LINGUISTIC VARIATION AND SOCIOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

DISSERTATION

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* * * * *

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Much current thinking in the field of linguistic variation assumes that speakers actively manipulate linguistic variables for local social purposes. While broad social structures such as class, ethnicity, and gender continue to shape the basic questions that variationists ask, attention to speakers’ context-driven uses of variables is gaining prominence. Eckert (2002) addresses this shift in her description of the three “waves” of linguistic variation studies. Critically, third-wave studies assume that speakers (consciously or not) use linguistic variables to construct identities situated within local social contexts. The claim that particular uses of linguistic variants index dynamic and ultimately supra-local social meanings entails that speakers recognize links among different levels of social organization. Despite the upsurge of ethnographic work in sociolinguistics, the latter claim has yet to be fully supported or even well investigated, partly, I argue, for lack of an adequate theoretical framework for speakers' perceptions.

This study explores sociological consciousness – the recognition of links among the levels of social structure – as a factor conditioning linguistic variation. The sociologist C. Wright Mills’ (1959) notion of the “sociological imagination” is used as a
framework. The *sociological imagination* is the quality of mind that allows one to conceptualize daily life in terms of society-wide social forces. According to Mills, those who possess well-developed sociological imaginations manage to understand personal troubles and public issues as the products of historical events, social structures, and biography—the three “coordinate points.”

The speech community under investigation is Worthington, Ohio, a mostly white, upper-middle class community lying immediately to the north of Columbus. Worthington was founded in 1803 by well-educated, Episcopalian settlers from Massachusetts and Connecticut, and some of the current residents work vigorously to maintain the city’s “traditional” New England identity with its religious and educational values intact. This task has become all the more relevant and challenging as Columbus has expanded; in fact, Worthington is now completely surrounded by annexed Columbus land, much of which has been stuffed with residential developments. A preliminary analysis of the sociolinguistic distribution of /l/ vocalization with respect to locally-relevant social categories (Dodsworth 2005a) reveals a significant linguistic distinction between living within the Worthington city boundaries and living in the surrounding areas of Columbus. Building on that conclusion, the present study considers the ways in which Worthingtonites understand and react to the forces that promote urban sprawl and urbanization.

Following much recent variationist work, this study employs the qualitative and quantitative paradigms simultaneously, using both ethnographic and traditional quantitative methods to investigate three phonetic variables previously documented in central Ohio: /l/ vocalization (Ash 1982, Durian 2004, Fix 2004), /o/ fronting (Thomas
1989[1993]), and movement of /æ/ toward /a/ (Dodsworth, ms). The linguistic data are extracted from one-on-one ethnographic interviews with 17 speakers. Speakers are divided into four rough 'social consciousness' categories with respect to the local urban sprawl situation: individual-focused, social structure-focused, integrated (i.e. a relatively balanced view of the individual with respect to social structures and history), and little or no critical awareness. These four types constituted a factor group in logistic regression analyses of the three linguistic variables. The results show sociological consciousness, when combined with attitude toward urban sprawl in the Worthington area, to be a significant factor group for all three variables. The proposed explanations for the patterns of linguistic variation are rooted to some extent in familiar notions such as 'persona', but they are claimed to ultimately descend from differences in sociological consciousness, particularly for /æ/ backing and /o/ fronting.

The importation of sociological consciousness as a factor in variationist analysis, as well as the quantitative results derived from it, are argued to have potentially serious implications for sociolinguistic theory, particularly the notions of persona and style. It is argued further that greater use of social-theoretic concepts within variation studies promises fruitful results for both sociolinguistics and other areas of social science.
Dedicated to my parents
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CHAPTER 1
SOCIAL THEORY AND LINGUISTIC VARIATION

1.1 Introduction

This study contributes to sociolinguistics in its recognition and investigation of a dimension of personhood\(^1\) that conditions linguistic variation, referred to throughout this work as *sociological consciousness*. The speech community under investigation is Worthington, Ohio, a middle-class suburb confronting the effects of urban sprawl from Columbus, and the variables, previously documented in central Ohio, are /o/ fronting, the movement of /æ/ toward [a], and /l/ vocalization. The 20\(^{th}\) century sociologist C. Wright Mills' (1959) notion of the “sociological imagination” frames the analysis of sociological consciousness in Worthington. The decision to make this concept from sociology central to the study calls for some explanation as well as acknowledgment of some of its implications for the present approach to linguistic variation. I first address those issues

\(^{1}\) I use the term *personhood* rather than *personal identity* in order to index my view that sociological consciousness – unlike ethnicity, class, or sex, for example – is not a salient component of social identity on a day-to-day basis.
and subsequently offer a more general discussion of the relationship between social
theory and sociolinguistics.

