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Chapter 21

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FIELDWORK METHODS IN LANGUAGE VARIATION

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<HI> 21.1 Defining Sociolinguistic Fieldwork<sup>te</sup>

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The label 'sociolinguistic fieldwork' has been assigned to cover a wide variety of activities and procedures for collecting speech data, extending from the incidental observation of language use in the course of everyday interaction to the systematic elicitation of structural responses conducted within an experimental study. In this context, the role of the fieldworker can be as diverse as the types of studies conducted on the social life of language. The relatively loose, operational definition of fieldwork that prevails in sociolinguistics is, of course, a far cry from the model of participant observation set forth by Bronislaw Malinowski (1915, 1922) when he argued that cultural anthropologists needed to have daily contact with their subjects for an extended period of time if they were to record the 'imponderabilia of everyday life'.

In the cultural anthropological tradition, of se, we think of social scientists who enter a completely different, preferably non-Western culture, for extended periods of time in order to observe and understand behaviours quite different from their own from the standpoint of the indigenous culture. Such is hardly the case in sociolinguistic fieldwork, although there are many instances in which researchers travel to distant community sites for extended periods of time in order to profile sociolinguistic variation in a culture different from their own (e.g. Meyerhoff, 2002; Nagy, 2000; Schreier, 2003). More frequently, however, sociolinguistic researchers are

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likely to work with communities in their country of residency, and may even focus on communities of which they are a part.

The range of community involvement may further extend from one-time interaction with subjects through a rapid, anonymous interview in the context of a department store (Labov, 1966) to the video recording of a politician on the political trail to examine variation that includes linguistic and paralinguistic behaviour (Mendoza-Denton and Mjahed, 2002). Or, it may involve a professional community (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; Holmes, 2006), a prescribed professional interaction (e.g. Hagstrom, 2004), a subcultural community (e.g. Alim, 2004), or any other specialized setting or interaction. It may even involve living in a community context for years without relying on audio- or video-recording in order to observe language use in its natural context (Dayton, 1996). Sociolinguistic fieldwork is much more fluid and open in its definition than in some other fields of social science inquiry. At the same time, it is often a neglected dimension of discussion within the sociolinguistic enterprise, and most sociolinguistic studies simply offer a limited description of their fieldwork, in some cases consigning it to a footnote. But a footnote of sociolinguistic study may alter the narrative text of the sociolinguistic description in ways that greatly affect our description and interpretation of data  $\frac{L}{M}$  and it can never be marginalized.

In this survey, we consider a variety of topics that have fallen under the rubric of fieldwork methods, from the selection of a community of study to the discussion of specific methods for collecting data from the community. On one level, sociolinguistic fieldwork may be viewed in terms of a set of questions about choosing a community of study, working with the community, and gathering appropriate data to answer research questions posed in a study of sociolinguistic differences. Schilling-Estes (2008: 165) identifies the challenges of fieldwork as:

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(1) How do I decide who to get data from; (2) how do I get people to talk to me; (3) how do I explain to people why I'm recording them; (4) how do I make good quality recordings in the field; and (5) how should I be involved with my research participants? We address some of these questions as well as some additional considerations as we examine some of the traditions that have developed during the last half-century of sociolinguistic field methods.

## <H1> 21.2 Identifying the Community

<T17> It is hard to imagine any social group or community from which an attendant set of research issues related to the life of language does not emerge, thus making just about any community eligible for sociolinguistic study. By the same token, the type of community selected for study depends, to a large extent, on the researcher's interests and questions. While sociolinguists conveniently refer to 'speech community' as a primitive sociolinguistic notion, defining the speech community can be theoretically elusive and communities can be quite fluid. William Labov, a pioneer in the development of fieldwork methods as well as other areas in sociolinguistics, defined the speech community as a group of people with shared norms, or common evaluations of linguistic variables (1966, 1972b). Though this may seem like a reasonable working definition, it is important to understand the difficulties involved with such a seemingly straightforward definition of a speech community (Patrick, 2002). 'Shared language norms' does not mean that everyone in a speech community speaks exactly the same way, or even very similarly, only that they orient toward the same language norms. But language norms can also be elusive and negotiated rather than proscribed.

A number of issues arise when attempting to delimit a community in order to conduct a sociolinguistic study. For example, should researchers apply external, predetermined 'objective'

criteria in delimiting a community, or allow the definition of the community to emerge as particular populations are studied so that researchers realize how participants themselves demarcate their communities? Should the researcher start by identifying a particular social unit and seeing how they use language, or start with the particular language variety, an ideal construct in its own right, and then see who uses it and how they are tied together socially? Further, there are questions of size and uniformity. Can we really talk about a very large social aggregate like the Lower East Side of New York City (Labov 1966) or perhaps a region like the Fens of Eastern England (Britain 2001) as a single unified community with a shared set of norms, or is it more likely that different subpopulations have different norms for language use and other social behaviours? It may, in fact, be best to view the 'speech community' as more of a multi-layered construct, since people have affiliations at different levels, ranging from various communities of practice, neighbourhood communities, migrant communities (Kerswill, 1993), larger politically-defined groups (e.g. a city or state), and broadly-based regional groups (e.g. US Southerners). A resident of Charleston, South Carolina, for example, may be affiliated with an individualized set of communities of practice, some of which extend beyond Charleston or South Carolina, at the same time that he or she is affiliated with a particular neighbourhood group that may be based on ethnic and family ties as well as geographic proximity and the broader-based notion of the American South.

In considering the various intersecting communities of which all speakers are necessarily a part, we need to consider whether we should take a 'top-down' approach, in which we begin by focusing on large social aggregates such as cities or regions, or a 'bottom-up' approach, in which we begin by studying individuals and their various interconnections. Better yet, it may be best to work 'back and forth' between the individual and the community, and between the social and the

linguistic, as we study the interrelation of language and community. For example, Labov began his study of New York City by first applying social criteria to the identification of a particular group as a 'community'. He then narrowed this group down through linguistic criteria, selecting only native speakers of the New York City English varieties he was particularly interested in studying. Though his focus was on community patterns of language variation and change, he did not neglect individuals and included in his studies investigations of individual speech patterns in different stylistic contexts, as well as individual speakers' comments about stigmatized vs. prestigious language features. In more recent work (Labov, 2001), Labov relies even more heavily on detailed studies of individuals, including individual personality traits and social networks, in seeking to understand the large-scale patterns of variation and change that reflect their multilayered and overlapping interactions, affiliations and orientations, and in addition use features with a variety of social associations to help shape social groups and social meanings in their daily conversational interactions.

