

# 24

## Sociolinguistic Approaches to Dialectal, Sociolectal, and Idiolectal Variation in the Hispanophone World

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### 24.1 Introduction

All of us are many things at once. In a single person we may encounter a mother, a daughter, a lawyer, an African American, a Christian, a liberal, a Latina, and a New Yorker. In another individual, we may find a fisherman, a grandfather, a retiree, an atheist, a Cuban, a painter, etc. The goal of this chapter is to highlight the ways in which the many dimensions of individual human identity have served to illuminate language use within the Hispanophone world. To consider language this way, that is, to focus on the link between characteristics of people and patterns of linguistic behavior, is to take a *sociolinguistic* perspective. From this perspective two attributes of language use are of central importance; namely, its inherent variability and its social nature. The first of these refers to the fact that when people use language, whether through speech, through writing, or some other medium, they do so in ways that vary. For instance, to inquire about the geographic origin of a new acquaintance, one person may ask *¿De dónde eres?* ‘Where are you from?’ while another may say *¿De dónde sos vos?* ‘Where are you from?’ Furthermore, this second individual may, in another context with a different interlocutor, ask *¿y usted, de dónde es?* ‘and you, where are you from?’ This kind of variation – as well as that found at other levels of linguistic structure – is not only pervasive in the use of language, it is also socially constrained. As suggested by this simple example, speakers may, depending on the context in which they find themselves, request similar information in different ways. In other words, the

choice to use a particular linguistic form or forms is partially influenced by a person's knowledge of the social signaling potential that such forms have when embedded in a specific interactional context.

These interconnected attributes of language use, its systematic variability and intrinsic sociality, are hallmarks of linguistic interaction not only in Spanish-speaking communities, but wherever language and society intersect. Several fields of study take a central theoretical interest in understanding this intersection, including the sociology of language (Fishman 1971; Bernstein 2003), linguistic anthropology (Ochs 1992; Eckert 2000; Bucholtz and Hall 2004), and variationist sociolinguistics (Labov 1963, 1966, and 2001, **amongst** others). While scholars in these fields ask different research questions and use different methods to answer them, they are unified by their view of language as a multifaceted instrument for communication, one that has the capacity to transmit social, as well as linguistic, meanings and messages. That is, a sociolinguistic perspective sees language as both a means of information exchange and a medium through which speakers relate themselves to others in the world around them. The present chapter adopts this perspective and aims to provide a general sociolinguistic account of language use in the Hispanophone world, principally by focusing on the relationship between dimensions of social organization and patterns of linguistic variation.

A first step towards doing so is to address the nature of the relationship between familiar identity categories and linguistic behavior. The frequency with which we encounter many such categories – age, sex, occupation, nationality, social class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, place of residence, native speaker, etc. – can create the impression that they are natural and given by the world itself. This, in turn, can lead to the view that the linguistic behavior of particular persons is the product of the various identity category values that describe them at a certain point in their lives. However, there are several problems with this perspective. The first is that it runs the risk of accepting named identity categories without acknowledging their abstract, socially constructed, and frequently contested nature. Even a personal attribute as seemingly natural and objective as age is, in fact, subject to wide-ranging cultural variation in interpretation. For instance, in her investigation of age as a sociolinguistic variable, Eckert 1997 (citing Fortes 1984) remarks that

In industrial society chronological age, measured as an accumulation of years since birth, serves as an official measure of the individual's place in the life course and in society, by reference to a societal dating system . . . This can be reversed in societies that do not traditionally use chronological age. Fortes (1984:110), for example, observed the Ashanti assigning a chronological age of 16 to females at the time of their nubility ceremonies, even though their actual birth dates were unknown. (Eckert 1997:156)

Similar issues arise with respect to more obviously socially constructed identity categories such as gender, ethnicity, nationality, and class. With respect to the last of these, for instance, Guy (1988) recounts various debates on the definition of social class, not only in linguistics, but also within sociology, political science, and history. He notes that conceptions of class that are common in Western industrialized societies – which are often based upon attributes of individual experience such as income, occupation, education level, and place of residence – make little sense in other parts of the world. For example, citing Rickford's (1986) research in Guyana, Guy (1988:47) reports that

if applied unaltered [such a conception of class] would probably put everyone together in one of the lowest categories. But this does not mean that local class distinctions do not exist. On the contrary, Rickford demonstrates that people in Canewalk [Guyana] have a lively awareness of class distinctions.

The locally defined, socially constructed, and contested nature of this and other identity categories is a topic of considerable attention within linguistic inquiry. This research includes, but is far from limited to, discussions of the relationship between language and nationality (Gal and Irvine 1995; del Valle 2013), gender (Cameron 1992; Holmes and Meyerhoff 2003), race (Chun 2001; Bucholtz 2011), and sexual orientation (Gaudio 2001; Zimman 2013).

Another problem with what might be described as a deterministic perspective on sociolinguistic variation – that is, the view that linguistic behavior is merely the probabilistically conditioned output of a particular combination of identity category values – is that it has the relationship between language and identity in the wrong order. It is not our identities that determine the way we use language. Rather, it is partly through linguistic behavior that we make our identities. That is, identity *emerges* through linguistically mediated interaction; it is neither given, granted, nor static, but is instead constructed, negotiated, and reproduced dynamically. In other words, identity is not the source but rather a product of linguistic practice (Bucholtz and Hall 2010:19). To acknowledge this is to see language users as active participants in the ongoing construction of their identities and to see language as a tool over which they have a substantial degree of individual agency.

It may seem that the preceding considerations conflict with the stated aim of the present chapter, i.e. surveying patterns of sociolinguistic variation in the Spanish-speaking world. Indeed, might not the socially constructed nature of named identity categories invalidate or at least seriously limit them as tools for linguistic inquiry? Will applying them to a certain person or group of people as way of framing their linguistic behavior amount to putting the cart before the horse, misunderstanding the dynamic and emergent nature of identity as well as the agency of language

users? The answer to these questions is “No.” Recognizing identity categories as social constructions does not deny them of meaning or dismiss their capacity to shape human behavior. Rather, it properly locates the source of their meaning and influence, which is within human ideologies that impose (sometimes rather arbitrary) divisions between people in societies and inform attitudes and expectations about how their members should behave. Furthermore, when we describe someone in terms of familiar identity categories – e.g. *a young African American Latina* or *a retired Cuban fisherman* – we are not requiring that they behave in any particular way. To the extent that such descriptions allow patterns of linguistic behavior to emerge, they do so as the result of linguistic choices made by individual language users, not from a lock-step relationship between identity category values and linguistic output. Indeed, as will be seen in some of the research literature reviewed below, within many groups there are often individuals who diverge from or represent exceptions to general patterns – a fact that is sometimes indicative of incipient language change in a community (Labov 2001).

With these considerations in mind, let us take, as an organizing principle, the following observation of Bucholtz and Hall (2010:21): “Identities encompass (a) macro-level demographic categories; (b) local, ethnographically specific cultural positions; and (c) temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles.” Bucholtz and Hall refer to this as the *Positionality Principle*, and it suggests that the multifaceted nature of individual identity emerges, and therefore can be profitably explored, across numerous levels of social organization and positions within linguistic interaction, i.e. from the broadly demographic identity category to the in-the-moment context of spontaneous conversation. Since the goal of this chapter is to provide an overview of sociolinguistic variation in the Spanish-speaking world, the focus will be on large-scale demographic categories and ethnographically specific cultural positions. These categories and positions will serve as windows into the three primary ways in which variation in the use of Spanish has been investigated. These are dialectal, sociolectal, and idiolectal approaches to variation, respectively.

The first of these, *dialectal variation*, refers to patterns of language use delimited in terms of physical space. Research on dialectal variation typically utilizes the terminology and categories of geography as well as those of international and municipal politics to circumscribe groups of speakers. Such terms and categories, like the physical spaces they are meant to delimit, vary in size, ranging from the global to the hyper-local in scope. For example, the same group of individuals may be described as Latin Americans, Caribbeans, Colombians, residents of Cartagena, and/or occupants of a specific apartment building within the colonial zone of that particular city. Another group might be variously described as Europeans, Iberians, Spaniards, Madrileños, and/or residents of a given block in that city’s La Latina neighborhood. *Sociolectal variation*, by comparison, refers to

patterns of linguistic behavior that emerge along social vectors between and within specific locales, where groups are frequently delimited in terms of census-style categories such as age, sex, class, rurality–urbanity, and ethnicity as well as in terms of attitudinal, political, ideological, or lifestyle categories, e.g. liberal, conservative, feminist, Catholic, vegetarian, socialist, jock, nerd, etc. Finally, variation at the *idiolectal level* refers to differences in linguistic behavior both between and within particular individuals: Two speakers may overlap or differ in their use of given linguistic form or feature, and the linguistic behavior of any single individual will vary across social and interactional contexts. These three approaches to sociolinguistic variation are, of course, necessarily interconnected, as they share a common source: individual speakers, who construct and reproduce their multidimensional identities through linguistic practice. So, while dialectal, sociolectal, and idiolectal variation will first be outlined in separate sections below, the chapter culminates with a series of case studies that highlight their intersection.