1.2 The sociological imagination

Mills (1959) introduces the concept of the sociological imagination with the
claims that “the facts of contemporary history are also facts about the success and the
failure of individual men and women ... Neither the life of an individual nor the history of
a society can be understood without understanding both” (3). In the post-modern U.S.,
Mills claims, a vague uneasiness or indifference to public issues afflict many individuals.
The solution, argues Mills, is the sociological imagination, described as follows:

The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger
historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of
a variety of individuals. It enables [him/her] to take into account how individuals,
in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their
social positions. Within that welter, the framework of modern society is sought,
and within that framework the psychologies of a variety of men and women are
formulated. By such means the personal uneasiness of individuals is focused
upon explicit troubles and the indifference of publics is transformed into
involvement with public issues (5).

People with well-developed sociological imaginations are conscious of connections
among Mills' three “coordinate points” of history, biography, and social structure, each
distinct from yet understood in relation to the other two.

One of the reasons I adopt Mills' notion of the sociological imagination is that it
presupposes the mutual influence of individual behavior and social structures. In defense
of the sociological imagination against Denzin's (1990) “minimalist” sociological
critique, Dandaneau (1994) provides a view of Mills' (conception of classic social
[Classic social science] neither 'builds up' from microscopic study nor 'deduces down' from conceptual elaboration. Its practitioners try to build and deduce at the same time, in the same process of study, and to do so by means of adequate formulation and reformulation of problems and of their adequate solution (128).

Mills was a Weber sympathizer insofar as he embraced neither structural determinism nor a fully agentive perspective. In taking this approach, I am distancing myself a priori from the interactionist approach that currently dominates discourse analysis and, to a lesser extent, variation study, yet I am not reverting to the category-based, static, practice-deficient model of identity that preceded current practice-based thinking. My proposed explanations for the patterns of linguistic variation shown in Chapter 4 are rooted both in the current notion of “persona”, a locally-based facet of identity, and in the imposed concept of sociological consciousness as it relates to urban sprawl. I employ a social variable that is shaped by ethnographic observation within the boundaries of an externally-imposed framework. Thus my approach is partly category-based, but not solely and not to the extent of the Labovian tradition.

A closely related reason for using the sociological imagination as a framework is that it is a realist concept (see the discussion on realism in Chapter 2) that nevertheless recognizes subjective, personal experiences. I have attempted to maintain that perspective in this study by, for example, categorizing speakers by “consciousness type,” which is not locally recognized as a dimension of identity but is nevertheless based entirely on speakers' subjective conceptions of the community's shifting identity. Another indication is the treatment of urban sprawl simultaneously from bottom-up and top-down perspectives, both laid out in Chapter 3.
It is worth noting what I do and do not hope to accomplish by using Mills' notion as a framework. I do hope to conceptualize and evaluate sociological consciousness in a principled and theory-driven manner. I also hope to situate my use of sociological consciousness *qua* social variable with respect to the familiar and dominant oppositions of structure/agency and object/subject. I do *not*, however, hope to offer the definitive word on any of the social-theoretic dualisms discussed in this chapter, nor do I hope to prove that borrowing social theory is the way to do sociolinguistics. If I can offer quantitative evidence that sociological consciousness is a robust phenomenon, and/or use the notion of sociological consciousness to account for a significant part of the variation exhibited by the phonetic variables discussed here, then I will have accomplished my goals.

But what exactly is the motivation for employing theoretical constructs from other social sciences in the study of sociolinguistic variation? Does the heading “social theory” include sociolinguistic theory? Are the foundational assumptions and goals of sociology and sociolinguistics similar enough to merit it, and if so, why is the use of current social theory not more visible in sociolinguistics? In addressing these questions, the next section reveals considerable disagreement among theorists, particularly discourse analysts.

