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Individuals and Communities

Norma Mendoza-Denton

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Some of the greatest controversies taking shape today in sociolinguistics focus on the relationship between the individual and the community. How do individuals' language patterns and individuals' language ideologies fit into society-wide patterns of usage and change? The mechanisms relating individual behaviour to community-wide patterning provide the material for both enduring and new debates within our field. These debates may, for various scholars, take the form of familiar dualisms such as langue/parole, grammar/usage, structure/agency, society/praxis, macro/micro, emic/etic (defined by participants vs defined by researchers; see an especially relevant discussion in Coupland, 2001). This chapter takes as its domain some of the major areas of sociolinguistics and seeks to adumbrate the controversies surrounding the dualisms mentioned above. Despite a conciliatory desire to provide a middle way between the dualisms, I will argue that holding these dualisms in tension gives us analytical affordances that might otherwise be lost. In discussing the history of the field of sociolinguistics from what I have termed Type I, II, and III variationist analyses (Mendoza-Denton, 2002), roughly corresponding to Eckert's three waves (2005), I also aim to elucidate how studies engaging the constructs of practice, performance and identity have emerged as pivotal in modern understandings of the relationship between individuals and communities.

13.2 THE SPEECH COMMUNITY

Much of the study of quantitative sociolinguistics hinges on accounting for the coherence of individual behaviour as it is nested within larger and larger sociocultural structures. We go from individuals to small units, like families or households, to progressively larger and larger units, such as communities of practice and speech communities, all the way out to major sociopolitical aggregates such as the city or nation-state, and beyond to virtual communities that involve no face-to-face interaction across members and which must in effect be imagined (Anderson, 2006 [1983]; though Anderson makes the point that both cities and nation-states are imagined communities as well).

Carpenter and Hilliard (2005) and Meyerhoff and Walker (2007) and Bayley and Langman (2004) all follow Guy (1980) in identifying the relationship of the group to the individual as one of the central issues in the study of language variation and change. Differences in production, basic physical perception and social evaluation are the hallmarks of language in use, and the fact that these dimensions exhibit variation both across individuals in a community, as well as within single individuals, remains a challenge in modelling collectivities at various levels of abstraction.

The term 'speech community' is a hallmark of the twentieth-century innovations in the study of language by anthropologists, sociologists and linguists, and was in use well before these fields had drifted into separate academic entities in the United States (for an excellent extended review of the concept of speech community, see Patrick, 2002). This section will consider the beginnings of the concept of speech community as it arose from the joint theorizing of linguists and anthropologists in the 1960s and 1970s.

Leonard Bloomfield, considered both a linguist and an anthropologist, in 1933 offered the following definition: 'A speech community is a group of

people who interact by means of speech ... differences of speech within a community are due to differences in the density of communication ... sub-groups are separated by lines of weakness in this net of oral communication' (1933: 153–4). Within this definition, two aspects must be noted. The first aspect is that the reference to the density of communication effectively prefigures – down to suggestions for social networking diagrams – the later developments in understanding communities of speakers as social networks (see Vetter, this volume). The second aspect is that such a definition sidesteps the sometimes politically- and historically-motivated, more general notions of 'language' and 'dialect', focusing less on the linguistic object and more on the people using it. Dell Hymes underlines this aspect of the term, going so far as to consider it a prime for analysis:

> Speech community is a necessary, primary concept in that ... it postulates the unit of description as a social, rather than a linguistic, entity. One starts with a social group and considers the entire organization of linguistic means within it, rather than start with some partial, named organization of linguistic means, called a "language" (Hymes, 1974: 47).

(See also Johnstone and Marcellino, this volume.)

In privileging social collectivities over linguistic entities, Hymes erected a sustained challenge to the emerging core of the field of linguistics that focused on the abstract faculty of language rather than language in use (Chomsky, 1965), privileging Saussurean *langue* over *parole*, and taking as its domain the architecture of grammar over speakers' actual usage (see Guy, this volume). It is in the focus on speakers' usage that Hymes found commonalities with the work of another emerging figure in linguistics, William Labov.