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Early fieldwork techniques in sociolinguistics tended to start with predetermined populations, defined by language, political or social boundaries. Pioneering studies in the US, for example, focused on politically-based metropolitan areas such as New York City (Labov, 1966) and Detroit (Shuy, Wolfram and Riley, 1966), whereas Trudgill's (1974) early sociolinguistic analysis in England focused on Norwich. As studies of speech communities progressed, however, enquiry turned towards social groups within large-scale communities, in particular, interaction within social groups. In the 1970s, following Leslie Milroy's (1987) innovative studies of Belfast English, focus shifted to social networks and the kinds of people the residents of a given community tended to interact with most often on a daily basis. In examining social networks, the concern is on the DENSITY, the extent to which members of a social network all

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interact with one another, and MULTIPLEXITY, the extent to which people interact with the same people in different spheres of activity, for example, in work, in leisure activities and in the neighbourhood. Researchers have shown that social network density and multiplexity can have a significant impact on dialect maintenance and change. In particular, speakers in high-density, multiplex networks tend to maintain localized, vernacular language varieties far more tenaciously than speakers in uniplex, low-density networks, who are quicker to adopt language features from outside their local communities. In more recent work, Dodsworth (2005) extends network analysis to a model related to social perceptions in attributes.

In addition to looking at people's patterns of interaction, focus has extended to the investigation of why people come together as they do – <sup>ie</sup> that is, what sorts of activities people join together to participate in, and what these social practices reveal about people's values, as well as the role of language in shaping and projecting these values. Accordingly, the COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992) approach has become a central community-based social group for sociolinguistic inquiry. Community of practice is defined as 'an aggregate of people who come together around some enterprise' and which is 'simultaneously defined by its membership and the shared practices in which that membership engages' (Eckert, 2000: 35). In other words, when considering people's communities of practice, the focus shifts from pre-established **structures**, whether the small-scale structures of localized social networks or large-scale structures like social class groups, to the ongoing social **practices** through which social structures are sustained and changed. In addition, communities of practice are defined in terms of people's subjective experiences and sense of belonging rather than the external criteria often used to delimit social group memberships (e.g. type of residence, income level) or determine the strength of an individual's social network ties (e.g. number of workmates who live in one's

neighbourhood). Communities of practice are also viewed as dynamic and fluid rather than as static entities, and individuals are seen as active agents in the construction of individual and group identity, rather than simply as passive respondents to the social situations in which they find themselves (e.g. the social class group to which they belong).

In examining individualized, localized practices rather than social structures, we begin to understand not only what sorts of language patterns correlate with which groups but also **why** people use the language features they do. For example, in conducting a study of a small African American community in the Smoky Mountain region of Appalachia, Christine Mallinson and Becky Childs (Childs and Mallinson, 2004; Mallinson, 2006) found that the linguistic practices of some adult women in the community could only be explained in terms of the different communities of practice in which the women participated. One group, the 'church ladies' engaged in practices such as church-going and other activities associated with cultural conservatism and propriety. The other primary group, the 'porch sitters' engaged in regular socializing on one group member's porch, where they would listen to music and engage in other activities indicative of affiliation with more widespread African American culture, especially youth culture. Such patterns of practice help explain why the 'porch sitters' showed high usage levels for features of African American English, while the 'church ladies' showed low usage levels for these features and instead used features associated with the local European-American variety, as well as more features of standard American English.

To carry the permeable, fluid definition of a community to its logical extension, sociolinguistic analysis may even focus on a single speaker as a representative of a community type. Thus, focus on the speech of a political figure (Mendoza Denton, 1995; Mendoza-Denton and Mjahed, 2002; Podesva et al., 2008) or a linguistic isolate might provide critical

sociolinguistic insight into a community. One instructive study on the ethnolinguistic development of African American English is limited to the last surviving member of the only African American family to have lived on the island of Ocracoke since the 1860s. This study of a single African American speaker born in 1904, who was part of an ethnically-isolated family on a geographically-isolated island, demonstrated how one family and one speaker could indeed constitute a type of community.

In the final analysis, communities come in many sizes and shapes, and they are usually quite dynamic. They range from predetermined, bounded political populations to shared-experience communities of different types. On a practical level, they are operationally limited to our sample of participants, though inferences about their representativeness of population beyond the sample are inevitable and appropriate.

### 21.3 Selecting Participants

Like other aspects of fieldwork, the selection of participants in a sociolinguistic study is constrained by the goals of the study. Validity, the extent to which a procedure measures what it is supposed to measure, and reliability, the degree to which an item is consistently measured by the same or another analyst, are the cornerstones of sociolinguistic research, as they are in any type of social science research. However, the assumptions of and the operationalization of these constructs in sociolinguistics may differ somewhat from other fields of social science inquiry. Early in the regional survey game, Pickford (1956) criticized linguistic atlas surveys in terms of sociological sampling theory, noting that they suffered from significant deficiencies of validity and reliability.

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Though some of these criticisms are indeed valid – for example, to this day, sociolinguists do not seem sufficiently concerned about issues of intra- and inter-judge reliability in data extraction and measurement (e.g. Kerswill and Wright, 1990; Thomas, 2002; Kendall, 2009) – it also needs to be recognized that the assumptions and goals of sociolinguistics are also quite different from those in other social science disciplines. Accordingly, a survey focusing on the historical linguistic development of a region might legitimately be restricted to older, lifetime local residents rather than a random sample of the entire population. Furthermore, there are assumptions of representativeness and homogeneity that set linguistic behaviour apart from some other types of social behaviour. Thus, it is not uncommon in linguistic description to use a single speaker as a representative for an entire language, and millions of speakers of the language due to the shared features among its speakers. Given the breadth of diversity in American English or British English, we can still safely assume that the vast majority of structures are shared by all varieties. This kind of homogeneity reduces the need for extensive sampling to make generalizations from the perspective of social science sampling (Neuman, 2002). For sociolinguistics, of course, the relevant question is how much and what type of sampling is needed in order to investigate the differences and generalize about them. Ultimately, it is not how many subjects are included in a sample, but how many speakers are needed to adequately represent a **cell** in a study, <sup>ie.</sup> that is, a particular demographic or social attribute category that is being examined as a variable in the analysis (e.g. older, Latino, male, length of residency 10-15 years). The number of cells is the number of factors in each variable multiplied by each other. Thus, a study that considers three age categories, two ethnicities, and two gender groups ( $3 \times 2 \times 2$ ) would involve 12 cells. With just <sup>five</sup> 5 speakers in each cell, we would then have a sample of 60 speakers.