1.3 Social theory and sociolinguistics

Theory-borrowing from sociology and related fields is a longstanding practice among sociolinguists, particularly (critical) discourse analysts. In fact, in the introductory
chapter to the only anthology devoted explicitly and solely to the topic of social theory's relevance for sociolinguistics, Coupland (2001) correctly observes that three major social-theoretic oppositions – macro/micro, structure/agency, and individual/society – have guided sociolinguistic studies. These oppositions have emerged, roughly speaking, as three “strains” of theory both in sociology and in linguistics: socio-structural realism, social-action centered (rationalism/praxis), and social-behavior centered (integrationism), respectively. In the chapter following Coupland's, Sarangi cites essentially the same oppositions as central to social theory but identifies all of them as specific cases of the general opposition of structure vs. action:

Indeed all such oppositions can be mapped on to the overall dualism of social structure and social action. The development of social theory as a scholarly discipline over the last three centuries can be seen as a reconfiguration of the structure-action interrelationship. In more recent years, there is a noticeable shift from the primacy of social structure to that of social action, and the resultant move away from a positivistic theory of action towards a voluntaristic theory of action (Parsons 1942) (34).

The shift toward “voluntaristic” theory, as Sarangi describes it, is quite visible in sociolinguistics, including variation studies. While I leave the bulk of that discussion for Chapter 2, it should be immediately clear that the gradual (and not total) turn from the Labovian paradigm to the current “identity-based” ones such as the community of practice (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992) is describable as a shift from (structural) determinism to more agentive approaches. Sarangi attributes to C. Wright Mills a view of structure and action as interconnected, and places Giddens in the same theoretic camp. He warns, however, that such views introduce the risk of “los[ing] sight of what each component element is” (35). This cautionary note sets Sarangi apart from most contemporary sociolinguists, who view such an integrationist attitude as necessary. In
fact, Coupland (ibid.) and Heller (Chapter 8 of the same anthology) both indicate the potential benefits for sociolinguistics of Giddens' (1987) structuration theory, which defines social structures in terms of local, daily practices. (It should be noted here that Giddens' structuration theory differs in critical ways from Mills' (1959) call for the simultaneous examination of the micro and macro.)

Heller (ibid.) goes so far as to deny the micro/macro opposition:

Over the years, many social scientists have suggested that perhaps the macro/micro dichotomy is not the most helpful way in which to understand how the observable dimensions of social life in the here and now are linked to durable patterns which lie beyond the control or the awareness of individuals ... Conceptualizing social life in terms of a dichotomy implies that there are different types of data for each, equally observable (or not, as the case may be), and that, in addition, the linkages should be identifiable. And yet, empirical work fails to identify such types (212).

Heller's solution is to reformulate the question: “The problem of linkage between macro- and micro-levels becomes a problem of linkage among social interactions over time and (social) space” (212). She thus locates her research squarely in the observable, the local, looking for the construction and reification of social structures in daily interactions. This rather extreme shift away from structural determinism runs counter to the position I will adopt here.

Certain theories of communicative action and social psychology – particularly those of Habermas, Foucault, Bourdieu, and Tajfel & Turner – are nearly ubiquitous in discourse analysis and are beginning to make their way into variation studies as well. Meyerhoff (2001), for example, applies the “intergroup principles” of convergence, divergence, and accommodation to situations of speaker uncertainty to account for both patterns of discourse and results of quantitative variation analysis. More recognizable
and widespread social-theoretic influences on variation studies include Weberian notions of class (especially in Labovian work; see also Rickford 1986 for what could be considered a Marxian approach) and the importation of the social network and community of practice concepts, the latter marking the interactionist/praxis-oriented/constructionist turn in variation which Labov is reluctant to accept (2001: 191).

Williams (1992) offers an ambitious, 250-page sociological critique of several sociolinguistic subfields revolving around the thesis that since its inception, sociolinguistics has been implicitly dominated by a Parsonian structural-functional model of society. This theoretical rigidity, Williams argues, fosters critical flaws in variation studies such as problematic notions of “speech community”, the illusion that statistical correlation amounts to explanation, and insufficient conceptions of social class. While I submit that Williams' critique is appropriate and important for the field of variation through perhaps the mid-1980s, methodological and theoretical advances of the past 20 years have addressed most if not all of the shortcomings he identifies, and those which have not been exactly corrected – such as the deficiencies of social class scales – are well recognized and discussed at length elsewhere. Williams even cites discussions of many of the most prevalent issues by sociolinguists such as Romaine (1982) and Cameron (1985). I therefore will not evaluate Williams' claims here except to note that mainstream variationists have, for the most part, cast off the structural-functional mold.