Variationist starting points: Labov

One of the earliest and most influential statements with regard to speech communities in what was then the nascent field of quantitative sociolinguistics was made in the work of William Labov. In his groundbreaking 1972 study of social stratification in the speech of New Yorkers, he advances a definition of the speech community: 'the speech community is defined ... by participation in a set of shared norms; these norms may be observed in overt types of evaluative behavior, and by the uniformity of abstract patterns of variation which are invariant with respect to particular levels of usage' (Labov, 1972: 120). The latter portion of this definition, the phrase 'particular levels of usage', can be understood as having a double

referent: on the one hand, it refers to levels within the speech of individuals (further explained below when we talk about styles) and, on the other hand, it refers to levels within the community as a whole: social stratification. For Labov, social stratification means that: 'the normal workings of society have produced systematic differences between certain institutions or people, and that these differentiated forms have been ranked in status or prestige by general agreement' (1972: 72).

In Labov's model of the speech community, members of the community share social evaluation by means of ranking performances relative to each other, despite the fact that they do not all produce the whole spectrum of styles. In Labov's framework, production differences are expected precisely because of the stratification of the population (not everyone has access to the same language resources), but the key in this framework is that members of the community judge particular performances in the same way, orienting to linguistic features as producing the same status matrix. It is precisely the uniformity of their orientation that **constitutes** the speech community. Some scholars (Rickford, 1986; Williams, 1992; Bucholtz, 1999; Dodsworth, 2005) have argued that Labov puts forth a structural-functionalist, consensus-based model of language, one that stresses underlying agreement and solidarity, privileging *structure* over *agency* (for a sociological precursor to this view, see e.g. Durkheim, 1893; Parsons, 1964). Dodsworth explains:

> Labov ... notes that there is inherent individual variation which is usually too constrained to interfere with the regularity of the community pattern ... [individuals] are grouped together so that generalizations can be made, and individuals who skew the generalizations are considered aberrant. Social *types*, in other words, are considered robust' (2005: 18).

An important feature of the Labovian framework for speech communities is that it allowed for the quantitative operationalization and replication of his basic findings: by relying on sociodemographic characteristics to divide the community (the social categories in the second column), and making those demographic characteristics relatively uniform (usually based on widely-used multi-index scales of social class), Labov introduced a new way of thinking about social attributes and about the place of individuals in the social matrix. Indeed, in his study of the distribution of (r) in New York City, Labov advances the following strong hypothesis: 'If any two subgroups of New York City speakers are ranked in a scale of social stratification, then they will be ranked in the same order by their differential use of (r)'

(Labov 1972: 44). It was the testability and replicability of these initial bold hypotheses that allowed the Labovian paradigm to emerge as a contender in the newly-emergent field of sociolinguistics. This etic classificatory approach, aiming for scientific objectivity, allowed for a methodological independence from the particulars of communities and led to a focus on the internal workings of social structures, yielding such concepts as *hypercorrection* (the tendency of some groups of speakers to talk above their station, as it were, using greater percentages of features ordinarily associated with a higher social class), and the *lower middle class crossover* (a related phenomenon where the lower middle class overgeneralizes the production of the linguistic features that carry prestige, effectively overshooting the most prestigious target). Broad psychological attributions and motivations such as a group's *linguistic insecurity* (the purported reason for hypercorrection) were advanced, though it was at that level that the testability of the claims ceased. The paradigm established by these studies is what I call Type I: sociodemographic variation (Mendoza-Denton, 2002), see also Eckert's first wave (2005).

Ethnography of speaking/ethnography of communication: Gumperz and Hymes

Shortly before Labov began work on developing his framework based on the linguistic analysis of urban dialects on the East Coast of the United States, anthropologists Dell Hymes and John Gumperz, working within the discipline of anthropology at Berkeley, were contributing to the development of the ethnography of speaking approach (proposed by Hymes in a 1962 essay), a new approach within linguistic anthropology that sought to go beyond traditional grammatical descriptions of 'exotic' languages to put emphasis on the uses to which language was put. (See also chapters by Johnstone and Marcellino, and by Gordon, this volume.) Ethnography of speaking was concerned with describing **speaking** in its own right, and looked to bounded events and ritual performance as descriptive starting points. Thus, instead of focusing exclusively on the rules of grammar, or the possible grammaticality of sentences, or even on the collective agreement of social evaluations of particular features (as Labov did), ethnographers of speaking sought to discover ways of speaking through in-depth investigations within the community, starting with analyst-determined **etic** approaches, but always seeking to uncover, through ethnography, participants' **emic** categories. Discovering ways of speaking might involve finding out what counts as a refusal, which situations require a greeting, how one

