have a slight lead in the backing of (e) and the Jocks have a slight lead in the raising of (ae). The statistical significance of each of the differences is given in Table 6.2. A treatment of variation that views variables as markers would call the fronting of (ae) and (a) “sex markers,” the backing of (uh) and (e) “social category markers,” and the fronting of (oh) both.

In an earlier article, I expressed some puzzlement about the lack of sex differences in the backing of (uh), having expected a simple relation between sex and any sound change (Eckert 1988). More careful examination of the backing of (uh), however, shows that a simplistic view of the relation between gender and sound change prevented me from exploring other ways in which gender might be manifested in variation. In fact, gender plays a role in four out of the five changes in the Northern Cities Chain Shift, although it correlates only with three out of five of the changes, and the role it plays is not the same for all changes.

As can be seen in Table 6.2 and Figure 6.4, the oldest change in the Northern Cities Chain Shift, the raising of (ae), shows no significant association with category membership in the sample as a whole. The same is true within each sex group taken separately (girls: $p < .96$; boys: $p < .22$). However, the girls lead by far in this change. The second change in the Northern Cities Shift, the fronting of (a), also shows only a sex difference, once again with the girls leading. The lack of category effect holds true within each sex group considered separately (girls: $p < .19$; boys: $p < .76$).

The lowering and fronting of (oh) shows a significant difference by both sex and social category, and these effects appear to operate additively in a variable rule analysis:

Overall tendency: 0.182

boys: 0.300 girls: 0.700

Jocks: 0.452 Burnouts: 0.548

When the sexes are separated, however, it turns out that the category difference is only significant among the girls ($p < .009$) and not the boys ($p < .14$).

In the backing of (uh), category membership correlates significantly with backing for the population as a whole, with Burnouts leading, but sex does not. When each sex is considered separately, however, it is clear that the category difference is much greater among the girls. The backing of (e) shows a significant category difference, with the Burnouts leading, but no significant sex difference. In this case, when the two sexes are considered separately, the category difference is the same among the girls and among the boys.

Figure 6.5 compares the differences in the percentages in Table 6.1 between the Jocks and Burnouts, within the girls' and boys' samples separately. None of these differences is significant for (a) and for (ae). For (e) they are significant and identical for the two sexes. For (oh) and (uh), however, there is a clear tendency for there to be greater social category differentiation among the girls than among the boys.

These results throw into question general statements that women lead in sound change or that sex differences are indicative of sound change. In fact, in my data, the greatest sex differences occur with the older – and probably less vital – changes, involving (ae), (a), and (oh). I would venture the following hypotheses about the relation of gender to the older and the newer changes in these data. It appears that in both sets of changes, the girls are using variation more than the boys. In the case of the newer ones, the girls' patterns of variation show a greater difference between Jocks and Burnouts than do the boys'. In the case of the older ones, all girls are making far greater use than the boys of variables that are not associated with social category affiliation. I have speculated elsewhere (Eckert 1987) that the newer changes, which are more advanced closer to the urban center, are ripe for association with counter-adult norms. The older changes, on the other hand, which have been around for some time and are quite advanced in the adult community, are probably not very effective as carriers of counter-adult adolescent meaning, but they have a more generalized function associated with expressiveness and perhaps general membership. In both cases – the girls' greater differentiation of the newer changes and their greater use of older changes – the girls' phonological behavior is consonant with their greater need to use social symbols for self-presentation.

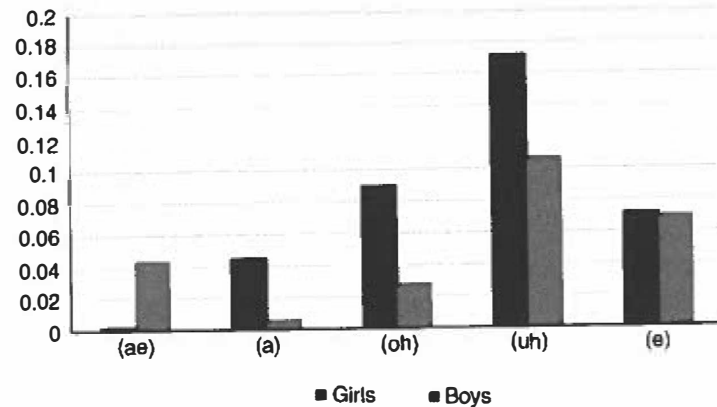


Figure 6.5 Absolute differences of percentages for Burnouts and Jocks, calculated separately for girls and boys (note that for (ae), Burnouts actually trail Jocks).

Conclusions

I would not, at this point, claim that the relation shown in these data between new and old changes is necessary, particularly in view of the fact that Labov (1984) found that women in Philadelphia led in new sound changes, whereas sex differences tended to disappear in older changes. It is apparent, then, that generalizations about the relation between sound change and gender are best deferred until more communities have been examined.