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Logistically, large-scale sampling of in-person interviews in sociolinguistics is simply not practical given the microscopic attention to linguistic detail characteristic of most sociolinguistic analyses. In one of the largest urban sociolinguistic surveys ever conducted, the Detroit Dialect Study (Shuy, Wolfram and Riley, 1967, 1968), more than 700 speakers were interviewed in the Detroit metropolitan area based on a quasi-random sampling of school children, but less than 100 of the interviews were ever subjected to detailed sociolinguistic analysis of any type (e.g. Shuy, Wolfram and Riley 1968; Wolfram 1969). In Labov, Ash, and Boberg (2006), arguably the most influential survey in the history of North American dialect geography, only two native speakers were selected for phone interviews from each US city with a population of more than 50,000; 772 speakers in all were included. On the basis of this sample, major vowel patterns and shifts in North American English were plotted, based on the assumption that a couple of native speakers is adequate to make generalizations about major dialect patterning. Other studies have operated with a threshold of <sup>five</sup> 5 speakers per cell for quantitative analysis (Guy, 1980), but of course this is sensitive to the type of linguistic phenomenon being investigated and the assumptions of representativeness of the speakers in the cell. It should be noted that small cell sizes may work fine for variationist studies but not for opinion polls, because linguistic variation is often much more constrained and less amenable to conscious reflection.

As might be predicted, one of the emerging trends in the examination of sociolinguistic surveys is the use of online surveys, with all of the advantages and limitations of self-selected participants and self-reported data. The personal and social attributes of such participants are worthy of careful study since the respondents from such studies typically show a distinctive set of social, educational and ethnic attributes, in addition to the personal traits that make them respond. Surveys such as the Cambridge Online Survey of World Englishes

(<http://www.ling.cam.ac.uk/survey/>) and the Harvard Survey of English dialects

(<http://www4.uwm.edu/FLL/linguistics/dialect/index.html>) provide important data that appears to match some of the data elicited by fieldworkers conducting linguistic field surveys. For example, general surveys of particular lexical items (*pop* <sup>vs</sup> *soda* <http://popvssoda.com:2998>), and regionalized online surveys for lexical items in Canada by Boberg (2005), tend to confirm data from linguistic atlas surveys, at least for lexical data.

Another type of sociolinguistic participant to emerge from online communication comes from those who participate in computed-mediated communication, including instant messaging, blogs, and other types of online postings (Johnstone and Baumgardt, 2004; Tagliamonte and Denis, 2008). Such studies are clearly expanding the profile of the participant and community in sociolinguistic studies, and virtual communities can no longer be dismissed as extraneous to the collection of data in sociolinguistics.

#### 21.4 The Sociolinguistic Fieldworker

In Labov's (1972: 99) pioneering article on linguistic methodology, he notes that the methods used in linguistics can be captured by looking at where linguists might be found, noting that 'In this search, we would find linguists working in the *library*, the *bush*, the *closet*, the *laboratory*, and the *street*'. In sociolinguistics, <sup>(TTT)</sup> *the bush* and <sup>(TTT)</sup> *the street* are prime locations for sociolinguists in the traditional focus of sociolinguistic inquiry, and *online* would certainly be added now to the list of places linguists might be found. As the field of sociolinguistics has developed, the role of the sociolinguistic fieldworker has become more closely scrutinized, with growing sensitivity to the affect of the fieldworker in the collection of data (Cameron et al., 1992; Hazen, <sup>#</sup>2000; Nagy, 2000; Schilling-Estes, 2000, 2008). Though some researchers study communities of which they

are already a part, the majority of sociolinguists venture into new communities as strangers. Accordingly, they are assigned a social role within the community that may range from a proscribed role as an external social science researcher to a negotiated status as participant observer in the life of the community. In between, there is a range of roles and relationships that fieldworkers may assume, and the process is a dynamic, evolving one. Over the past 15 years and more than 50 trips to the island, our fieldwork team (Wolfram, Hazen and Schilling-Estes, 1999) has gone from our initial role in Ocracoke as academic sociolinguists to partners in a variety of community activities that extend from collaborative projects documenting and celebrating local language history and other cultural traditions within the community, to friends who celebrate special occasions with families, including birthdays, graduations and funerals (Wolfram, Reaser and Vaughn, 2008).

In earlier (and current) sociolinguistic surveys such as Labov (1966) and Shuy, Wolfram and Riley (1967) which relied on stratified and quasi-random sampling, the sociolinguistic fieldworker assumed the status of an outside social scientist who had a single encounter with subjects during the interview. As sociolinguists migrated away from the sociologically-based survey model for selecting a sample (Wolfram and Fasold, 1974) towards convenience or judgment samples (Milroy, 1987; Milroy and Gordon, 2003), they have typically spent more time getting to know the community and people within the community, resorting to the so-called 'friend of a friend' method (Milroy, 1987) for establishing a common acquaintance within the community. Such a method often has a 'snowballing' effect (Milroy and Gordon, 2003: 23) in that it can lead to a natural network of friends and a role that somewhat mitigates the status of the social science researcher. Though there are obvious advantages in securing participants through this method, there are also disadvantages associated with the friend-of-a-friend technique

(Schilling-Estes, 2008). It limits representativeness in terms of the broader population and applying parametric statistical testing. Furthermore, the fieldworker's association with one group may inhibit access to other groups. By the same token, the advantages of working with a group over time may help ease some of the awkwardness and social obstacles associated with an outside fieldworker and lead to more natural interaction.

While audio-recording is standard procedure for the collection of sociolinguistic data, there are some occasions where data may be collected and even quantified from unrecorded natural conversation. Ha<sup>(146)</sup> (2001), for example, shows how the use of a generalized form of the past tense form of *be*, *wont* (e.g. *I/you/(s)he/we/you/they wont there*) showed significant differentiation when family members were and were not being recorded, and Wolfram and Smith (2008) showed how meaningful stylistic variation took place in the use of the generalized negative past tense form of *be* (e.g. *She weren't nice*) when three friends were not being recorded. There are only a few instances, however, where sociolinguistic data have been collected completely from participant observation without the aid of any audio or video recording. Dayton (1996) is an exceptional case; she spent almost a decade in an African American community in Philadelphia as a participant observer, collecting examples of different uses of verb structures in African American English exclusively on note cards. In part, her motivation was to escape the limitations of the sociolinguistic interview as a specialized speech event (Wolfson, 1976) and to observe the use of grammatical forms only in their natural setting of conversation through the course of everyday life. Dayton's study is an admirable but painstaking exception to the usual method for gathering data.