marks irony or politeness, what might be the appropriate length of a pause – in short, the culturally-specific ways that speech use above the level of the sentence might be organized. This allowed ethnography of speaking to conceptualize not only a *Sprachbünd* 'language area' (German: 'language bond'), where despite having different languages an area might share language features in common (the Balkan *Sprachbünd* has for instance morpho-syntactic commonalities that obtain in languages from different families), but also to identify a *Sprechbünd* ('speech area': Neustupný, 1978), where ways of speaking could be shown to be commonly held, even though these crossed language boundaries and even families: in Hymes' example (1974: 49), Austria, Czechoslovakia, Southern Germany and Hungary might form a *Sprechbünd*, and a non-German speaking Czech might display some communicative competence, understanding the pragmatics and speech appropriateness of German hosts despite an inability to speak the language. A recently-emerging *Sprechbünd* would be the current popularity and spread of hip-hop musical and linguistic forms around the globe, where people from radically different languages participate in commonly-held ways of speaking and aesthetic practices. And yet, neither *Sprachbünde* nor *Sprechbünde* are speech communities: 'a speech community [is] defined through the concurrence of rules of grammar and rules of use' (Hymes 1974: 120). Note that in this conception, there is nothing preventing more than one language from applying within a speech community. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of the 1970s ethnography-of-speaking approach is that bilingual and multilingual aggregates could be conceptualized as speech communities (Gumperz, 1962: 16). Although having more than one language in a speech community is not completely inconsistent with the Labovian framework, in practice, the focus on phonological variable patterning has meant that the variants must indeed be quite close to each other so as to form part of a single phonology (see also Kerswill, 1994: 34–6).

Gumperz's (1958, 1968, 1972 [1962]) work in India, and his work in Norway with Jan Petter Blom (Blom and Gumperz, 1972), set the standard for talking about multilingual communities in which diglossia (India) and code-switching (Norway; though see Mæhlum, 1996) were present. In cases of diglossia, specifically in a community such as Khalapur in Northern India which was divided into stable caste/occupational groups, Gumperz found that it was not Bloomfield's frequency of interaction that was predictive of differences, but rather the nature of these interactions: he found more pressures toward uniformity and similarity in the speech of people who were in friendship groups than among people of the same

caste or of the same status (touchable/untouchable) (1958: 681). In his later work (1996), Gumperz does take the notion of social networks as building blocks for speech communities, in which 'interpretive strategies are embedded ... and passed on as shared communicative traditions' (Gumperz 1996: 362). Similarly, Hymes observes (1974: 47) that relying solely on frequency of interaction might not be enough, since it is the 'definition of situations in which, and identities through which, interaction occurs [that] is decisive'. In practice, this would mean that a quotidian service interaction with a mere acquaintance might have less of an effect on an individual's speech, despite greater frequency, than occasional contact with an important friend.

Duranti (2003), in a sweeping essay reviewing the history of linguistic anthropology, credits the Hymes/Gumperz ethnography of communication approach for putting the speech community front and centre as a unit of analysis along with speech events and genres. Today, the basic tenets of ethnography of speaking and ethnography of communication have become part of the way that modern discourse-analytic sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists carry out their work (regrettably, space constraints prevent me from fully covering developments in linguistic anthropology). However, now that these ideas have been incorporated into the basic assumptions of linguistic anthropology and some branches of ethnographically-oriented sociolinguistics, relatively few scholars still label their work ethnography of speaking/communication. Part of the reason is that anthropology itself (though not linguistics) has lost much of its taxonomic drive. In 1974, Bauman and Sherzer could write of ethnography of speaking as

> Consistent with the current views and purpose of ethnography, ... [EoS is research] directed toward the formulation of descriptive theories of speaking as a cultural system. In order to formulate such theories we need to describe the **range** of things that might enable us to comprehend the organization of speaking in social life ... (Bauman and Sherzer, 1974: 98; my emphasis).

Now firmly in a postcolonial, postmodern and post-positivist era, the aims of anthropology are no longer cultural taxonomy or cultural comparison (see *Epistemologies* in Herzfeld, 2001); rather, the focus has moved to analyses of circulation, power, ideologies, reflexivity and identities (for a linguistic anthropological example of this kind of analysis regarding the making of the nation-state as community, see Eisenlohr, 2007).