The first clear conclusion from these data is that sex and social category are not necessarily independent variables but that they can interact in a very significant way. It is the nature of that interaction, which occurs here with (oh) and (uh), that is of interest in this article. It is not the case with these phonological variables that there are large sex differences in one category and not in the other. In other words, sex is rarely more "salient" in one category than the other. One certainly cannot say that the boys and/or girls are asserting their gender identities through language more in one category than in the other. Rather, there are greater category differences in one sex group than the other. In other words, category membership is more salient to members of one sex than the other; girls are asserting their category identities through language more than are the boys. This is consonant with the fact that girls are more concerned with category membership than boys, as well as with the fact that girls must rely more on symbolic manifestations of social membership than boys. And this is, in turn, the adolescent manifestation of the broader generalization that

women, deprived of access to real power, must claim status through the use of symbols of social membership.

These data make it clear that the search for explanations of sex differences in phonological variation should be redirected. All of the demographic categories that we correlate with phonological variation are more complex than their labels would indicate. Indeed, they are more complex than many sociolinguistic analyses give them credit for. Some analyses of sex differences have suffered from lack of information about women. But it is more important to consider that where most analyses have fallen short has been in the confusion of social meaning with the analyst's demographic abstractions.

* * * * *

I guess this paper marks the beginning of my public difficulties with the variation mainstream. Sankoff had Bill Labov write a response (Labov 1990) for the next volume. The response felt dismissive. I felt bludgeoned by numbers – numbers that I had no argument with, but that could point to more than one story. Around the same time, I gave a plenary at the 1990 NWAV, entitled "Where the Rubber Hits the Road." The talk called into question the reliance on macro-social categories to explain variation, and while I don't remember well what I said in the talk, I do remember blowback on my discussion of gender. I processed it as a bunch of guys refusing to listen. It wasn't until nine years later, at a conference that Carmen Fought organized in Ronald Macaulay's honor, that Bill (at his initiation) and I actually sat down and talked about what I meant by "gender."

It's become pretty clear to me recently that a lot of these feelings of conflict were unnecessary. My impostor syndrome made it impossible for me to engage with my critics. Fear shut me down in face-to-face interactions, as I felt my entire worth as a human being depended on my not being wrong. Because being wrong would mean I was stupid. This got in the way of dealing with – even enjoying – disagreements, and shut me out from what could have been the most productive (sometimes even fun) part of academics. Instead, I crawled into a corner and tried to figure out things all by myself, wasting my own time and not contributing to the wider discourse. Those nine years were scary, as I was in and out of academics, and felt conflict where there could have been lively engagement.

But my new focus on gender led me to new people and ideas. I had met Sally McConnell-Ginet in 1982, when my college classmate Joel Sherzer organized a series of talks at Oberlin, featuring Oberlin graduates who had become linguists. Sally was a pioneer in the study of language and gender, and when I began to take gender seriously, she was the person I went to. Serendipitously, she was invited to write an article on Language and Gender for the 1992 *Annual Review of Anthropology*, and I was invited to teach a course on Language and Gender at the 1991 Linguistic Institute at Santa Cruz. We teamed up on both projects,

beginning a decades-long collaboration and a lifelong friendship. These events coincided with the heyday of the Berkeley Women and Language Group (BWLG). Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall, both graduate students at Berkeley, were the primary movers and shakers in this group, which organized a biennial Language and Gender conference and published elegant proceedings for each in record time.⁶ The BWLG conferences were not just the best conferences I'd ever attended, but the most fun and the most inspiring. They offered a diverse and challenging intellectual atmosphere, robust support for new ways of thinking about language and society, and a more critical theoretical discourse. As I focused increasingly on gender as structuring possibilities among women and among men, and on the central binary fact that women show a greater range of variation than men, my interest in style intensified.

⁶ The Berkeley Women and Language Group held its last conference in 1998, and the following year a bunch of us founded the International Gender and Language Association (IGALA). I have been less active in recent years as my work no longer focuses on gender.

7 Foregrounding Style

The focus on style in variation had always been on style shifting, but the Jocks and Burnouts work had gotten me interested in style as structured co-occurrences of features. It also got me to see the significance of variation as tied up with that style. During my Stanford stint in 1985, students Sharon Inkelas, Melissa Moyer, Sue Uhland and I had gone to interview kids during their lunch break at Palo Alto High School, to find out what the social categories were. Knowing that people are reluctant to admit to categorizing others, we approached small groups of kids and asked them about their style. Most kids were intrigued by the idea and we began with each one describing what they were wearing. When we asked what other styles there were in the school, of course, we began to hear about the social categories. But in the course of this little project, social categories receded into the background, as style itself came into focus, and as I thought more and more about the relation between material and linguistic style.

Several years later, when I was at IRL, I started working on style with an amazing bunch of graduate students, along with Tom Veatch and Livia Polanyi. I pulled out the Paly High tapes from 1985, and we fell on an interview that Sue Uhland had done with two girls. We did an analysis of the style of the dominant speaker of the two, whom we came to call "Trendy." Calling ourselves the "California Style Collective," we presented our analysis at the 1993 NWAV. We never published it, though, both because we scattered at the end of that year, and because we found that the statistics were not as robust as we had originally thought. And as I look back, the fact that we didn't yet have a good handle on the California variables limited our effectiveness. While we still have the paper, the figure is lost forever as are some of the measurements. But the introduction to this paper was the first laying out of the perspective on style that gave rise to the Third Wave. Since people still refer to it, and since it is a good statement of the perspective, I include the introduction to the paper here.