## 24.2 Dialectal Variation

Physical space represents an important dimension of variation for all groups of language users, as physical proximity has, at least for the vast majority of human history, been a prerequisite for linguistic interaction. Even in the digital age, the people we talk to the most and talk the most like are those with whom we share physical space. This was also the case during the five centuries that encompass the geographic expansion of Spanish. During this period, what were once the linguistic practices of a relatively small group of people living in the central northern part of a peninsula in western Europe spread to a community of language users that today spans the globe. This expansion occurred through face-to-face interaction, as Castilians first encountered other Iberians, and then, over the long course of the rise and fall of the Spanish empire, as they interacted with people in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. As the linguistic practices of Castilians spread, they changed, and these changes are presently reflected in geographically constrained patterns of variation within the Hispanophone world. For instance, one is likely to eat a *palta* ‘avocado’ in the Andes, but an *aguacate* ‘avocado’ in Mexico. Gratitude is likely to be expressed with *gra[θ]ia[s]* ‘thanks’ in Madrid but with *gra[s]ia[h/Ø]* in Puerto Rico. In Buenos Aires, a speaker will refer to herself with [ʒo] or [ʃo], but in the Caribbean, “I” is [jo] or [dʒo]. If the speakers around you are using *vosotros* to address groups of familiars, you are assuredly not in Latin America. And if someone remarks that *Tengo que pagar mis taxes* ‘I have to pay my taxes,’ it is a good bet that he or she has lived in the United States.

The sources of such dialectal variation, which is lexically, phonologically, and morphosyntactically ubiquitous, are numerous. A primary cause

is to be found in the interaction between language change and the physical proximity of speakers. A linguistic innovation that arises within one group of speakers is likelier to spread to another that is nearby than to one that is far away (Mufwene 2008). Furthermore, even among groups that are not separated by sheer mileage, linguistic interaction (and therefore the transmission of linguistic innovations) may be impeded by natural barriers, e.g. rivers, jungles, mountain ranges, etc. The impediment to interaction that such physical obstacles represent can and was overcome as the Spanish empire expanded, but contact between the European seat of power and colonial settlements was uneven, geographically speaking (Lipski 2014; Mufwene 2014).

Such considerations play a central role in accounting for the present-day distribution of a number of linguistic features, particularly those that represent innovations that occurred within Spain itself over the course of colonial development. For instance, consider *voseo*, which was alluded to in Section 24.1: In the 16th century, the use of *vos* as a second-person singular pronoun began to fade in the Iberian peninsula (for a discussion of factors that contributed to this change see Kany 1969 and Benavides 2003). This trend made its way across the Atlantic in a geographically variable fashion, such that the Peninsular shift away from *voseo* towards *tuteo* was directly transmitted to areas that were administrative, economic, and cultural centers of colonial activity, e.g. the viceroalties that were established in Mexico, Peru, and the Caribbean. By contrast, in areas that were both physically distant from and characterized by more infrequent contact with new arrivals from Europe, Iberian shifts in pronominal behavior failed to take root, e.g. in central America, parts of Colombia, and the River Plate region of South America.

A related factor that has had a relatively more recent impact on dialectal variation in the Hispanophone world is the emergence of modern urban centers in the Americas (for discussion of dialectal diversification outside of the Americas, see Quilis 1992; Sayahi 2004, Clements 2009; and Lipski 2012). As American cities came into being, their increasing populations helped to establish and reinforce local linguistic norms and also mute the influence of linguistic innovation in Spain:

Once cities reached a critical mass of several tens of thousands (which usually occurred during the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century), these speech communities effectively resisted full incorporation of language changes that occurred in Spain and arrived with new settlers.

(Lipski 2014: 44)

That is, the large populations and increased autonomy achieved in urban centers of Hispanic America shifted the sociolinguistic center of gravity, diminishing the impact of European linguistic norms and amplifying the significance of those that were locally emergent.

Yet another factor that shaped the historical emergence of dialectal variation in the Hispanophone world is what modern linguistics refers to as *language contact* (Weinreich 1953; Thomason and Kaufman 1988; Silva-Corvalán 1994; Winford 2005; Poplack and Levey 2010; Mufwene 2014; amongst others). The many different European, Amerindian, African, and Asian peoples that Castilians encountered had their own well-established linguistic traditions. Because the settlements of such groups – the Taino, Inca, Yoruba, Catalan, Aymara, Kimbundu, Chiquitano, etc. – were themselves variably distributed across areas of Spanish imperial expansion, the influence of their respective linguistic practices within the Hispanophone world is geographically constrained. For instance, a range of features that have been interpreted as arising from contact with speakers of Quechua (e.g. the presence of third-person possessive markers accompanying nouns in genitive phrases: *su casa de Juan* ‘Juan’s his house,’ the use of diminutive affixes to express modesty and deference *ellita* ‘she,’ etc.) is concentrated in the Andean region of South America (see Escobar 2012 for a broad survey of the linguistic outcomes of contact between Iberians and Amerindians). Another phenomenon that has been analyzed as a potential outcome of language contact is coda consonant lenition (e.g. weakening and deletion of coda /s, n, l, d, r/). High rates of coda consonant lenition are routinely observed in Caribbean and coastal communities of Hispanic America as well as in Lusophone America, a distribution that Guy (2014:445) attributes to contact with Africans:

Brazil and the Hispanic Caribbean were two of the major destinations of the Atlantic slave trade, but few Africans were ever taken to the highland regions of South America or Mesoamerica. Typologically, this account is also well-motivated: the great majority of Africans taken to the Americas spoke West African languages which favored open, CV syllable structures, and in many cases, prohibited coda consonants entirely.

An additional, and more recent, instance of contact-induced dialectal variation can be found in Argentina, which was a major destination of European, and especially Italian, immigrants from the mid-1800s until the onset of World War II. Various intonational, lexical, and morphophonological features typical in the speech of some Argentines have been attributed, in part, to an Italian substrate (e.g. a circumflex intonational contour; deletion rather than aspiration of coda /s/ in first-person plural verb morphology such that *-amos* is produced as [amo] in parallel with the Italian cognate *-iamo*, Lipski 1994:167).

Intertwined with the question of causation – that is, determining what factors gave rise to and continue to shape geographically constrained differences in the linguistic behavior of Spanish speakers – is the more descriptive (and onerous) task of delimiting the boundaries of dialectal variation. This topic represents a major site of inquiry within Hispanic linguistics (Henríquez Ureña 1921, 1930, 1931; Navarro Tomás 1942; Rona 1964; Zamora Vicente 1970; Resnick 1980; Canfield 1981; Zamora Munné

and Guitart 1982, Alba 1992; Lipski 1994; Penny 2000; among others). Of central interest in this literature is the linguistic relationship between Spain and its colonial territories (particularly those in the Americas), as well as the linguistic zonification of these territories. Among the earliest proposals for the dialectal zones of Latin America is that of Henríquez Ureña, whose three works titled *Observaciones sobre el español de América* (1921, 1930, 1931) emphasize both the heterogeneity of linguistic behavior in Spanish America and the limitation inherent to the enterprise of dialectal zonification; namely, that any zone will be further divisible into yet smaller zones:

Provisionally I would distinguish in Spanish-speaking America five main zones: first, the zone that includes the bilingual regions of southern and southwestern United States, Mexico and the central American republics; second, the three Spanish Antilles (Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, the old Spanish part of Santo Domingo), the coast and plains of Venezuela and probably the northern region of Colombia; third, the Andean region of Venezuela, the interior and western coast of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, the larger part of Bolivia and perhaps northern Chile; fourth, the larger part of Chile; fifth, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and perhaps part of southeastern Bolivia . . . Inside of each zone, there are then subdivisions. (1921: 360; my translation)

In the decades following this proposal, several scholars took seriously Henríquez Ureña's remark about subdivision, substantially expanding upon his five dialectal zones. Rona (1964), for instance, subdivided Henríquez Ureña's five-zoned system – (i) north/central American, (ii) Caribbean, (iii) Andean, (iv) Chilean, and (v) River Plate zones – and expanded it into a system of 16 dialectal regions. Three features served as the linguistic basis for these zones: *zh-/sheísmo*, *yeísmo*, and *voseo*. These refer, respectively, to (i) the production of the initial sound of words like *yo* and *llamar* as a post-alveolar fricative, (ii) the merger of the palatal approximant /j/ and the palatal lateral approximant /ç/, through which words like *haya* 'she/he/it has (auxiliary).<sub>SBJV</sub>' and *halla* 'she/he/it finds' become homophonous, and (iii) the use of the second-person singular pronoun *vos*. For instance, in Rona's scheme, speakers in the *zona ultraserrana del Uruguay* are mirror images of those in the *zona andina de Colombia*, in that the former are *yeístas* and *zheístas* but not *voseantes* while the latter maintain a contrast between *calló* 'she/he/it silenced' and *cayó* 'she/he/it fell,' say [jo] rather than [ʒo], and routinely use *vos*. Resnick (1980) proposed an even more granular system based on eight binarily variable phonological features, which has the potential to delimit 256 distinct dialectal zones. The features included: (i) *yeísmo*; (ii) the neutralization of liquids, e.g. *mal* 'badly/poorly' and *mar* 'sea' are homophonous; (iii) the weakening of /s/ in syllable coda position; (iv) a glottalized realization of /x/; (v) the spirantization of /b/ after /l/; (vi) the velarization of coda /n/; (vii), an assibilated production of /r/; and (viii) the devoicing of vowels.