In working with communities, there are a number of relationships and roles that sociolinguists can assume. Cameron, Frazer, Harvey, Rampton and Richardson (1992) define

several different kinds of research based on relationships between researchers and those they are researching, including ETHICAL RESEARCH, ADVOCACY RESEARCH and EMPOWERING RESEARCH. Ethical research assumes that there is minimal inconvenience to participants and that the subjects are adequately acknowledged for their contributions. Advocacy-based research is characterized by a 'commitment on the part of the researcher not just to do research on subjects but research *on* and *for* subjects' (Cameron et al., 1992: 14), whereas empowering research is research **on**, **for**, and **with** the community in light of the fact that 'subjects have their own agendas and research should try to address them'. As Cameron et al. noted (1992: 24), 'if knowledge is worth having, it is worth sharing'. In the current sociolinguistic context, a number of sociolinguists have proactively sought to share their insights with community members and to 'give back' to the community, with the goal of empowering the community in some way. As John Rickford (1999: 315) puts it:

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The fundamental rationale for getting involved in application, advocacy, and empowerment is that we owe it to the people whose data fuel our theories and descriptions; but these are good things to do even if we don't deal directly with native speakers and communities, and enacting them may help us to respond to the interests of our students and to the needs of our field.

Sociolinguists can work with community members to ensure that language variation is documented and described to raise the level of consciousness within and outside the community about the past, current, and future state of the language variation, and to engage representative community agents and agencies in an effort to understand and explicate the role of language in community life.

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There are a variety of stances, positions and roles that sociolinguistic researchers might assume in the field, but one of the most essential aspects of current fieldwork is the increasing self-awareness of the role of the fieldworker in the fieldwork process. As Schilling-Estes (2000: 84) observes:

More and more, we are coming to realize that genuine detachment is impossible and that there indeed exists a reality outside our individual and societal interpretations of it, it is virtually impossible to access it (Cameron et al., 1992). This inability to separate ourselves and our biases from that which we are studying is especially acute for those of us whose object of study is our fellow humans ... Thus, it is imperative that we consider exactly how what we as researchers bring to the field with us impacts on the observations and analysis we take home.

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If nothing else, fieldworkers are becoming increasingly reflexive about their role in the gathering, shaping and interpreting of data in the field (Hazen, 2000; Mendoza-Denton, 2008; Wolfram et al., 2008).

Many surveys of vernacular dialects now employ fieldworkers from the community itself, and some of the richest sources of data we have collected over the years come from interviews conducted by indigenous fieldworkers, but this condition in itself is also no guarantee of a more useful interview for analysis. Outsiders also possess the personal characteristics that make for an effective fieldworker, and sometimes the 'intimate stranger' who has outsider status (Briggs, 1986) will be offered information not shared with community members. People with empathetic, non-threatening conversational styles often end up getting more useful interviews than fieldworkers who are carefully selected to match the status, age and gender characteristics of the interviewee (Cukor-Avila and Bailey, 2001). In the final analysis, the role of rapport and

empathy in promoting an effective conversational interview may be discussed at length, but ultimately those qualities are difficult to programme.

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## 21.5 Collecting Data

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As noted previously, the collection of data in sociolinguistics is related to the research questions that underlie the study (Milroy and Gordon 2003). At the same time, the articulation of research questions is not a predetermined, static process; instead there is a synergy that binds together methods, description and theory. I personally cannot identify one project in which the predetermined research questions remained unaltered throughout the course of the research project in more than four decades of field-initiated research that has included dozens of different projects. Notwithstanding our best attempts to identify our primary research issues before beginning a study, research questions continue to be formulated and reformulated during the course of the study, invariably linking methods, description and theory. In such a context, complementary methods of data collection are often included in sociolinguistic fieldwork. In the following sections, we consider some of the traditional and developing trends for collecting data in field-initiated sociolinguistic research.

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## 21.6 The Sociolinguistic Interview

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The methodological heart of the sociolinguistic movement over the past half-century, particularly in the variationist paradigm pioneered by William Labov (1963, 1966, 1972a, 1984; Wolfram and Fasold 1974), is the so-called 'sociolinguistic interview', a conversational interview intended to elicit conversation comparable to everyday, ordinary speech. The underlying goal of most conversational interviews is quite straightforward: to get as much natural conversational speech

as possible from the interviewee, <sup>i.e.</sup> that is, speech that represents how the interviewee speaks in everyday conversation when language is not directly under examination. Even in a conversational interview focused on relatively neutral topics of discussion, the fact that a person is being interviewed and tape-recorded is a formidable obstacle to obtaining ordinary speech <sup>1</sup>/<sub>M</sub> the kind of speech that is so central to most studies of dialect variation. This problem has become known in sociolinguistics as the OBSERVER'S PARADOX, which Labov formulated thus: 'To obtain the data most important for linguistic theory, we have to observe how people speak when they are not being observed' (Labov, 1972b: 113). A lot of attention has been given to developing strategies for overcoming the inherent constraints of a tape-recorded interview with a relative stranger, ranging from concern with the personal characteristics of interviewers (Edwards, 1986; Rickford and McNair-Knox, 1994; Cukor Avila and Bailey, 1995, 2001) to the best physical locations for conducting these interviews and the kinds of questions to be asked in the interview (Cukor-Avila and Bailey, 2001; Kendall, 2009).

Topics of conversation in the sociolinguistic interview are centred on themes of common interest, eliciting discussions that might be of most natural interest to community participants and which minimize the attention paid to speech. Open-ended questions are grouped into common areas or 'modules' and most are open-ended to maximize conversation by the participants. One set of questions might, for example, focus on childhood games, another on friends, another on community concerns, and so forth. The key element of these questionnaires is the elicitation of spontaneous conversation that taps into personal and community interests and is non-threatening to the participant.

There are important theoretical reasons for targeting the most casual and ordinary conversations as the basis for analyzing <sup>S</sup>/<sub>I</sub> sociolinguistic data. It was originally based on the

AG7 assumption of Labov's vernacular principle (1972: 112, 113) which maintained that most important speech for linguistic theory came from relatively unmonitored, natural conversation.