A major point of discussion in the anthology cited above (Coupland, Sarangi, & Candlin 2001) is whether the use of social theory is critical, or even helpful, for sociolinguistic research. A related question found in several chapters is whether sociolinguistics should be considered part of social theory or a distinct discipline.
Coupland contends that sociolinguistic theory should be considered part of social theory and that its data-anchored methods have the potential to improve social theory by blending top-down and bottom-up perspectives. By contrast, Roberts (Chapter 12) argues that social theories are useful heuristics but do not help us “do” sociolinguistics.

She gives two reasons:

[The “personal anthologies” of sociolinguists], combined with the grounded analysis which comes from extended periods in the field, gives their work an authority and relevance which may be framed or given a general context by social theory but does not require it to be ‘imported’. Secondly, the extent of the debt of critical social theory depends more upon the particular circumstances of the sociolinguistic research than on the robustness of the theory (326-327).

Roberts claims that “grand” social theories often falter when confronted with empirical data, despite her stated sympathy for Woolard's (1985) well-known call for more thoughtful, principled use of social theory in sociolinguistics. Rampton (Chapter 10) takes yet another stance, claiming that sociolinguistic theory and social theory tend to have distinct objects of analysis:

My own view is that, where they are interested in different objects, there should not be any problem if the substantive theories that sociolinguists work with are different from other social scientists'. They are likely to be able to bring different kinds and amounts of knowledge to bear on claims about, say, text-processing rather than race relations, and in line with this, complaints about sociolinguists not knowing more sociology or anthropology are only fair if sociolinguists make inflated claims to cross-disciplinary knowledge they do not really have (267).

This final claim – that sociolinguists should not be expected to gain familiarity with social theory – is understandable given the difficulty of maintaining currency in more than one field's theoretical debates. While a full response to this criticism lies outside the scope of this project, I believe that the problem could eventually be greatly relieved by closer physical cooperation between linguists and other types of social theorists at all
levels of scholarship. Further, the lack of any expectation for sociolinguistics to incorporate insights from sociology and anthropology could detract from the cross-disciplinary dialogue that has at times proved remarkably productive. For instance, Milroy's (1987) application of social network methods to linguistic variation in Belfast sparked a minor revolution in variationist thinking. Viewing sociolinguistic theory as distinct from other social-theoretic traditions would also reinforce what are already, I argue, artificial boundaries among the social sciences. Anthropological linguistics, linguistic anthropology, the sociology of language, sociolinguistics, ethnolinguistics, the ethnography of speaking: the sheer number of titles used to capture the various combinations of linguistics with anthropology and sociology suggests the complex links among the fields.

My view of the relationship between variationist sociolinguistic theory and social theory is that the former is an instance of the latter and that cooperation among social-scientific disciplines is essential. For instance, few if any sociolinguists have denied the appropriateness of Rickford's (1986) call for the integration of conflict-based social class theory into studies of class-based linguistic variation; the argument extends to other dimensions of society, as language and gender scholars, among others, would contend. Sociolinguistic theory is social theory insofar as it is the study of the relationships between social structures and individuals' practices. In making this claim I do not intend to dismiss the contribution of sociolinguistics to the so-called “theoretical” linguistic areas of syntax, semantics, phonology, etc., or to suggest that sociolinguistics is not “real” linguistics. On the contrary, I view sociolinguistics as belonging to linguistic
theory and social theory simultaneously, and I perceive no clear boundary between the two fields.

Some linguists who favor the interweaving of sociolinguistic and social theories have nevertheless voiced the concern that it threatens to obscure the distinctions among levels of social structure. Wilson (ibid.), for example, sounds the following cautionary note:

If sociolinguistics can be criticized for not paying enough attention to the detail of social variables and social processes, we must be careful not to go too far in the other direction, that is trying to pay attention to everything ... When one combines the concerns of sociolinguistics with social theory the micro and macro may become diffused and confused (343).

In principle, this concern is valid. It has taken variationist sociolinguistics several decades to arrive at its current appreciation of localized stylistic practices as distinct yet linked to the broad patterns of variation and change which result from interrelated processes such as migration and shifts in national economies (cf. Mendoza-Denton 1997, Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 1998). However, neither Wilson nor other scholars who put forth this concern ever (to my knowledge) offer real or hypothetical examples of interference with linguistic research. I am inclined to trust that the benefits of integrating sociolinguistics and social theory will outweigh any resulting confusion about social structure.