Our understanding of regionally defined dialectal zones in Hispanic America has been further enriched by scholars who have utilized geopolitical boundaries as convenient heuristics for illuminating variation. Canfield (1981), for example, provides a country-by-country analysis of phonological variation in the Americas. In this work, consonantal weakening figures prominently as a unifying theme and leads Canfield to make a broad areal distinction, contrasting “highland conservatism” (i.e. lower rates of consonantal weakening) with the “relaxed trends of much of coastal Spanish America” (1981:52). Another country-level analysis can be found in Lipski’s monumental 1994 work. In *Latin American Spanish*, Lipski surveys not only phonological variation, but also morphological, lexical, and syntactic behavior at the national level, providing an historical overview of each country as well as a description of extra-Hispanic influences on the linguistic behavior of its residents. What ultimately connects the work of pioneering dialectologists, such as Henríquez Ureña, to the more sociolinguistically sophisticated research of scholars like Canfield, Lipski, and Penny is a shared recognition of the central role that physical space plays in shaping linguistic variation. Indeed, the regional and national origins of speakers have come to be widely acknowledged as key components in any characterization of linguistic variation in the Hispanophone world. Furthermore, an accurate account of geographically constrained norms is a prerequisite for properly understanding variation within a given community, as such norms help establish baseline expectations for the linguistic behavior of its members. It is to this level of analysis, that of sociolectal variation, that we now turn.

### 24.3 Sociolectal Variation

While scholars of dialectal variation principally aim to describe and explain patterns of language use that correlate with the distribution of communities across physical space, those interested in sociolectal variation often seek to understand linguistic behavior *within*, as well as between, these communities. An iconic and seminal exemplar of such research is Labov’s (1966) investigation of variability in the production of post-vocalic /ɹ/ among English-speaking employees of three New York City department stores. In this study, Labov identifies the *social stratification* of communities as a central force that shapes linguistic behavior within them. According to Labov, social stratification is

the product of social differentiation and social evaluation. The use of this term does not imply any specific type of class or caste, but simply 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.

He goes on to specify how this view informs the guiding hypothesis of his study: “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 /ɹ/” (1966:44). In his department store study, Labov found abundant evidence in support of this hypothesis, observing, among other things, the highest rates of *r-lessness* among workers at S. Klein, a discount department store, and the lowest rates among workers at Saks, a luxury goods store.

This and other early work of Labov’s (1963, 1968; Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog 1968) helped to establish the research paradigm of *variationist sociolinguistics*, which seeks to understand language variation and change through quantitative modeling of sociolinguistic variables (Cedergren and Sankoff 1974; Bayley 2002; Tagliamonte 2006; among others). The central assumption underlying such models is that variability in a given linguistic feature – be it a speech sound, morpheme, lexical item, etc. – is sensitive to the influence of sets of linguistic and social factors. The former consist of factors internal to the workings of linguistic systems *per se*, e.g. the phonetic context in which a sound occurs, the frequency of use of a lexical item, the grammatical category of some morpheme, the tense-mood-aspect and/or person and number of a verb, etc. The second set, the external constraints, consists of factors that describe characteristics of language users in a speech community, e.g. social class, sex, age, ethnicity, etc.

Among the first social categories to be extensively examined from this perspective were class and sex. Emblematic of such work is that of Trudgill (1972, 1974), whose investigations in Norwich, UK, contributed to the explicit formulation of the concepts of *overt* and *covert linguistic prestige*, or the social value associated with *standard* and *non-standard* (or *vernacular*) language forms, respectively. Standard forms are those features and ways of speaking which are sanctioned as correct or proper by institutions that wield social, political, and economic power in a particular community. Non-standard forms fail to conform to such prescriptions. Trudgill observed systematic differences in the use of standard features across levels of social class and sex: Speakers of higher social class, defined in terms of their level of education and occupation, tended to use standard forms at higher rates than speakers of lower social class. He also observed that women tend to produce standard features at higher rates than men, even within a given social class. For instance, in Trudgill’s Norwich study, lower working-class males’ rates of *-ing* reduction, that is, their production of a word like *working* as *work[n]*, were substantially higher than those of women in the same social class.

Trudgill suggests that class- and sex-based differences in language use depend on speakers’ varying orientations towards overtly and covertly prestigious behavior. It is not that lower working-class males are *unaware* of overtly prestigious forms. Rather, it is that their linguistic choices reflect

their orientation towards the social value that is covertly ascribed to non-standard forms, which are themselves frequently linked to connotations of masculinity and toughness that are supposedly characteristic of working-class life. More recent research has refined these interpretations, resulting in a clearer understanding of the role of sex in sociolectal variation as well as its interaction with age, class, and linguistic innovation (Eckert 1989, 1997, 2008; Labov 1990). Eckert, for instance, has challenged the notion of *female conservatism* in linguistic variation by showing that in cases of language change, in contrast to cases of *stable variation*, women (and young women in particular) are often linguistic innovators, a phenomenon that has been dubbed “the Gender Paradox” (Labov 2001:292–293). Eckert’s work has also helped broaden conceptions of the social meaning of linguistic forms, allowing language scholars to move beyond questions of linguistic prestige. Instead, she and others have focused on the *indexicality* of linguistic forms, that is, the ability of a sound, word, or construction to dynamically communicate a speaker’s attitude(s) toward his or her interlocutors and to point to attributes of their identity, including their membership in certain social groups, e.g. jocks, burnouts, nerds, etc.

Both the variationist paradigm and the insights of linguistic anthropology have been brought to bear on the study of sociolectal variation in the Hispanophone world. It is not possible to mention all of the relevant research here (see Díaz-Campos 2011 for a handbook-length treatment of this topic). Suffice it to say that nearly every variable feature that has been systematically studied has revealed differentiation along social and linguistic dimensions. For instance, investigations of variation in coda /s/ have found that it is more likely to be weakened by men than by women (Fontanella de Weinberg 1974; Cepeda 1995; among others), by younger rather than older speakers (Poplack 1979; Guillén Sutil 1992), and by working-class speakers (Alba 1990; Cepeda 1995). Other features for which class, sex, and/or age differentiation have been reported include (but are not limited to) the lenition of /tʃ/, deletion of intervocalic /d/, voicing of post-alveolar fricatives, *ceceo*, *voseo*, *leísmo*, lexical borrowing, and code-switching.

In her 1987 study of /tʃ/, in Panama, Cedergren found that rates of deaf-frication (i.e. *mucho* realized as [muʃo]) were significantly higher among younger speakers overall, and among young women in particular. Cameron’s 2005 investigation of intervocalic /d/ deletion in the speech of Puerto Ricans in San Juan observed that differences between men and women waxed and waned with age (for detailed discussion of this study see Section 24.5 below). Rohena-Madrado’s 2015 study of *zh-/shéismo* (also detailed in Section 24.5) found that a shift towards devoiced fricatives in Buenos Aires was being led by younger, working-class speakers. In a 2008 study conducted in Jerez de la Frontera, Spain, García-Amaya observed that women were more sensitive than men to the social signaling potential of the use of [s] vs. [θ] in cases of orthographic *ci*, *ce*, *s*, and *z*. Both Quintanilla

Aguilar (2009) and Michnowicz and Place (2010) examined attitudes towards *voseo* in central America. These studies affirm the complex indexicality of this form, highlighting a tension between the generally non-standard, historically stigmatized status of *voseo* in central America and the possibility that an expansion of the use of *vos* is being led by younger, more educated speakers. In her 1979 study of clitic pronouns (discussed further in Section 24.5), Klein identifies an interaction between class and region. While *léismo* is observed in the speech of residents of three provinces in Rioja, Spain, its frequency of use and sensitivity to social class differences varies widely across the provinces. Varra's 2013 investigation of lexical borrowing among Spanish-speaking New Yorkers identifies social class as a key determinant of borrowing frequency. Among first-generation immigrants, the most frequent borrowers of English origin lexical items into Spanish discourse were individuals with more education. Finally, Poplack's (1980) study of code-switching among Puerto Ricans in New York City revealed significant differences along lines of sex (women produced intra-sentential switches at a significantly higher rate than men) and age of acquisition of Spanish and English (those who learned these languages in early childhood were the most frequent intra-sentential code-switchers). What these and many other studies illustrate is that the notions of social stratification, linguistic prestige, and the indexical field generalize to Spanish-speaking (and very likely all linguistic) communities, and that social dimensions are rich and regular vectors of linguistic variation within them.