The more participants focused on the topic of conversation vis-à-vis the speech per se, the better the data would be for analyzing authentic linguistic patterning. Operationally, the sociolinguistic interview was also considered essential in order to examine the orderly nature of language

variation, since it was the basis for examining the fluctuating patterns of socially-diagnostic

AG8 variants. The careful examination of dialect forms (Fisher, 1958; Labov, 1966; Wolfram, 1969)

showed that dialects sometimes were differentiated on the basis of how frequently particular forms are used rather than whether or not a given variant is used. Individual speakers may

fluctuate in their use of variants, sometimes using one form and sometimes using an alternate

form, and the relative frequencies of usage helped differentiate varieties of a language and

correlated with various linguistic and social traits. For example, the production of unstressed *-ing* as *-in'* in words like *swimming* or *taking* might fluctuate within the speech of a single speaker

during a single speech event, referred to as INHERENT VARIABILITY. At the same time, the relative

frequency of different variants correlates significantly with various linguistic factors, for

example, *ing* is more likely to become *in'* when it functions as a verb vs. a noun (e.g. She was

swimmin' > He likes swimmin'), and by various social attributes, for example, as a group, lower

working-class speakers use more *in'* than middle-class speakers, men more than women, and so

forth. But in order to tap into such systematic variability, sociolinguists need sufficient amounts

of natural conversation to produce enough cases for meaningful quantitative study of orderly

variation (Tagliamonte, 2006).

Although a fieldworker cannot control the elicitation of particular diagnostic forms when the focus of the interview is simply upon obtaining reasonable amounts of conversation, it is

possible to include certain kinds of questions that raise the likelihood for targeted structures to occur. Thus, interview questions may be designed to yield narratives of past experiences or of movie plots in order to obtain significant numbers of past tense verb forms. Similarly, descriptions of different attributes (e.g. 'What does he look like?') may raise the potential for predicate adjective constructions to occur (e.g. *He's tall and he's kinda thin...*). <sup>ellipses</sup>

The kinds of questions that promote the potential for certain structures are, of course, determined only after pilot trials with various formats and, in some cases, after some of the analysis has already begun. In our early studies of Detroit speech (Wolfram, 1969), we found that many of the occurrences of habitual *be* (e.g. *They be tagging somebody when they catch them*) among children occurred during their descriptions of traditional game activities, since such speech events call for the description of regularly-occurring, or habitual activities. Such information not only aided in the analysis of the invariant form of *be* (Fasold 1969), <sup>but</sup> it also helped researchers studying this form to devise questions that might bring out the use of *be* (Bailey and Maynor 1987). Care may therefore be given in a conversational interview to the kinds of questions that might elicit sufficient data for analysis, the kinds of linguistic structures that certain questions are likely to call forth, and the cultural topics that are relevant to the community. When these considerations are taken into account, the demands of the conversational interview may present a significant challenge. These concerns also point to the need for extensive pilot testing before <sup>large-</sup>widescale series of sociolinguistic interviews are undertaken. The success of particular topics in eliciting conversation varies considerably from community to community and from subject to subject, and the actual interview sometimes strays far from the structured topics as the fieldworker follows the interviewee's interests. <sup>should be early quotes throughout</sup>

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Notwithstanding the important data that can be obtained from the sociolinguistic interview, there are a number of concerns about the focus on data derived from this primary method (Schilling-Estes, 2008). Wolfson (1976), for example, has criticized the sociolinguistic interview as being a specialized speech event and less, rather than more, like typical kinds of interviews; furthermore, she notes that it excludes certain types of narrative styles that are important for the analysis of conversational speech. It has also been noted that some of the questions are not typical of everyday speech and could be considered impolite or inappropriate for different cultural groups (Schilling-Estes, 2008). Another concern with the sociolinguistic interview emerges from the focus on the most vernacular, unconscious speech style. For non-mainstream varieties of speech, this obsession has led to a focus on vernacular structures and basilectal versions of speech, resulting in a kind of sociolinguistic nostalgia for the authentic vernacular speaker and reification of nonmainstream vernacular speech and speakers (Bucholtz, 2003).

Schilling-Estes observes that the focus in the Labovian interview on vernacular, unselfconscious speech lapses into unjustified assumptions about a monolithic vernacular. Schilling-Estes notes (2008: 173):

*ellipses*  
...it is by no means certain that each speaker can be said to have a single, "genuine" vernacular style unaffected by situational and speaker-internal factors such as who they're talking to and how much attention they're paying to their speech. Instead, people may have a range of quite casual, unselfconscious styles they use with various people in different circumstances.

The focus on unselfconscious styles ignores the sociolinguistic insights provided by examining more self-conscious styles of speech. Studies of performative styles within and

outside of interviews (Preston, 1992, 1996; Schilling-Estes, 1998) provide insight into the significant distribution of socially diagnostic forms. For example, these forms may be prone to linguistic overproduction when speakers are conscious about their speech so that it signifies ironic roles in the symbolic representation and language change. Notwithstanding some major and minor concerns about the role of the sociolinguistic interview in fieldwork, the data provided by such interviews have been indispensable in the growth of sociolinguistic methodology, description and theory.

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## 21.7 Beyond the Sociolinguistic Interview

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While the sociolinguistic interview has been a staple method for gathering data in sociolinguistics for a half-century now, it has often been augmented by other techniques to gather a full range of sociolinguistic information and behaviour. Even within the sociolinguistic interview, there is a tradition of supplementing conversational speech with other types of tasks such as reading passages, word lists and minimal word pair lists to collect complementary data or simulate different levels of formality (Labov, 1966; Shuy, Wolfram and Riley, 1968). And, of course, there is a tradition of collecting data from groups of participants in naturally occurring speech events that characterized the earliest sociolinguistic studies. Labov's early study of African American English in the mid-1960s relied on interviews with peer groups of African American teenagers (Labov et al., 1968) to access the more vernacular style of speech as well as to compare group speech with the speech style used during individual interviews. Controlling for different permutations of interview participants, interviewers and speech events is fairly common in sociolinguistic fieldwork now (e.g. Edwards, 1986; Renn, 2007; Van Weegen and Wolfram, forthcoming) in order to examine systematically the effects of various participant attributes and

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speech conditions on language variation. Thus, in one current study of the longitudinal development of African American English over a 17-year span (Burchinal, Roberts, Zeisel and Rowley, 2008), participants are examined speaking with their mothers, with peers at different age levels and with adults. Furthermore, there are different conditions for each of these participant sets, including formal speech (such as constructing a formal speech for parents with a peer) and informal speech events (such as eating a snack or planning a MySpace page with a peer) for each combination of participants. Such proscribed designs for data collection allow researchers to maintain experimental control in their examination of systematic language variation while maintaining relatively spontaneous speech as the basis for the systematic investigation of language variation.