1.4 The research question

Fundamentally, this study's goal is to determine whether a correlation exists between sociological consciousness and linguistic variation. The social context in which
this question is addressed is altogether familiar: Worthington, a town once geographically and demographically distinct from Columbus, has been completely surrounded by Columbus sprawl. Two years of ethnographic observation reveal a complex and varied set of responses to and perceptions of the effects of sprawl among Worthington residents. Preliminary evidence (Dodsworth 2005a) indicated that resistance to /l/ vocalization in Worthington is a form of symbolic resistance to the threatened loss of community identity. The present study carries out quantitative analyses of phonetic variables previously documented in Worthington: /o/ fronting, /æ/ backing and lowering, and /l/ vocalization. Using Mills' notion of the sociological imagination as a framework, four rough types of sociological consciousness are found among 17 speakers: individual centered, social structure centered, integrated (i.e. a balanced view of the interrelationships among personal experiences, social structure, and history), and little or no critical awareness. These four types constitute an independent variable which shows a statistically significant correlation with each linguistic variable. The results indicate that sociological consciousness does condition linguistic variation, probably via locally-defined personae.

1.5 Structure of the dissertation

Chapter 2 begins with a critical review of major variationist frameworks from Labov to communities of practice, leading to the argument that the investigation of sociological consciousness is an appropriate next step for the field of variation. The sociological imagination is discussed in detail. Chapter 3 begins with an ethnographic
description of the Worthington community and proceeds to a description of the 17 speakers on whom I focus. The speakers are categorized according to social consciousness type using a framework based on Mills’ “coordinate points” of history, biography, and social structure. Chapter 4 presents quantitative analyses of the phonetic variables, showing social consciousness to have a statistically significant effect for each variable and interpreting the results. Chapter 5 discusses the implications of the quantitative results for current sociolinguistic theory and suggests future work, particularly that which deals with the integration of social theory and sociolinguistics.
CHAPTER 2
THE THEORETICAL APPROACH

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I motivate and explain my theoretical approach to sociolinguistic variation in Worthington. As the approach is innovative, I first present a critical review of influential variationist literature and subsequently show how my approach builds on earlier work, focusing on the increased emphasis on individual agency. Because the approach is interdisciplinary, I also review some relevant literature in social theory and sociology.
2.2 Critical review of variationist literature

2.2.1 The Labovian framework

The most fundamental assumptions about the nature of sociolinguistic variation were first stated by Labov’s study of Martha’s Vineyard. Labov acknowledges that “the point of view of the present study is that one cannot understand the development of a language change apart from the social life of the community in which it occurs” (1972 [1963]: 3). He goes on to say “I believe that we can find a specific explanation [for the centralization of (ay) and (aw)] if we study the detailed configuration of this sound change against the social forces which affect the life of the island most deeply” (25). Defining the “social life of the community” remains a complex and contentious business, as demonstrated by the array of approaches that sociolinguists have taken to operationalize social structure.

One of the first indications of Labov’s conception of the relationship between “social forces” and individual behavior comes after he has described the declining status of traditional trades, especially fishing, on the island, and the rise of tourism: “these economic pressures must be clearly delineated in order to assess the heavy psychological pressures operating on the Vineyarders of old family stock” (28). Here we can infer that “heavy psychological pressures” have the potential to influence linguistic practice, and Labov provides solid quantitative evidence for this later in the paper. Significantly, he also compares raw centralization scores across the six speakers who centralized (ay) to the greatest degree, showing that older, up-island (“traditional”) fishermen were the...
Labov’s use of this simple comparison suggests that he believes broad social forces — i.e. social and economic changes that affect the entire island — can have such precise influence on linguistic behavior that even a comparison across only six speakers is informative.

Labov’s primary conclusion is that one’s orientation to traditional island culture, as opposed to the encroaching mainland culture, is the only social variable that interacts significantly with centralization. Education, a commonly-used indicator of social class, does not (41, footnote). The implied relationship between social structures and individual choice is one in which the individual has significant autonomy. To understand linguistic variation, Labov suggests, we need to understand the way that community members themselves view the social space, and we need to assume that individuals can and will shape their linguistic performance to match their social identities (or the social identities they desire). Objective indicators of social status offer no guarantee; instead, it is critical to uncover the kinds of social groups that are most subjectively salient to people, as the nature of those groups can inform our understanding of linguistic practice. In short, Labov argues for an ethnographic approach to linguistic variation.