#### 24.4 Idiolectal Variation

If sociolinguistics is a field that puts language variation under a microscope, then the study of idiolectal variation is sociolinguistics at its highest level of resolution. For at this level, we zoom in to focus on single individuals. That is, while dialectal and sociolectal patterns reveal how language use varies between and within communities, idiolectal variation illuminates differences between and within particular individuals. Differences between language users are unsurprising for two reasons. First, interspeaker variation is the underlying basis of sociolectal variation, as generalizations about groups of people – e.g. younger speakers, men, working-class women, etc. – depend on differences in the behavior of individuals who fit these descriptions. Second, while the cognitive and biological basis of the human language faculty may be uniform across our species, the life experiences that shape its expression are unique to individual language users. This all but guarantees, for example, that one individual will accept a certain construction as grammatical while another in the same community will not, and that one person may use a particular feature at a significantly different rate from another.

Perhaps less immediately apparent than differences between individuals is the presence of structured linguistic variation within the behavior of a single person. However, when we consider that the entirety of individual linguistic competence is never brought to bear in any single linguistic interaction, and that linguistic forms have social as well as referential meanings, then variation within the individual also becomes unsurprising. Indeed, in the same way that a professional singer may know jazz standards, gospel numbers, and pop songs, each of us possesses a rich *linguistic repertoire*. Just as the singer knows when a pop tune is appropriate and when it is time to sing the blues, a language user knows which linguistic features to deploy given the social context and interpersonal dynamics that characterize a particular linguistically-mediated interaction. A language user may draw from very different parts of her repertoire, choosing between entire linguistic systems, or speaker-internal variation may manifest as fine-grained modulation in the production of a single speech sound.

Such variation has been central to the sociolinguistic perspective from the outset. In the foundational research mentioned in the preceding paragraph, intra-speaker variation is frequently discussed in the context of *stylistic variation*. In Trudgill's work (1974), for instance, lower working-class women varied substantially in their production of *-ing* depending on whether they were reading a word list or making casual conversation. In her 1982 study Cheshire found that young boys' rates of non-standard features varied significantly in relation to context, namely, depending on whether they were in the classroom or out on the playground. The notion that speakers shift across formal and informal styles has also featured prominently in Labov's work (1990, 2001). Similar patterns of stylistic variation have been observed throughout the Spanish-speaking world. For example, Alba (2004) reports on stylistic variation in the speech of Dominicans across numerous levels of linguistic structure. With regard to phonological variation, for instance, Alba observes that raising of /e/ to /i/ (e.g. *pasear* 'to go for a walk' realized as *pasiar*) as well as deletion of coda /s/ and intervocalic /d/ (e.g. *dedo* produced as *deo*, *hablado* realized as *hablao*) increase in frequency as situational formality decreases. With respect to morphosyntax, he notes more frequent use of diminutive suffixes (e.g. *cafecito* 'coffee,' *tempranito* 'early' vs. *café*, *temprano*) in informal settings. At the lexical level he identifies pairs of synonyms that are characterized by their varying likelihood of use in formal and informal settings, respectively (e.g. *centavo* 'cent' vs. *chele*, *borrachera* 'drunkenness' vs. *jumo*, *poco* 'little' vs. *chin*, etc.)

In addition to stylistic considerations, another dimension of idiolectal variation is temporal in nature. That is, the content of our linguistic repertoires, as well as our use of them, changes across our lifetimes. This is most obvious in early life, when children come to acquire the linguistic norms of their communities. However, there is a growing body of research

that reveals linguistic change across the lifespan of individuals (Zentella 1997; Harrington *et al.* 2000; Sankoff and Blondeau 2007; Bowie 2010; Baxter and Croft 2016). Of particular relevance is the work of Zentella (1997), whose longitudinal study of bilingualism in *El Barrio* directly bears on variation across the lifetime and also offers a segue into the final section of this chapter, which highlights the intersection of dialectal, sociolectal, and idiolectal variation. Zentella's study focuses on five girls of Puerto Rican origin who lived on the same block in New York City's East Harlem neighborhood. Zentella first examined the girls' behavior when they were children (ranging in age from six to eleven years old) and then again when they were young adults (ages 19–24). While all of the adult women continued to self-identify as bilingual and retained the ability to use Spanish in locally sensitive and sociolinguistically sophisticated ways – a capacity Zentella calls *communicative competence* – differences emerged in their use of Spanish verbal inflectional morphology. Some of the women were able to hit prescriptive targets across a wide range of tense, mood, and aspectual combinations (e.g. they demonstrated standard usage of the *pluperfect subjunctive*, *conditional perfect*, etc.). Others among the women were more restricted in this regard and instead relied heavily on the *present*, *preterit*, and *imperfect* at the expense of other tenses. Remarkling on the source of these differences, Zentella writes that “individual differences were rooted in the life experiences which weakened their participation in Spanish-dominant networks and immersed them in English-only settings to greater or less degrees” (1997:211). Zentella's study highlights the ways in which patterns of dialectal, sociolectal, and idiolectal variation flow in and out of one another, finding their confluence in individual language users whose identities encompass each of these dimensions at once, i.e. speakers' identities simultaneously include their geographic origin, place of residence, level of education, sex, age, social network, linguistic repertoire, etc. The final section of the chapter surveys a selection of studies that highlight the ways in which these various dimensions intersect, working in tandem to reveal patterns of linguistic behavior.

### 24.5 Dialectal, Sociolectal, and Idiolectal Variation in Interaction

The studies that are discussed below were selected because together they highlight Spanish speakers across a broad geographic range, including the Iberian peninsula, Latin America, and the United States. In addition, they illustrate variation across different levels of linguistic and social organization, examining phonological, morphological, and morphosyntactic phenomena along dimensions of region, sex, class, and age. They also bear on the outcomes of linguistic contact, both between speakers of Spanish with

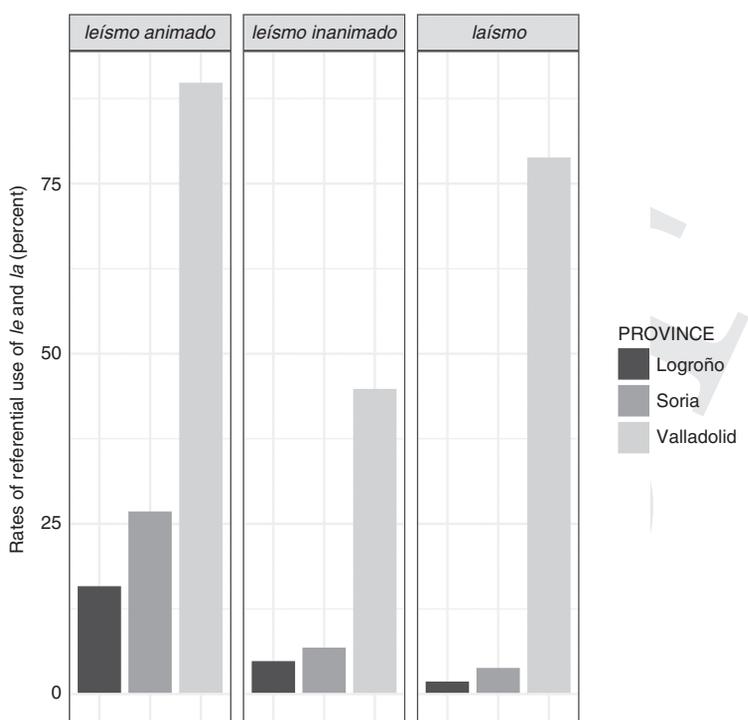
differing regional origins as well between speakers of Spanish and English. Finally these studies highlight group-level trends as well as individual variation within particular groups. They include an investigation of (i) *le/laísmo* in Castilla la Vieja (Klein 1979; Section 24.5.1), (ii) *consonantal lenition* in Puerto Rico (Cameron 2005; Section 24.5.2), (iii) *devoicing of /ʒ/* in Buenos Aires (Rohena-Madrado 2015; Section 24.5.3), (iv) *subject pronouns* in New York City (Otheguy and Zentella 2012; Section 24.5.4), and (v) *coda /s/ weakening* in New York City (Erker and Otheguy 2016; Section 24.5.5).