As creative and innovative as sociolinguistic interviews have become over the past decades, there are still inherent limitations to the types of data collected from these interviews for both linguistic and sociolinguistic analysis. Theoretically, sociolinguistic data are not conducive to tapping linguistic intuitions of speakers, one of the mainstays of 'descriptive adequacy' in formulating a linguistic description. The goal of a grammar of a socially subordinate language variety is no different from that of a standard variety in this respect. The basic problem is simple: we want to obtain the most complete data possible in order to arrive at an adequate, representative, descriptive account. The fieldwork situation for the collection of data is, at best, not conducive to the probing of linguistic intuitions, and, at worst, actively resistant to such probing. In reality, there are some occasions in linguistic description when particular hypotheses about vernacular structures need to go beyond the simple observation of language in a naturalistic context.

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On one occasion, for example, preliminary observations about *a*-prefixing in constructions such as *She was a-huntin'* and *They came a-runnin'* led to hypotheses about its linguistic boundaries as well as a set of hypotheses about cross-dialectal knowledge of this form (Wolfram, 1982, 1988). Direct intuition questions about the grammaticality of vernacular structures, however, are confounded by prevailing attitudes about social acceptability so it is impossible to obtain reliable data from straightforward questions about intuitions (Labov, 1972; Wolfram, 1986). To counter this tendency, we devised a forced-choice test of sentence pairs in which we simply asked speakers to choose which sentence sounded better; for example, does the speaker prefer adding the prefix *a-* to *He likes working* vs. *He was working*. We found that speakers given a forced choice task would, in fact, resort to their native speaker intuitions (viz., *He was a-workin'* vs. *\*He likes a-workin'*) and overcome the social acceptability judgments that lead them to reject as 'ungrammatical' any structure that was not associated with the mainstream standard variety. In a similar forced choice test with habitual *be* (*They always be going to school* vs. *\*They be going to school today*) administered to native speakers of African American English and middle-class speakers of Standard American English, we found important contrasts between these two groups that led to significant hypotheses about cross-dialectal grammaticality (Wolfram 1982, 1988) and the grammaticalization of habitual *be* in African American English (Fasold 1969; Green 2003).

The indirect probing of linguistic intuitions is not the only method that can be used to confirm or reject various hypotheses about the structures of non-mainstream language varieties. There is a tradition of structural elicitation tasks in sociolinguistic studies that ranges from simple repetition tasks to the elicitation of sentence fragments or cloze techniques of various types that expose underlying forms and patterns. In one early task to test out a hypothesis about

different underlying forms for invariant *be* in African American English, Fasold (1969, 1972) devised a task to elicit an elliptical form that would force the choice of an underlying modal. Fasold hypothesized that there were three underlying forms from which invariant *be* in African American sentence might be derived, which were indicated by the co-occurring auxiliary with the verb. The habitual derivation of *He be there*, occurs with *do* support (e.g. *He don't be there all the time*), the future co-occurs with *will* (e.g. *He won't be there tomorrow*), and past requires *would* (e.g. *He wouldn't be there if he had a choice*). To examine his hypothesis, Fasold devised sentence-stimulus frames that would require the subject to respond with an elliptical form that required a full auxiliary. After training the subject to a response pattern on non-diagnostic sentences, the subject would then provide responses such as the following:

Tape stimulus: *He be in in a few minutes*

Subject response: *I know he will*

Fieldworker response: *Will what?*

Subject response: *Be in in a few minutes*

The elicitation frame offered strong support for Fasold's (1969, 1972) claim that invariant *be* in African American English is derived from at least several different sources, a couple of which parallel its uses in the standard variety and one (habitual *be*) that was unique to this variety.<sup>2</sup> A variety of structural elicitation frames have been used to supplement the data from natural conversation in testing hypotheses for formulating grammars of vernacular varieties (e.g. Schilling-Estes and Wolfram, 1994; Wolfram, 1996; Rickford, 1999).

It is also possible to extend elicitation in sociolinguistic fieldwork to pragmatics and language use, though this type of elicitation is considerably less frequent than the elicitation of structural linguistic forms. In one sociolinguistic study of assumed information and felicitous

questioning, my son, who was seven years old at the time, and I collaborated to ask a series of 'how come' questions to people of different ages (Wolfram and Wolfram, 1977). We approached acquaintances of different ages and asked them how old they were, then followed it up with a 'How come' question, as in the following sample:

Fieldworker: How old are you?

Subject: Twenty-four

Fieldworker: How come?

Subject: How come [laughter] How come, what do you mean how come?

Fieldworker: How come?

Subject: Because 24 years ago my parents worked something out.

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<T1> Responses were not recorded, but each was written down on a file card after the interaction was observed by the senior fieldworker. The responses of subjects showed important differences based on the age of the subject and the age of the fieldworker. For the adult fieldworker with an adult subject, the subject typically assumed that it was a behaviour that plays on the known-information joking genre (e.g. *Why did the chicken cross the road? To get to the other side*). However, when asked by the seven-year-old fieldworker, adults assumed it was a sincere question and responded accordingly (e.g. 'The years have been hard on me', 'The years just fly by'). By the same token, younger children assumed it was a sincere question that required a criterion-based response, as in the following example:

Fieldworker: How old are you?

Subject: Six

Fieldworker: How come?

Subject: Because I'm in kindergarten.

<T1> Slightly older adolescents (9-13) interpreted it as a literal question related to a simple mathematical calculation (e.g. I'm 8 years old because I was born in 1966). Most importantly, the data indicated the developmental trajectory of assumed information in questions and the developmental acquisition of productive and receptive pragmatic competence. While such deliberate conversational manipulation admittedly extends the boundaries of data collection, it demonstrates that the collection of data is only limited by the willingness of fieldworkers to take conversational risks and think creatively about eliciting relevant data to address issues of linguistic form and use.

## <H1> 21.8 Perceptual Studies

<T1> The consideration of speakers' subjective viewpoints on language differences adds an important dimension to understanding and interpreting sociolinguistic differences (Preston, 1989, 1992, 1993). In recent years, fuelled by advances in technology and the accessibility of software programs, a proliferation of perceptual studies have taken place in the field, led by a variety of sociophonetic experiments (Thomas, 2002). Many current perceptual studies show the influence of experimental psychology in terms of their design, their controlled manipulation of variables, and their associated statistical analyses. At the same time, some of these perceptual research studies have shifted research samples from the indigenous research community to convenient, generic populations of middle-class university students. Indeed, there is a trade-off in terms of rigorous experimental design and field-initiated, community-based research that typifies current perceptual studies.