And yet the modern reflexes and contemporary consequences of the ethnography of speaking

approach are dramatic and perduring: a major contribution of this approach has been definitively liberating sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists from a narrow descriptive, syntax-and-phonology-based view of language patterns and linguistic variation, and fomenting multiple new foci such as pragmatic patterns, intonational inventories, discourse structures, conversational routines and face-to-face interaction. Imagining community as taking place beyond the constructional blocks of a segmental feature (or even the productive combination of several) has allowed the investigation of:

- political oratory patterns that travel with modernist leanings in Madagascar (Keenan, 1974; Jackson, 2006);
- the diversity of oratory, puberty rites and ways of speaking among the Kuna (Sherzer, 1983);
- language socialization and its imagining of kinship structure in Papua New Guinea (Schieffelin, 1984).

Work on the ethnography of communication also laid the groundwork for the consideration of non-linguistic material (such as silences and their symbolism (Bauman, 1983)), and of the ways that discourse and other semiotic modes such as gesture and intonation work in concert to produce specific speech events (Mendoza-Denton and Jannedy, forthcoming).

Cross-cultural applications of concepts of the speech community

The generality of the initial challenge of both the Labovian and the Hymes/Gumperz notions of speech communities lent itself to cross-cultural exploration: Could this basic unit of analysis hold up cross-linguistically? As speech communities have continued to be theorized, there has emerged a general notion that 'agreement on the social meaning of various linguistic parameters' (Kerswill, 1994: 24) is important, and yet there is still no consensus on how to treat individual performances in the distribution of community norms. The Labovian speech community is nowadays defined and tested by the agreement on social meaning implicit in the patterned production of variables that is the outcome of research designs such as that outlined above.

We are still left with a thorny question originally raised by Bickerton (1971): Is it the case that what looks like community variation is the disparate idiolects of individuals, lumped together by the analysts? Gumperz (1982: 24) remarks on the flip side of this question: that patterns that seem 'irregular at the level of the individual nonetheless

show systematic regularities at the level of social facts'.

Meyerhoff and Walker (2007) explicitly address some of these issues by testing different models of creole grammars in their study of the Caribbean community of Bequia, a small creole-speaking island in St. Vincent and the Grenadines that exhibits patterns of circular migration to cities in the United Kingdom and Canada. Meyerhoff and Walker conclude that, despite sometimes long absences, the urban sojourners from Bequia largely share the grammatical constraints of their specific villages of origin within the island, patterns which can be distinguished by the ordering of insertion/deletion of the copula *be*. They propose that the degree of embeddedness in strong social networks (for more on social networks, see Vetter, this volume) both before and during the sojourn will affect an individual sojourner's retention of features and constraint rankings in their specific, localized variety of Caribbean English. This hypothesis remains a challenge in quantitative studies of migrants.

Santa Ana and Parodi (1998) sought to address the evaluation aspect of the quantitative speech communities framework, and proposed some modifications to Labov's original concept, in particular questioning the notion of agreement on evaluation of forms across the speech community. They sampled a rural Mexican population in El Bajío, Michoacán, where they were unable to argue for a single **unified** speech community in the classical sense, but rather found that some community members 'demonstrated no awareness of any of the social evaluation patterns of language variation' (1998: 26). They hypothesized that it was possible for single individuals to be part of such tight-knit social networks that they would be relatively unaware of the stigma of their own speech forms, even when surrounded by community members who perceived the stigma. Santa Ana and Parodi follow Kerswill's (1994) idea of nestedness of speech communities (and propose four nested levels), focusing on defining speech communities only in reference to the linguistic variable, setting aside all considerations of the social function of language (1998: 33). This particular criterion turns out to be a major difference in the definition of the role that individuals play in linguistic communities. Is it the case that the use of linguistic variables and the presence of associated evaluative behaviours (following Labov) are the primary criteria for delimiting speech communities? As was discussed above, scholars working from an ethnographically- or historically-oriented perspective might disagree: social functions of language such as participation in speech genres, cross-cutting discourse styles, self-identification and feelings of ethnolinguistic identity would certainly be some of the criteria for community membership according to scholars conducting ethnographic work (Spitulnik, 1997; Lo, 1999; Ahlers, 2006; Hill, 2006; Levon, 2007). On the other hand, some quantitative linguists would agree with Santa Ana and Parodi, not only Guy (1980), who argued that the relationship between the group and the individual would reveal that, given enough data, individuals would mirror the rank ordering and constraints of their communities; in addition, recent developments in comparative sociolinguistics have advocated both historical and contemporary grouping and differentiation of speech communities precisely on the basis of the ranking and ordering of variable constraints (Poplack and Tagliamonte, 1991; Poplack 2001; Horvath and Horvath, 2003; for a review of method see Tagliamonte, 2002). Still other scholars, especially in historically-oriented creole studies, follow a mixed method of triangulating variable constraint analysis with historical events that refer to the social life of language in the community (Rickford, 1999). Carpenter (2005) goes so far as to divide the age groups of her speakers according to major historical events in the community that distinguished various phases of racism and contact for African-Americans. Here the epistemological status of emic vs etic classifications begins to emerge; we will return to this point in the section on communities of practice.