### 24.5.1 *Le/Laísmo* in Castilla la Vieja

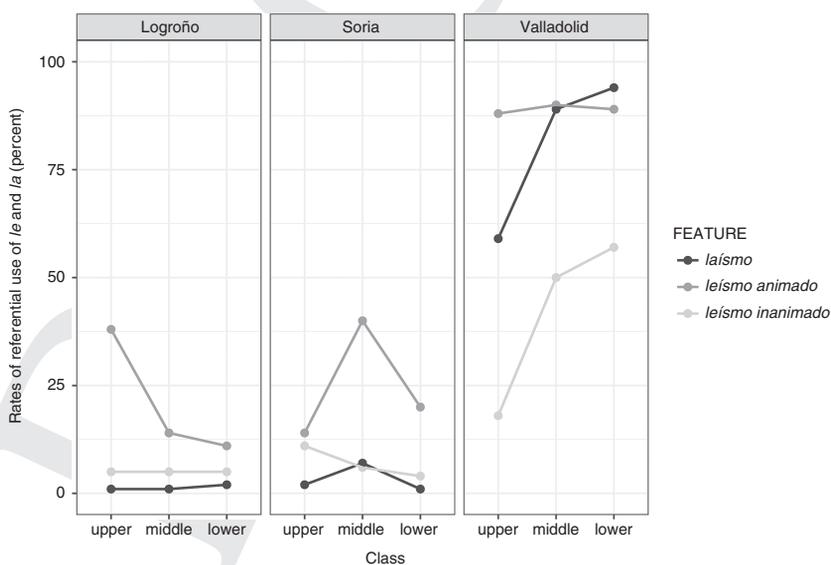
Klein's study (1979), which highlights the intersection of dialectal and sociolectal variation, examines the variable use of *le*, *la*, and *lo* in interviews with residents of three provinces in the Castilla la Vieja region of Spain: Valladolid, Soria, and Logroño (now known as La Rioja). Speakers in this region are well known for using these clitic pronouns in a way that distinguishes them from much of the rest of the Hispanophone world. Instead of being distributed in terms of structural case, *le*, *la*, and *lo* are used, in Klein's terms, *referentially* by these speakers. The referential uses of these forms are commonly referred to as *léismo*, *laísmo*, and *loísmo*, respectively. The first of these, which refers to the use of the clitic *le* as a direct object, is sometimes subdivided into *léismo animado* (in which the referent is animate, e.g. **Le** vi a Marco 'I saw Mark') and *léismo inanimado* (in which the referent is inanimate, e.g. **Le** leímos en la escuela 'we read it in school'). *Laísmo* and *loísmo*, refer, respectively, to the use of **la** and **lo** as indirect objects in examples like *Su novio la/lo* dio una sortija 'His/her boyfriend gave him/her a ring.'

Klein's data reveal a number of relevant trends, the first of which is that across the three provinces, each of which belongs to the larger region of Castilla la Vieja, speakers vary substantially, echoing Henríquez Ureña's remark on the dialectal zones of Latin America that "Inside of each zone, there are then subdivisions" (1921:360; my translation). Consider Figure 24.1a, which displays percentages of *referential* as opposed to *case-based* use of *le* and *la* across the three provinces (Klein's data for *loísmo* is relatively restricted and will not be discussed in detail). The figure reveals similarities as well as differences between the provinces. Speakers in all three demonstrate referential uses of *le* and *la*, and *léismo animado* is the most frequent type observed. At the same time, geographically constrained differences emerge, with speakers in Logroño and Soria producing referential *le* and *la* at much lower rates than speakers in Valladolid. In addition to a pattern of substantial *inter-provincial* variation, Klein's data also illustrate *intra-provincial* variation along lines of social class (see Figure 24.1b).

In Valladolid, referential use of *le* for animates does not vary along lines of social class (which Klein defines largely in terms of place of residence and rurality vs. urbanity). That is, rates of *léismo animado* are similarly high



**Figure 24.1a** Rates of referential use of *le* and *la* across three provinces in Castilla la Vieja  
Source: Klein 1979



**Figure 24.1b** Rates of referential use of *le* and *la* across three provinces in Castilla la Vieja: *intra*-provincial variation along lines of social class  
Source: Klein 1979

across speakers whose social class Klein categorized as *alta* ‘upper,’ *media* ‘middle,’ or *baja* ‘lower.’ Evidence of class-based variation in Valladolid *does* appear, however, with respect to *léismo inanimado* and *laísmo*: as class shifts from upper, to middle, and then to lower, rates for these features increase. This, in turn, contrasts with the data from Soria, where overall rates of referential usage are much lower, and where there is evidence of class-based differences in the distribution of *léismo animado*: In Soria, middle-class speakers have higher rates of *léismo animado* than both the upper and lower classes. Remarking on the results from Soria, Klein writes:

It suggests that this zone – even being predominantly “case-based” in its use of clitics and in this sense more similar to the Spanish-speaking world *outside* of Castile itself – nevertheless shows evidence of positively valuing the typical uses of clitics from Castile in that the middle class tends to adopt them. (1979:59; my translation)

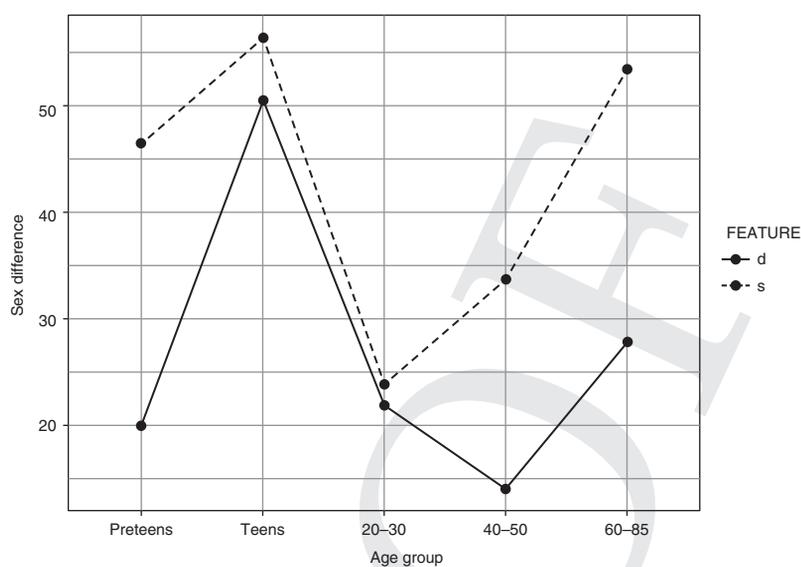
Finally, results from Logroño show referential usage in this province to be very infrequent:

Therefore, with respect to clitic use we could say that, of the three provinces examined, Logroño is the least “Castilian” in the synchronic and geographic sense of the word. (1979: 59; my translation).

That being said, even within the Logroño data set there is evidence of two things: (i) the broad regional preference for *léismo animado* over other referential uses and (ii) differentiation by class. For instance, among Logroño males, it is the upper-class speakers who have the highest rates of *léismo animado*. This contrasts with Valladolid, where use of this feature was not sensitive to class differences, and is also different from Soria, where the class effect amounted to the middle class preferring *léismo animado* more than the upper- and lower-class speakers. Klein’s study provides a valuable demonstration of the complex relationship between physical space, social stratification, and linguistic variation. Though all three provinces are part of a single larger region, clear inter-provincial differences emerge. Of particular importance is that the geographically-constrained differences are not limited to variation in rates of use but that they also arise with respect to the social distribution of patterned variation. Indeed, the same social dimension, class, is not equivalently predictive of differences in speakers’ behavior in each province, reflecting the influence of independent and local community norms.

#### 24.5.2 Consonantal Lenition in Puerto Rico

Among the patterns of dialectal variation mentioned above, few have received as much attention as consonantal lenition in the Caribbean. However, while it is true that higher rates of consonantal weakening are typically reported among speakers in this region than among those who



**Figure 24.2** Degrees of difference between females and males across the lifespan for word-final /s/ and intervocalic /d/  
Source: Cameron 2005

reside in the interior and highland regions of Latin America, there is clear evidence of sociolectal variation within Caribbean communities. In his 2005 study Cameron investigates two dimensions of such variation, focusing on the intersection of sex and age. Data were collected from 62 speakers in Puerto Rico, ranging from five to 85 years old. Guiding Cameron's analysis is the notion that sex segregation varies across the lifespan, with male and female segregation peaking in teenage years, dropping when adults enter the work force, and then increasing again as adults grow old. Cameron links these trends to patterns of linguistic variation, showing that greater sex segregation correlates with greater sex differences in linguistic behavior. The linguistic features under investigation are lenition of word-final /s/ and intervocalic /d/. Figure 24.2 summarizes Cameron's main results, plotting the degrees of difference (as measured by weights assigned by the VARBRUL statistical analysis program) between sexes across different age groups. The dashed line corresponds to sex differences for /s/ lenition and the solid line corresponds to sex differences in the production of intervocalic /d/. Cameron interprets the trends as follows:

During the working years of the middle age groups, age separation and, consequently, gender separation are relaxed. Thus, the reduction in degree of difference stems from increased cross-age and cross-gender interaction. With increased cross-gender interaction comes convergence between female and male speakers. This convergence, in quantitative terms, is revealed in the decreased degree of difference between females and males of the middle age groups. (2005: 40)

Cameron's study is valuable for several reasons. First, it serves as another reminder that sociolectal variation is a regular feature of language use in geographically circumscribed communities – i.e. all of his participants are Puerto Ricans from San Juan, and they vary widely in their treatment of the variables under analysis. This study is also important in that it shows sex differences in language use to be dynamic, varying across the lifespan in relation to factors in the external world, i.e. the ebb and flow of sex segregation.