Thomas (2002) has identified a number of different issues that frame the tradition of socio-perceptual approaches to sociolinguistics. One is the ability of listeners to identify regional

varieties, ethnicity or socioeconomic levels of speakers. There is a well-established tradition of compiling a stimulus tape of different speakers representing dissimilar groups and then having listeners identify the language variety, socioeconomic status or ethnicity of the speaker. Earlier studies, for example, had listeners identify whether speakers on a tape recording were using American, British or Indian English (Bush, 1967), or identify the social class and ethnicity of speakers from Detroit or Michigan based on tape recordings extracted from natural conversation (Shuy, Baratz and Wolfram, 1969). In the latter study, different social class groups and ethnicities from Detroit were included as listener groups to match the social attributes of speakers in the stimulus recording, leading to important conclusions about social class and ethnic identification. For example, middle-class speakers and working-class speakers were not significantly differentiated in identifying speakers from different social classes; at the same time, Black listeners of different social classes were better able to identify middle-class Black speakers than their cohort white groups. Such results are not only significant for sociolinguistic description; <sup>but also</sup> they underscore the value of including different social groups of listeners from the study population as a methodological procedure. In a recent study, Wolfram, Dannenberg, Knick and Oxendine (2002) examined listener accuracy in identifying Native American Lumbees, African Americans, and European Americans in a tri-ethnic community in North Carolina (NC). By comparing reactions of listeners from within the community with listeners from Raleigh, NC, a metropolitan area located about 100 miles away, it was shown that tri-ethnic identity in Robeson County was a highly localized phenomenon, endemic to the community where the Lumbee reside. While listeners from both communities reliably identified African Americans and European Americans at the same level of accuracy, only local community members could reliably identify Lumbee Indians. The enlistment of the local community in the experiment thus

proved to be critical for understanding dimensions of local and broad-based notions of ethnic identity in the American South.

Analyses of listeners' reactions to different productions can become quite sophisticated, thanks to computer software that allows for various kinds of experimental manipulations of speech, including speech synthesis. For example, it is possible to alter just the production of a particular vowel or consonant while keeping the rest of the utterance constant so that the specific contribution of the manipulated production to listeners' reaction can be teased out (Graff, Labov and Harris, 1986; Grimes, 2005; Campbell-Kibler, 2007). Experimentation of this type has advanced our understanding of the role of vowel and consonant production in listeners' judgments of regionality as well as the interaction of regionality with social factors such as ethnicity, social status and gender. For example, perception tests indicate that the fronting of the vowel in *boat* so that it sounds more like *bewt* is strongly associated with European American speech in the American South and that African Americans who use this feature are regularly identified as being European American rather than African American (Torbert 2004). In contrast, the fronting of the vowel in *boot*, so that it sounds more like *biwt* is not as strongly associated with European American ethnicity, and African Americans with this feature tend to be identified correctly as African Americans. This indicates that the fronted productions of these two vowels, both common in many Southern-based speech varieties, have quite different ethnic associations. Careful perceptual studies of this type help sort out the effects of subtle nuances of vowel production on listeners, and may help determine the relative perceptual saliency of different phonetic factors in marking regional and ethnic identity.

Another area of study relates to the relationship of stereotypes and speech perception, ranging from the association of personal and social attributes ascribed to different voices (e.g.

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Labov, 1966; Shuy et al., 1969; Frazee (1987) to the effect of social stereotypes on speech perception (Strand, 1999; Niedzielski, 1999). Studies now abound in which researchers manipulate the stimulus to determine the effect of various phonetic traits on personal and social attribution (see Thomas, 2002 for a review). For example, van Bezooijen (1988) investigated how listeners judge speakers' personalities in the Netherlands based on speech samples from speakers of various socioeconomic statuses in the city of Nijmegen. The speech was presented in four ways: (1) as excerpts of the unaltered recording; (2) lowpass filtered at 300 Hz in order to focus listeners' attention on prosody; (3) with the recordings cut and respliced digitally to focus listeners' attention on voice quality; and (4) as written text. The listeners rated the speech in the different conditions on various personality scales (e.g. 'educated', 'strong-willed', 'fair'), resulting in an analysis that concluded that strong personality was inferred from prosody but intellectual and socioeconomic status were inferred from the segmental aspects of speech.

One of the long-standing methods used in sociolinguistic research to elicit subjective reactions to speech is the MATCHED-GUISE TECHNIQUE, developed by Wallace Lambert and colleagues in the 1960s to evaluate the reactions of Montreal residents towards both French speakers and English speakers. In this technique a bilingual or bidialectal speaker renders the same passage in the two varieties, thus controlling for individual speaker traits. The results of the initial investigation by Lambert and his colleagues (Lambert, 1967) showed that the Canadian English speakers evaluated the Canadian French guises less favourably, as predicted, but the Canadian French speakers also attributed the Canadian French guises with less positive characteristics, a surprising conclusion.

A more recent use of the matched guise technique by Baugh (2003) applied it to linguistic profiling and housing discrimination. In response to advertisements for vacant

apartments in the newspaper, Baugh telephoned using three different guises <sup>1</sup>/<sub>M</sub> African American, Chicano American <sup>1</sup>/<sub>M</sub> and European American <sup>1</sup>/<sub>M</sub> and found that the proportion of vacant apartments reported was significantly differentiated based on the three guises and the location of the apartments. To a large extent, the use of speech synthesis has now replaced the matched <sup>1</sup>/<sub>M</sub> guise technique in sociolinguistic experimentation type since it is easier to manipulate variables in a speech sample more precisely while strictly controlling other speaker variables.

The previous studies relate to the social evaluations and stereotypes evoked from speech. A different tack is taken by Strand (1999) <sup>5</sup> who examined how stereotypes may alter a subject's perception of speech. Strand's study, based on part of the 'McGurk effect' (McGurk and MacDonald, 1976), showed an interaction between hearing and vision in speech perception as speakers hearing one sound, while watching a video with another sound, tended to perceive the sound they lip-read from the video. Her study showed that subjects altered their perception of the sound based on the sex of the speaker, concluding that perception was influenced by gender stereotypes.