Kerswill (1994) tests the Labovian model of speech communities further, this time challenging the assumption that members of a speech community must share a uniform structural [language] base (Labov, 1989: 2), a criterion that would exclude persons who are not originally from the community, community members in contact with other varieties, as well as communities undergoing language shift (Romaine, 1992; Dorian, 1994; Ahlers, 2006). In his study of rural Stril migrants to the city of Bergen, Norway, Kerswill makes the argument that migrants, despite their variable realizations in the production of Bergen variables, nevertheless interpret the production of Bergen features relative to their own Strilelandet phonology, and in fact construct some of their own prestige norms. For example, the lowering of schwa, ordinarily a non-standard feature in native Bergen production, is reinterpreted by Stril migrants as a prestige feature (they use more of it in formal contexts), perhaps giving a sense of sounding more like a true Bergener (Kerswill, 1994: 144–5). Not only is this shift in production creating a sort of micro-speech community, since the Stril migrants all agree on the direction of this style-shifting, but this production norm differentiates Stril migrants from Bergeners as well as from non-migrated Strils.

Crucially, however, this interpretation would be unavailable if one studied migrated Strils separately from Bergeners: Kerswill argues for the necessity of interpreting variation in the whole community rather than restricted parts of it. We might understand these studies as a means of discovering micro-norms and emergent innovations which, if understood through the close analysis of individual speech, can shed light on the processes of *actuation* of linguistic change (Weinreich, Labov and Herzog, 1968).

13.3 THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUALS

The close, contextually-rich analysis of individuals' speech advocated by Kerswill (1994) has been a growing part of quantitative sociolinguistics (though seeded from the beginning in Labov's earliest work), with the growth attributed by some (Johnstone, 1996; Coupland, 2001; Dodsworth, 2005) to a shift from more structure-based to more agency-based theories of language, and roughly from macro-oriented to micro-oriented approaches (Mendoza-Denton, 2002). An ethnographic turn within quantitative sociolinguistics (Bayley, 2002) as well as the *rapprochement* between sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology (Duranti, 2003) have contributed to this shift as well. One of the main features of the trend toward studying individuals has been the re-theorization of Labov's original concept of style.

Theorizing style

From the perspective of sociolinguistics, linguistic style has been largely understood in a statistical-correlational frame, and variously viewed as a class-stratified byproduct of formality and attention paid to speech (Labov, 1972) – as a phenomenon where speakers actively design their speech for a specific audience (Coupland, 1980; Bell, 1994), or as the codified reflex of repetition and habituation. A more recent line of work in this area (Eckert, 2000; Mendoza-Denton, 2002; Half Moon Bay Collective, 2007; Podesva, 2008) has sought to expand sociolinguistic understanding by viewing style as a jointly-accomplished performance between interlocutors, and by taking its study beyond social stratification to look at communities of practice and beyond single linguistic units to include discourse and interaction-level processes.