### 24.5.3 Devoicing of /ʒ/ in Buenos Aires

The central aim of Rohena-Madrado's (2015) study is to assess the potential completion of a sound change among speakers in Buenos Aires, Argentina; namely a shift from a voiced to a voiceless post-alveolar fricative ( $/ʒ/ \rightarrow /ʃ/$ ) in the first sound of words like *yo* and *llamar*. Of relevance to the present discussion are the patterns of sociolectal and idiolectal variation that Rohena-Madrado identifies in his analysis. Earlier work on the possible shift from the voiced to devoiced variant suggested that the change was being led by younger females (Wolf and Jiménez 1979; Fontanella de Weinberg 1983). In more recent work, Chang (2008), also working in Buenos Aires, observed an age difference effect such that speakers born before 1945 were *voicers* while those born after 1975 were *devoicers*. To investigate the possible completion of the change, Rohena-Madrado compared rates of voicing – defined as the percentage of a given fricative that shows evidence of vocal fold vibration – in alveolar as well as post-alveolar fricatives. The former category of sounds was used to establish a baseline rate of voicing that emerges during frication, largely as a result of coarticulatory effects. That is, when phonologically voiceless fricatives occur between/adjacent to voiced segments, they are naturally likely to evince some coarticulatory voicing, especially at the onset and offset of frication. Rohena-Madrado's logic is that if a speaker has a higher rate of percentage voicing for post-alveolar than alveolar fricatives, then s/he remains a *voicer*. However, if a speaker's percentage of voicing is comparable across alveolar and post-alveolar fricatives, then s/he has completed the change, i.e. s/he is a *devoicer*.

Rohena-Madrado's (2015) study included 16 participants stratified by sex, age, and class. There were eight men and eight women, eight younger (18–29 years of age) and eight older speakers (55 and up), as well as eight upper- and eight middle-class speakers (defined in terms of place of residence, i.e. residents of northern Buenos Aires were considered upper class while residents of the southern part of the city were grouped into the middle class). Data were collected from production tasks, including a word list and a sentence list, with the first designed to elicit more careful speech than the second. When divided by class and age, the older upper-class speakers showed the highest amount of percentage voicing in their post-alveolar fricatives ( $M = 53.2$  percent). Younger upper-class and older

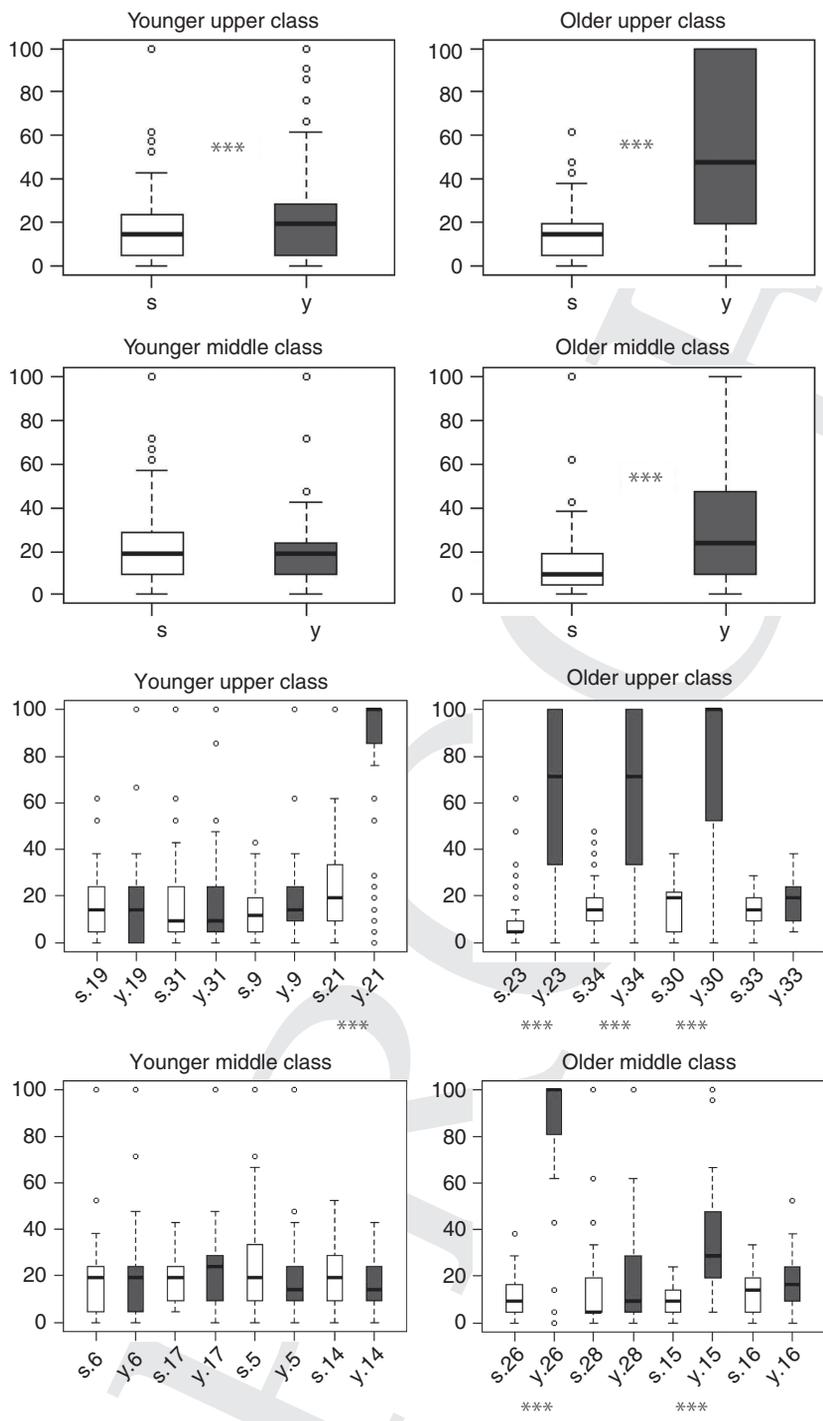
middle-class speakers showed comparable percentage voicing ( $M = 29$  percent and 34.8 percent, respectively), and younger middle-class speakers had a mean percentage voicing of 18.6 percent. Rohena-Madrado then compared these rates to the amount of voicing that occurs in these speakers' production of /s/, which, we should recall, is phonologically voiceless but variably phonetically voiced. The mean percentage voicing rates of /s/ for the older-upper-, younger-upper-, older-middle-, and younger-middle-class groups were 13, 18, 12, and 20 percent, respectively. On the basis of these comparisons Rohena-Madrado concludes that for the younger middle-class speakers, the change has been completed, as their post-alveolar fricatives are no more voiced than are their productions of /s/. Figure 24.3a illustrates the results with a series of boxplots.

An additional feature of this study is its analysis of individual speakers, which reveals group-internal differences. For instance, while all four speakers classified as younger middle class fit the overall pattern of the group – i.e. there is no significant difference in percentage voicing between their alveolar and postalveolar fricatives – there is substantial internal variation among the other groups: One older upper-class speaker is actually a *devoicer*, only one younger upper-class speaker turns out to be a *voicer*, and the older middle-class speakers are split, with two *voicers* and one *devoicer*. These results, illustrated in Figure 24.3b, highlight not only the potential for idiolectal variation to emerge within any socially defined group of speakers, but they also serve as a reminder that the relatively extreme behavior of a single individual can distort group-level behavior. Indeed, the quantitative evidence supporting the conclusion that younger upper-class speakers are *voicers* is largely based on the behavior of Speaker 21.

In addition to providing an innovative way for assessing the dynamics of a sound change that manifests at the subsegmental level, this study also highlights the complex relationship between groups and individuals. Only one group defined by the study's social parameters (age and class) is internally homogenous with respect to participation in the change under investigation (i.e. the younger middle class). Internal variation among the other groups is non-trivial. Indeed, in each of the other three groups there is at least one individual who differs from his or her age-class cohort in terms of (non-) participation in the sound change.

#### 24.5.4 Subject Pronouns in New York City

Otheguy and Zentella's 2012 study of Spanish in New York City is based on sociolinguistic interviews with 140 speakers with origins in one of two regions in Latin America; 72 of the speakers were either born in or have family roots in the Caribbean (represented in the study by Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Cubans), and 68 speakers have family backgrounds in the Latin America mainland (in Mexico, Colombia, or Ecuador). Speakers in the study also vary across several social dimensions, including age, sex,



**Figure 24.3** Boxplots showing voicing rates  
 a. By fricative, class, and age  
 b. By fricative, class, and age (individual speakers)  
 The white and black rectangles show the 2nd and 3rd quartiles of the data distribution for the variable on the y-axis, which is Percentage Voicing. The white rectangles refer to the alveolar fricative and the black rectangles refer to the post-alveolar fricative. ‘y’ represents postalveolar fricatives. Asterisks indicate a significant difference (\*\*\*) =  $p < 0.001$ ). The number to the right of ‘s’ or ‘y’ in Figure 24.3b indicates the subject identification number.  
 Source: Rohena-Madrado (2015)

and socioeconomic status, as well as in terms of age of arrival in and time spent living in New York City. Otheguy and Zentella's analysis of this corpus focuses primarily on the variable use of subject personal pronouns, e.g. (*yo canto* 'I sing,' (*ella canta* 'she sings,' etc. Variation in this feature has been the subject of extensive investigation in Hispanic linguistics (Guitart 1982; Silva-Corvalán 1982; Cameron 1993; Bayley and Pease-Alvarez 1996; Flores-Ferrán 2004; Orozco and Guy 2008; Torres Cacoullós and Travis 2010; Claes 2011; Holmquist 2012; Shin 2014; Shin and Montes Alcalá 2014; Michnowicz 2015; Carvalho *et al.* 2015). Two aspects of this research are relevant to the topic at hand. The first is that rates of pronoun use in variable contexts, or simply *pronoun rates*, observed in Caribbean communities are typically higher than those reported among communities located in the Latin American mainland. In addition, subject pronouns represent a site of cross-linguistic difference, i.e. pronoun rates among Spanish speakers are considerably lower than those of English speakers, who have been shown to use subject pronouns at rates upwards of 90 percent (Shin and Montes Alcalá 2014). In New York City, then, pronominal variation can function as a diagnostic for potential outcomes of contact between (i) Spanish speakers with different regional origins and (ii) speakers of Spanish and English.