The development of experimental methods in perceptual studies is one of the fastest growing areas of sociolinguistics, and there are many experiments related to vowel mergers, vowel splits <sup>1</sup>/<sub>M</sub> and comprehension across different dialects (see Thomas, 2002, <sup>2</sup> Labov, 1994) <sup>1</sup> that have advanced our understanding of the role between perception and production in sociolinguistic description. However, these studies take us beyond our focus on field methods here and are best treated as a burgeoning subfield of sociolinguistics in its own right (Thomas, 2002).

Not all studies of subjective viewpoints of speakers are dependent on tape-recorded stimuli of various types. The research of Dennis Preston and his colleagues (Preston, 1986, 1989, 1991,

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9) focuses on people's 'commonsense' beliefs and subjective mental categories rather than spoken language data. Such beliefs and mental representations are important to sociolinguists, since they may play an important role in shaping language variation and change across regional and social space. In the most straightforward procedure for determining people's 'mental dialect maps', study participants are simply asked to draw, on a blank or minimally detailed map, lines around regional speech zones. Instructions that guide such drawings involve eliciting people's perceptions of the boundaries of Southern and Northern speech areas. These lines can then be traced onto digitized pads and software can then be used to generate composite maps of various types based on drawings from a large number of respondents. Differences in mental maps may correlate with a range of respondent attributes such as region, age, social class, ethnicity and gender. <sup>L</sup><sub>M</sub> the same kinds of social factors shown to be relevant in the patterning of variable dialect productions. For example, respondents from Southeastern Michigan and Southern Indiana in the <sup>CA</sup><sub>L</sub> US draw very similar Southern dialect regions. However, there seems to be a 'home region effect' that influences how each group draws their Northern and Southern Midland boundaries, with each group drawing a larger dialect area around their home region.

These maps are supplemented by people's evaluative judgments of different regional dialects, elicited through instructions such as 'Rank the states on a scale of 1 to 10 showing where the most correct and the most incorrect English are spoken', 'Rank the states showing where the most pleasant and unpleasant English are spoken', and 'Rank the states showing where English is most and least like your own variety'. For example, New York City and the South tend to be ranked as 'most different' by respondents from Michigan and Indiana. New York City and the South were also ranked as 'most incorrect' by these same respondents. At the same time,

Southern dialect is rated high on a scale of pleasantness, showing people's complicated and sometimes somewhat contradictory reactions to regional speech varieties.

## (K1) (T1) 21.9 Ethnographic Description

Over the past couple of decades, the role of ethnographic description has taken on increased significance in sociolinguistic field methods. Most ethnographic description is based on some level of participant observation and long-term involvement in a community, whether it be through extended residency in the community or regular visits and participation in the life of the community. The benefits of an ethnographic approach include the quality and amount of data and the familiarity with community practices that allow researchers to uncover the essential social and cultural factors that may affect language variation and change from the standpoint of the community itself (Johnstone, 2000; Milroy and Gordon, 2003). Most sociolinguistic analyses that use social network or community-of-practice approaches to sociolinguistic description rely on ethnographic approaches to some extent, and there are several paradigm examples of the benefits of long-term involvement in an observation of a community. Eckert (2000), in her study of high school students in a Detroit suburb, spent two years at the school, regularly attending the school in the first year and occasionally attending it in the second year. Her years at the school helped her make sense of the linguistic and behavioural patterns of the school, particularly as they related to different social groups of students (viz. 'jocks' and 'burnouts'). In a similar vein, Mendoza-Denton's (2008) description of language and cultural practices among Latina youth gangs was based on several years of participation in the lives of high school girls in California. In the process, she recorded them on different occasions, she copied their drawings, she took notes and video-taped them when they went on trips to the beauty salon or to the amusement

park. This regular engagement over time led Mendoza-Denton not only to a description of their speech, but <sup>also</sup> to a description of their bodily practices and symbolic exchanges that signal gang affiliations, cultural practices and ideologies.

The richness of accounts based on extensive ethnographic involvement speak for themselves, but they also suggest that greater explanatory power in sociolinguistic description is dependent on understanding the local social categories and ideologies that emerge from long-term participation. Ethnographic approaches are by their very nature more interdisciplinary and involve the observation and description of a wide range of behaviours. For example, Mallinson's (2008) description of two communities of practice in a small African American community in the Smoky mountains in western North Carolina, the 'church ladies' and 'the porch ladies', includes a description of physical details such as the layout and decoration of their homes, their style of dress and their physical complexion, as well as their attitudes about religion, family, race and social mores. The ethnographic description thus frames the social groups that constitute the communities of practice and the language differences that distinguish them. As Milroy and Gordon (2003: 70) note, participant observation tends to work well in small, well-delineated communities if the community is responsive to the fieldworkers on a personal basis.

The model of participant observation used by fieldworkers from the North Carolina Language and Life Project in Ocracoke (Wolfram, Hazen and Schilling-Estes, 1999; Wolfram, 2008) has lasted more than 15 years with numerous trips to the island for up to a week at a time. Furthermore, it has involved multiple teams of student fieldworkers over the years with one of two constant faculty members of the team involved in each trip. Without our extended participation, we would not have been able to identify some of the social groups and personal attributes critical to our description of language change. For example, the so-called 'Poker Game

Network' is a male-exclusive group that values traditional island themes, which in turn correlates with their maintenance of several iconic dialect features (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 1995). Our long-term participation in the life of the community has now led to real-time studies that combine panel studies with trend studies at different periods, including a comparison of a current analogue of the 'Poker Game Network' (Wolfram and Smith, 2008). While this extended participation has resulted in some unique insights into the relation between real-time and apparent-time studies, it has also uncovered some methodological cautions for real-life studies of language change. Keeping data points in time equal in terms of social conditions, interaction and even acoustic conditions for recording also need to be considered in order to conduct systematic comparative studies of the same community and speakers at different points in time. And, of course, in the current vein of sociolinguistic studies, both groups and individuals need to be considered in real-time language change  $\frac{l}{m}$  just as they are in apparent  $\frac{f}{k}$  time studies. Indeed, qualitatively-based fieldwork is necessary to complement and inform our quantitative analyses in sociolinguistics. The balance between the qualitative perspective provided through ethnographic study and the quantitative analysis of variable speech data is one of the challenges for sociolinguistics in the future development of field methods that are rooted in both humanities and social science traditions.

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Notes

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1<sup>2</sup> Dayton (1996) and Labov ( ) have since rejected Fasold's hypotheses about the different underlying structures for invariant *be* in African American English based solely on naturalistically-acquired data, but it remains an issue in dispute (Green, 2002).

NOTE on file 849