In theorizing style beyond the dualisms of formality and informality, Coupland (1980) and Bell (1984) both investigate the ways in which individuals (a travel agent and a newsreader,

respectively) deploy the linguistic resources available to them to accommodate and reflect their audience's expectations. Bell (1984) called it audience design, and took us beyond the construct of attention paid to speech, which had been used by Labov (1972) to explain the difference between formal and informal styles within a single speaker (the more attention paid to speech, the more formal the style), to new territory where one could imagine that individual speakers were actively planning and calibrating how they were going to sound to different interlocutors, whether they were addressees, auditors or overhearers. Bell assumed that 'persons respond mainly to other persons, that speakers take the most account of their hearers in designing their talk' (Bell, 1984: 159). After this point, the study of individuals and their stylistic dimensions became a productive new area that allowed varying combinations of Coupland's social-psychological approach of accommodation with the in-depth case study methods that were more reminiscent of anthropology than the sociologically-oriented random-sample urban studies that had been dominant through the 1970s and early 1980s. Johnstone (1996) effectively spearheads the call for more attention to individuals in language, while Rickford and McNair-Knox (1994) provided further confirmation of Coupland and Bell's claims by showing that a single speaker, whom they nicknamed Foxy Boston, would style-shift not only in response to different addressees, but also style-shift across different topics in an interview. Mendoza-Denton, Hay and Jannedy (2003) show that the talk show host Oprah Winfrey similarly style-shifts according to the ethnicity of referees (persons she is referring to) in her deployment of variably monophthongized /ay/, an African-American English variable.

Radical changes in how we think about individuals and communities become necessary if we are to incorporate the findings of new studies of style. Here, individuals command more than just formal and informal styles, and there is no community-wide agreement on a hierarchy of which styles are more prestigious, since even informal styles are thought to be performed and involve attention paid to speech (Schilling-Estes, 1998, 2002). A crucial point in the new studies of style is that individuals may belong to more than one subcommunity, and in many cases the subcommunities themselves will be defined in terms of networks or practices and will merge, overlap or otherwise coalesce to form even larger communities. Podesva (2008) follows Eckert (2003) and Irvine (2001) in advancing the claim that styles take meaning in relation to one another. In his study of the stylistic resources of a gay San Francisco doctor named Heath, Podesva shows

how the phonetic features of stop release and falsetto differ in distribution and combine with other features to create at least two distinct styles, or personae, for Heath: *caring doctor*, while he is interacting with his patients; and *gay diva*, when he is at a barbecue with friends (2008: 4–5). Heath is thus part of two subcommunities (let's call them communities of practice): San Francisco medical professionals and San Francisco middle-class gay men. These two subcommunities would be part of the larger San Francisco Bay Area community. Hence we find that the relationships between styles, individuals and communities described by the Labovian framework are quite different from the relationships envisioned in current studies of individual styles. These differences are most apparent for the researchers known as the third wave of variation theory (Eckert, 2005), often working in the framework of communities of practice.

13.4 COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

In addition to speech communities and social networks, the concept of communities of practice (CofP) is one of the main analytic tools used to understand communities in sociolinguistics. Pioneered by Lave and Wenger (1991), with strong roots in the practice theory of Bourdieu (1978), the Cofp framework has been elaborated in Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) and Wenger (1998) (for a review see Meyerhoff, 2001). Communities of practice can be defined via three criteria (Wenger, 1998: 73–83): (a) mutual engagement, (b) a joint enterprise and (c) a shared repertoire. Broadly speaking, CofPs are composed of individuals who routinely interact in a joint activity (a practice that structures their engagement), and it is through the routine and recurrent engagement in these practices that they develop a shared repertoire, linguistic and non-linguistic. A CofP typically describes a small, locally-relevant group such as a family, or a card-playing group, or a corporate subculture. The classic examples are the apprentice tailors studied by Lave and Wenger and the high school students studied by Eckert who labelled themselves jocks and burnouts, and had correspondingly different behaviour toward school norms and vowels to match.

Members of a CofP can name and recognize each other as being engaged in the practice, and crucially this **emic** (member-categorizing) perspective is also shared with social network theorists, and contrasts with the **etic** (researcher-categorizing) perspective adopted in most other quantitative sociolinguistic work. Both Eckert (2000) and Wagner (2008), for instance, created elaborate social network diagrams, from participant observation and by interviewing students at high schools in Detroit and Philadelphia, respectively. It would be fair to say that, within sociolinguistics, one of the hallmarks of CofP work is an emphasis on ethnographic methods, often resulting in the combination of participant-observation methodology with quantitative linguistic work that is characteristic of variation's third wave.