Otheguy and Zentella's (2012) analysis centers on comparisons of groups defined by speakers' ages of arrival in and years spent living in NYC, proposing the groups *Newcomers*, *Established immigrants*, and *New York raised* (Table 24.1).

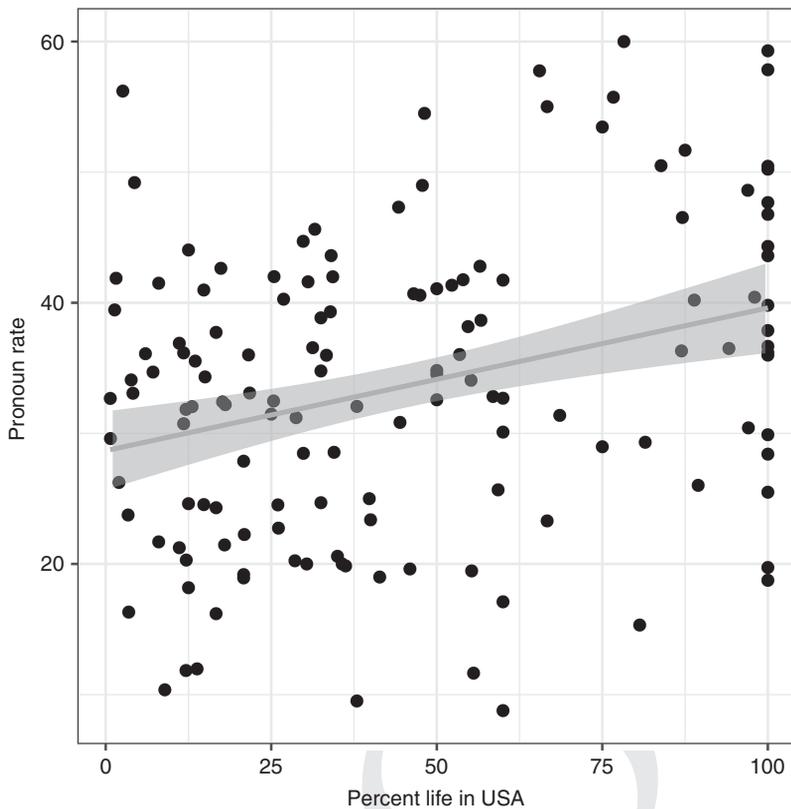
The authors interpret the higher pronoun rates of the *Established immigrants* and *New York raised* as evidence of the influence of English pronominal norms upon members of these groups. Though Otheguy and Zentella do not focus on idiolectal variation in their analyses, they do provide, for each speaker in their study, a listing of pronoun rates, ages of arrival in, and years spent living in New York City (Otheguy and Zentella (2012:77–80). These data make it possible to address an issue of interest to the present chapter, namely the relationship between group-level trends and individual behavior (Figure 24.4a). Each dot in this figure represents an individual in Otheguy and Zentella's study. The *x*-axis corresponds to the

Table 24.1 *Pronoun rates (percent) for three generational groups in New York City*

	Age of arrival	Years in USA	Pronoun rate (%)
Newcomers (N = 39)	≤ 17	≤ 5	29
Established immigrants (N = 73)	≥ 13	≥ 11	33
New York raised (N = 28)	< 3 or NYC born	–	38

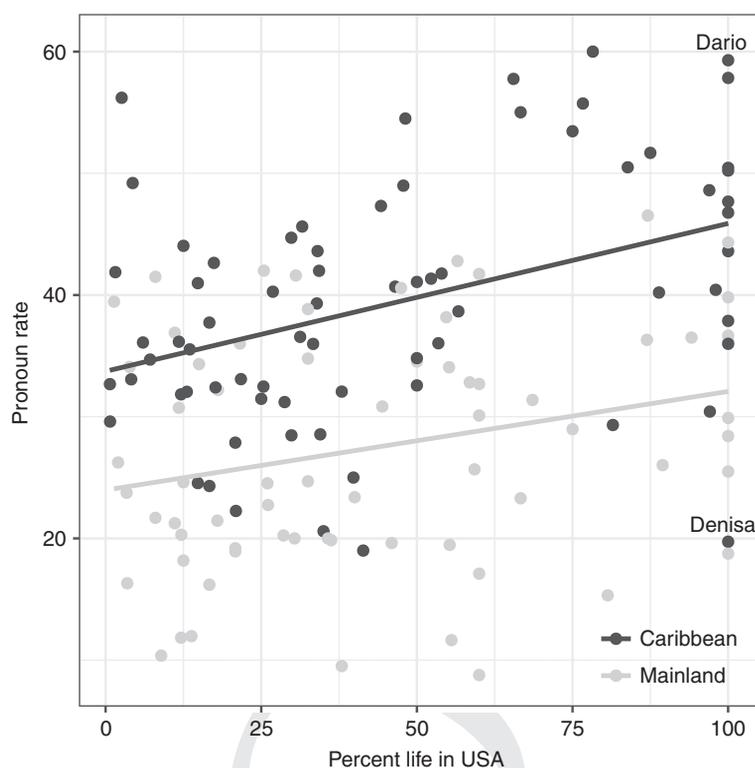
$F(2, 137) = 4.4; p < 0.01$

Source: Otheguy and Zentella (2012)



**Figure 24.4a** Subject pronoun rates of 140 speakers in New York City  
Source: Otheguy and Zentella (2012)

percentage of a person's life that has been lived in the United States, which is calculated by dividing the numbers of years that s/he has lived in the US by overall age; e.g. a 40-year-old who has lived in the US for 20 years has a *percent life in USA* (PLUS) of 50; for a person born and raised in the USA, the value of this variable is 100. As the regression line illustrates, speakers with a greater proportion of life experience in the US tend to have higher pronoun rates:  $r(138) = 0.3$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . It is also clear, both from the relatively modest correlation coefficient and from the distribution of individuals across the figure, that not every speaker in the study participates in the overall trend. That is, the group-level pattern coexists with wide-ranging variation at the speaker level. The extent to which a particular individual might diverge from a group-level pattern can be extreme. Consider Figure 24.4b, which differs from Figure 24.4a in that a separate regression line has been calculated for each regional group in the data. Two speakers are also highlighted, *Dario* and *Denisa*. The overall trend in the data – that is, higher pronoun rates with increased PLUS – emerges within each regional group of speakers. The region-specific correlations between these two parameters are, for Caribbeans ( $r(70) = 0.39$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ),



**Figure 24.4b** Subject pronoun rates of 140 speakers in New York City – Caribbeans and Mainlanders  
Source: Otheguy and Zentella (2012)

and, for Mainlanders ( $r(66) = 0.26$ ,  $p < 0.03$ ). Additionally, results of a linear regression indicate that both *Region* ( $B = 0.5$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and *PLUS* ( $B = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) are significant predictors of pronoun rates. There is no statistical evidence of an interaction between them, however. In other words, there is evidence supporting the interpretation that contact with English is driving pronoun rates higher for both regional groups, but there is, at least in the aggregate, no statistical evidence to suggest that contact between Caribbeans and Mainlanders is leading to the leveling of regional differences in pronoun rates. (NB: Otheguy and Zentella do report evidence of leveling in relation to linguistic constraint hierarchies that condition pronoun use.)