Although some scholars (Bucholtz, 1999) reject speech communities as a language-based unit of analysis which is incapable of more broadly addressing social theory, in fact CofPs encompass a wider range of phenomena (including non-linguistic phenomena) than speech communities and can thus make different predictions. This creates an interesting tension that I will illustrate with reference to my own work.

The disjunct between what might be found in a CofP analysis vs a speech community framework is especially striking. At the outset I will state that I do not believe that one or other framework is 'right', or that one provides consistently better results than the other. Most of the time, there is no way to evaluate the different predictions that speech communities vs social network analyses vs CofPs might make because researchers ordinarily collect their data within a single set of assumptions. I myself have collected the data I present below ethnographically and within the CofP framework (for reasons explained in Mendoza-Denton (2008) where a full quantitative account is presented), but here I will stress some of the ethnography-language data mismatches for expository purposes.

For my analysis of two communities of practice, the Norteña and Sureña female gang members of Sor Juana High School in Northern California, I conducted in-depth ethnography over the course of more than two years on the high school campus and in the community. Through participant observation and interviews, I was able to identify CofPs corresponding to different groups of young Latinos in the high school; for the linguistic measurements I focused primarily on the girls. The most vigorously marked and defended oppositions were between the core Norteña and the core Sureña gang members, each identifying with different aspects of the Mexican-American migration experience. The Sureñas claimed a recent-immigrant, Mexico-oriented cultural identity, whereas the Norteñas saw themselves as being American minorities, but wholly American. These distinctions permeated every aspect of their recorded discourse and observable behaviour. Semiotically opposed, they claimed not only separateness but outright hostility. Norteñas and Sureñas wore colour-coded clothing (red and blue, respectively), listened to different

symbolic music, had differing language ideologies and got into fights with each other. But were they really so different? Although real violence was at stake in their claims, and they protested at the suggestion of being compared to each other, the purely linguistic data on tensing and raising of /I/ > [i] told a different story: core Norteña and Sureña girls had very similar linguistic behaviour, both with high rates of /I/ raising, and the groups that exhibited differences from them were girls who did not share the gang networks, the Latina Jocks and some girls who called themselves the Disco Girls and who were participating in African-American oriented hip-hop culture. The Latina Jocks and the Disco Girls, who named each other in friendship networks, would not have shown up as different in a classic Labovian social-index scale, even if we took their parents' education and social-class background into account: too many of the Latina Jocks' parents had migratory histories indistinguishable from those of the Sureñas, earning the same amount of money and living in the same neighbourhoods (though as Kerswill (1994) points out, perhaps looking into parental social-class background – and racialized status in Mexico, I would add – prior to migration might yield some different results). The point here is that the 'social facts' gathered here were complicated by the 'sociolinguistic facts'. As I mentioned before, one is not better or worse, and with triangulation a fuller picture has emerged. It is entirely possible that the variable measured was simply not very sensitive to the Norteña/Sureña identity dimension, and that other variables still lurk in the data that would show this opposition more robustly (see an especially relevant discussion by Bayley, 2002). In any case, the CofP analytic framework uncovered rich patterning that would have been ignored in a traditional speech communities analysis. For Labov, the problem of actuation is

> ... not a search for individuals, but rather for social locations and social types. The leaders of linguistic change are not individual inventors of a certain form, but rather those who, by reason of their social histories and patterns of behavior, will advance the ongoing change most strongly (Labov, 2001: 34).

In focusing on the positioning of individuals with respect to broad sweeping changes (are they ahead of or behind the curve?), this perspective misses the importance of clustering in the construction of styles and personae.

A feature of Cofp work is that, because it can concentrate on the styles that are built up around specific features, it allows for the historical investigation of styles, something that is not currently possible in the speech communities framework.

Certainly speech-community modelling is the bedrock of the historical investigation of language change, but recognizing overtly-named, and salient, styles or personae has allowed a completely new kind of inquiry. Zhang (2005) looks historically to find that speakers draw on preexisting resources to establish the social meaning of linguistic variation, and that sociolinguistic meaning-making is a cumulative endeavour. She traces Beijing rhotacization back to Qing-dynasty literature in the construction of a specific social type, the Beijing smooth operator, who is a male, working-class, Beijing vernacular speaker with a high degree of rhotacization. Looking historically at styles and personae is a novel development within third-wave variationist sociolinguistics, one that can find productive synergy with historical linguistics and the study of language change.

13.5 PERFORMANCES: DO WE ALWAYS NEED TO PICK A VARIABLE?

One further productive point of tension in the literature arises from the classic definition of a variable, 'a construct that unites a class of fluctuating variants within a language set' (Wolfram, 1991: 23). In this conceptualization, a variable reflects a decision point at which a speaker chooses between alternative ways of saying the same thing. But what if, in performance, individuals did not always need to pick a variable? What if the variants did not have to fluctuate, but could be used simultaneously? Quantitative sociolinguistics does not have a way of modelling this kind of situation, but it is worthwhile to draw attention to the phenomenon Woolard terms *bivalency*, 'the use by a bilingual of words or segments that could "belong" equally, descriptively and even prescriptively, to both codes' (Woolard, 1999: 7). This particular strategy in bilingualism calls attention to forms that resolutely belong to both of the source languages. Woolard argues that this is an agentive, and underanalysed, strategy on the part of bilingual speakers. Woolard provides an example from a Catalan comedian whose comedy lies precisely in not resolving for the audience whether he is speaking Castilian or Catalan, creating ideological uncertainty in a sociolinguistic situation in which language choice is fraught with tension. A somewhat different example comes from Kerswill (1994: 141–2) who, in his study of rural–urban migration in Norway, identified novel pronunciations by Stril migrants of Bergen words with mid-front vowels. Thus, the word for 'freedom', /friːheit/ in Stril dialects and /friːheːt/ in Bergen, becomes /friːheːt/ in the speech of Stril migrants to Bergen, despite the existence of /eː/ in

Stril dialects. The use of /ɛ:/ can be interpreted as a strategy of neutrality, this vowel being much more frequent in Stril than /e:/ – the inverse being the case in Bergen. Together with the assignment of a new sociolinguistic function to the Bergen lowering of schwa, this 'mixed' strategy adds evidence to the argument of the creation of a new micro-community that takes elements from both its source and target linguistic varieties.

Some researchers have understood these syncretic elements as 'substratal interference', but I follow Woolard in arguing for a deeper analysis that looks at the interactional context of bivalent utterances to understand what speakers are actively constructing as they creatively and aesthetically combine linguistic elements (see also Johnstone, 1996; Schilling-Estes, 1998).

Not only do the variants not need to fluctuate but also we find that a specific variable usage could have a different social indexicality depending on the context and the time course of the event. Agha (1994), in a discussion of honorification and T/V forms, observes

... no two tokens of T or V can necessarily be interpreted as alike. Consequently, even if an individual consistently uses T forms over an entire stretch of discourse, different tokens of T may reflect distinct configurations of situational variables at different points in the same discourse. Silverstein suggests that the data of honorific usage does not permit any kind of 'social semantic' calculus at all. Rather, the norms of usage in some particular community indexically associate linguistic categories with multiple, alternative configurations of contextual factors that become apparent only in the T or V usage responding to the one at issue, confirming, as it were, or disconfirming its invoked social dimensions 'in play' (Agha, 1994: 280).

Conceiving of styles in performance – creative, agentive, and unfolding through time, legible to addressees and still with enough room for innovation – is a hallmark of modern sociolinguistics' view of how individuals use and shape language.

13.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has traced some of the current issues, tensions and controversies in sociolinguistics regarding the constitution of communities and the relationship of individuals to communities. We have covered the variationist beginnings of the notion of speech communities, as well as the understanding of the term in the tradition of ethnography of speaking. Putting that notion to the test, we found that various scholars working with

non-homogeneous speech communities found it necessary to expand the definition, calling for attention to the individuals that make up the communities. Retheorizing style in variation theory has been a consequence of the attempt to understand how individual repertoires fit into larger social patterns, and these questions have also given rise to new frameworks such as the community of practice concept. We have noted the dearth of work that can compare predictions and findings made under the speech communities or social networks or community of practice approaches. New understandings of style and individual variation allow for the ambiguity and bivalency of some linguistic variables, and place an emphasis on clustering, historicity and the unfolding of stylistic aggregates either through time or as the accretion of stylistic moves into personae. Future directions include further exploration of the historical dimensions of styles and personae, placing those histories side by side with accounts of language variation and change.

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