A speaker like Dario, with a *PLUS* of 100 and a pronoun rate of 59.2, helps drive these trends. Dario is a 25-year-old of Dominican origin who was born in the Bronx. He reports speaking English *excellently* and Spanish *very well*. A speaker like Denisa, however, is an exception to the group-level analyses in two ways. An 18-year-old of Dominican heritage with a *PLUS* of 100 and a pronoun rate of 19.7, not only is her behavior inconsistent with the interpretation that the contact setting promotes structural convergence with

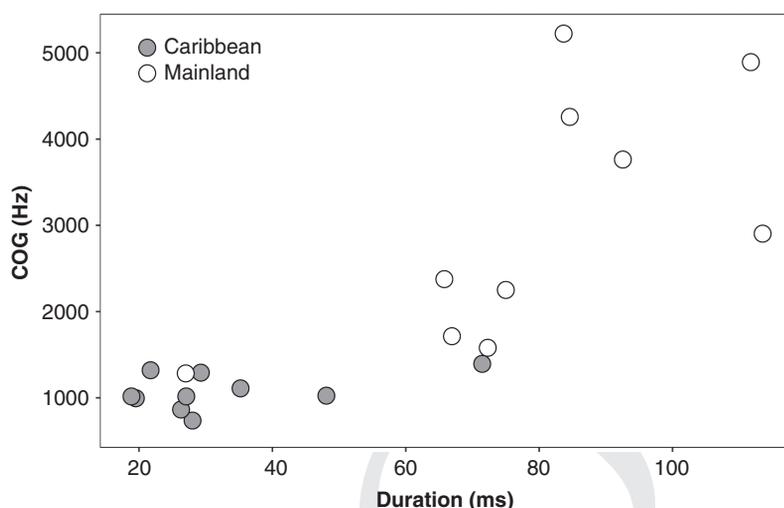
English pronominal norms, it is also hard to square with her regional origin. Even more intriguing is that despite having lived in the NYC area her entire life, Denisa reports being a *less than excellent* English speaker and remarks that she likes speaking Spanish more than English. She can read and write in both languages, and while she reports speaking mostly English with her father, siblings, and friends, she speaks Spanish with her mother. Speakers like Dario and Denisa highlight the fact that patterns of linguistic variation are not deterministic but rather probabilistic in nature, and that any given individual may participate in or diverge widely from a group-level trend. These results also highlight the well-recognized methodological challenges presented by the task of relating groups and individuals in a speech community (Guy 1980; Bayley *et al.* 2012). For quantitative variationist sociolinguistics at least, the focus on individuals often results in a problematic reduction of statistical power. At this level of analysis, the ability to confidently characterize structured variability is greatly limited: “To subdivide the data too finely – by limiting the scope to individuals and multiplying the number of environments – is inherently self-defeating” (Guy 1980:13). Overcoming this challenge can be difficult, as reliable tests of the relationship between individual and group behavior require large amounts of data.

#### 24.5.5 Coda /s/ in New York City

Another feature examined using Otheguy and Zentella’s (2012) data is variation in the production of coda /s/, a feature that has received tremendous attention within Hispanic linguistics. Of relevance here are well-established dialectal and sociolectal trends: Higher rates of /s/ weakening are routinely observed among communities located in the Caribbean and in coastal areas of Latin American; within specific locales, males tend to reduce /s/ at higher rates than women (see Lynch 2009 for a survey of dialectal and sociolectal patterns in /s/ production). In their 2016 study, Erker and Otheguy examine the acoustic properties of /s/ in the speech of 20 speakers, ten of Caribbean and ten of Mainland origin. Nine speakers fit Otheguy and Zentella’s (2012) criteria for *Newcomers*, having arrived in New York after their 17th birthdays and having spent five years or less in the city at the time of their interview. The other 11 speakers are treated as *Longtime residents*. On average, members of this latter group arrived in New York City at the age of 12 and have spent 22 years in the city. 200 tokens of coda /s/ were collected for each speaker and were measured using two acoustic parameters, (i) *duration* in milliseconds and (ii) *center of gravity* (COG) in Hertz. COG is a weighted average calculated with equation (24.1):

$$(24.1) \quad \text{COG} = \frac{\sum fI}{\sum I}$$

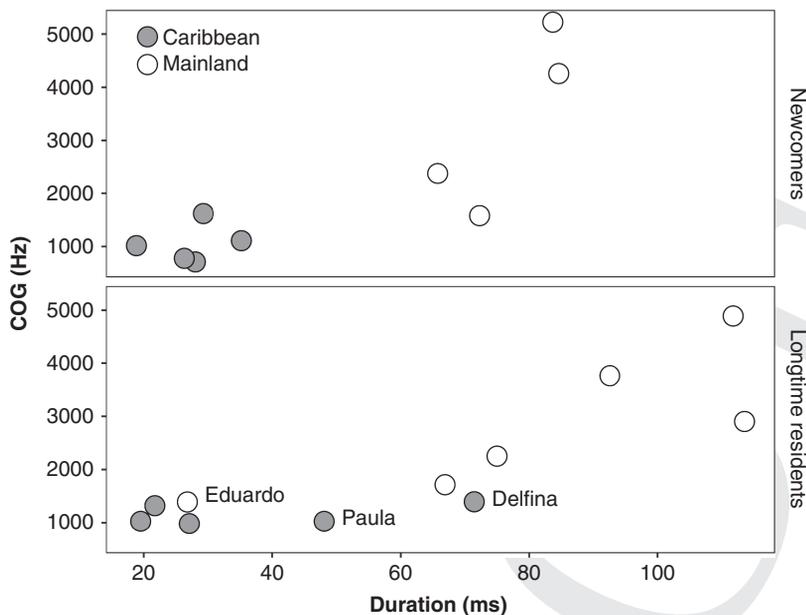
where  $I$  is the amplitude in decibels and  $f$  the frequency in Hertz of the spectral components. Consider Figure 24.5a, which plots duration on the  $x$ -axis and COG on the  $y$ -axis. Each dot in the plot represents the mean



**Figure 24.5a** Duration and center of gravity of coda /s/ for 20 speakers in New York City  
Source: Erker and Otheguy 2016

duration and COG of coda /s/ for each speaker in the study. Speakers' region of origin is indicated by shade.

As expected in light of the research literature, most Caribbean speakers are clustered towards the lower left corner of the plot, indicating that for them /s/ is typically shorter in duration and lower in COG than it is in the speech of Mainlanders, who mostly populate the upper right quadrant of the plot. However, despite the general regional clustering observed in Figure 24.5a, there are also several speakers whose behavior locates them on the regional fringes or, in some cases, distinguishes them entirely from their regional counterparts. Figure 24.5b, which replicates the immediately preceding scatterplot, but treats *Newcomers* and *Longtime residents* separately, shows that regionally atypical behavior is restricted to speakers who belong to the latter group. When compared simultaneously in terms of duration and COG (through multiple analysis of variance, MANOVA), a significant regional difference emerges among *Newcomers*:  $F = 40.79$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . However, region of origin fails to significantly predict differences in the speech of *Longtime residents*:  $F = 2.94$ ,  $p < 0.11$ . The statistical attenuation of a regional difference among *Longtime residents* is largely the result of the behavior of three speakers, *Eduardo*, *Paula*, and *Delfina*, who are Ecuadorian, Puerto Rican, and Dominican, respectively. Their behavior suggests that diminished regional differences among *Longtime residents* is the result of different kinds of shifts among men and women. *Eduardo*, a Mainland male, produces /s/ in a way that is closer to Caribbean norms, while *Paula* and *Delfina* have approximated Mainland norms. A possible interpretation of their behavior is that the contact setting has redefined targets for what constitutes the prestige standard with respect to /s/. Consider, for instance, the case of Caribbean women, and in particular those recently arrived in New York City. While



**Figure 24.5b** Duration and center of gravity of coda /s/ for 20 speakers in New York City – *Newcomers* compared to *Longtime residents*  
Source: Erker and Otheguy 2016

their speech may meet the standard for locally prestigious behavior outside of the US setting, it may fail to do so relative to the norms of their new home. Indeed, within the context of New York City, the behavior of Caribbean women is not only further from the standard when compared to Mainland women, but their /s/ production, locally defined, is likely to be more non-standard than that of Mainland men as well. Conversely, for Mainland men, what might represent covertly prestigious behavior in Latin America may fall short of doing so in New York City. This study, along with Otheguy and Zentella's (2012) analysis of pronominal variation in New York City, highlights the intersection of dialectal and sociolectal variation, and the two works demonstrate that contact-induced change is dependent on the innovative linguistic behavior of particular individuals.

## 24.6 Conclusion

This chapter began with the observation that each human being has a rich and multifaceted identity. Let us conclude by reaffirming that these many facets represent spaces in which the inherent variability and intrinsic sociality of language use may be circumscribed, described, and (ideally) explained. Patterns of dialectal, sociolectal, and idiolectal variation remind us that variability in language use is organized, predictable, and systematic. At the same time, the non-random nature of linguistic variation does not

make us linguistic automatons. Indeed, the studies reviewed here emphasize that the systematicity of variation in language use is probabilistic rather than deterministic in nature. Patterns of variability that characterize how Spanish is used across the world, within communities, and between individuals are the result of choices that individuals make in linguistic interaction. These choices are not the product of our identities, but rather help bring our identities into being. In the years to come, sociolinguists will likely strive to continue refining our understanding of the relationship between individuals and the communities to which they belong. While the obstacles to such an understanding are significant, recent trends in quantitative analysis, along with related advances in sociolinguistic theory, have offered new pathways in the exploration of individuals and groups. For instance, the emergence of mixed-effects statistical models as the norm in quantitative analysis reflects the field's growing sophistication in accounting for the unique contribution of individuals to aggregated sets of linguistic data (Johnson 2009). Furthermore, innovative use of principal components analysis (Torres Cacoullós and Berry, forthcoming) suggests a method for “reverse-engineering” the relationship between social organization and linguistic behavior. Instead of categorizing speakers according to a set of *a priori* social dimensions and then examining variation across these categories, this approach relies on patterns of language use to establish social groups, thus building sociolinguistic analysis upon a more richly empirical foundation.

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