Labov’s later work in New York City departs from this anthropological approach, pioneering a consensus-driven model of social forces that subsequently dominated variationist sociolinguistics. Labov (2001) summarizes his early study of phonological variables in New York City (NYC) as follows: “the behavior of the individual speaker cannot be understood until the sociolinguistic pattern of the community as a whole is delineated” (33). Taking a purely objective approach to NYC’s social structure, he employed a socioeconomic scale based on three indicators: occupation of the family’s
breadwinner, the number of years of school the informant had completed, and the
family’s income. The scale was based on one constructed by the Mobilization for Youth
program and was used by Labov as an indicator of social status. Accordingly, informants
occupying a high position on the scale had what Labov called “prestige.” Informants
were grouped into ten socioeconomic classes, though these are collapsed into five and
sometimes six groups when they are plotted against phonological variation indices. For
each phonological variable, there was shown to be a positive correlation between
socioeconomic status and frequency of the “standard” or “prestige” variant. In the case
of coda /r/, for example, the informants who produced [r] the most frequently in casual
conversation were those with the highest socioeconomic status. More striking was the
fact that the different classes showed very similar patterns of variation across the four
styles, or registers, of speech that Labov elicited (casual, careful, reading, word lists). All
classes used the prestige variants the most frequently in the word list style, and least
frequently in the casual style. These conclusions are taken as support for Labov’s claim
that social forces and/or structures condition linguistic variation in a regular, patterned
way.

In addition to studying the production of linguistic variables, Labov investigated
community members’ subjective evaluations of them. There was considerable, though by
no means complete, agreement among informants in their evaluations of the variables.
Labov concludes that “this result is typical of many other empirical findings which
confirm the view of New York City as a single speech community, united by a uniform
evaluation of linguistic features, yet diversified by increasing stratification in objective
performance (1972[1966]: 117). In other words, (white, native-English speaking) people
living in the Lower East Side share common norms for linguistic behavior even though their production of certain variables is stratified. Individual speakers are essentially anonymous in this approach; a speaker’s linguistic variation is conditioned by his/her membership in a particular socioeconomic group. Further, all speakers know which variants are “prestigious,” though many speakers do not use those variants very often. This “diversity in uniformity” or “orderly heterogeneity” is the hallmark of the Labovian class-based approach. Studies of this variety operate within a single speech community where there is assumed to be a single set of social norms governing linguistic variation.

Yet there are two types of exceptions to this (alleged) regularity, both discussed at length by Labov. First, the lower socioeconomic classes sometimes exhibit a different pattern of variation across the four styles than the higher classes. This is the case for the variable (th), where the lowest five classes show a relatively sharp increase in the frequency of the prestige variant between the careful style and the reading style. As Labov describes it, “the five strata of the population are grouped into two larger strata with widely different *use* of the variables” (113, my emphasis). The word *use* here may or may not indicate that Labov believes speakers actively manipulate their linguistic variation to achieve social gains. In either case, Labov would not view the effort as very productive: “variation in linguistic behavior does not in itself exert a powerful influence on social development, nor does it affect drastically the life chances of the individual; on the contrary, the shape of linguistic behavior changes rapidly as the speaker’s social position changes” (111).

Second, there are “crossover” effects: the class that Labov calls “lower middle” sometimes uses the prestige variant more frequently than the higher classes use it, and
this tends to occur in the reading and word list styles. This pattern is explained as the reflection of linguistic insecurity; lower middle class speakers are claimed to have the most negative evaluations of their own speech, and so when speaking carefully, they self-correct the most often.

Labov also notes that there is inherent individual variation which is usually too constrained to interfere with the regularity of the community pattern. However, “individuals whose deviation from the mean is large enough to disturb the pattern are marked by aberrant social histories” (2001: 80). This is a wonderful example of Labov’s (not altogether unjustified) treatment of individuals: they 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.

It is clear that neither kind of irregularity prevents Labov from viewing the speech community (in this case, the Lower East Side of NYC) as a unified whole, both linguistically and socially. All community members know their places with respect to the social hierarchy, and their patterns of linguistic variation merely reflect their knowledge and tacit acceptance of this hierarchy. The social meaning of a linguistic variable is accepted throughout the community. This rigid, structural-functional view of the speech community does not view individuals as linguistically creative, or even as particularly agentive. While Labov never (to my knowledge) explicitly claims that social class irrevocably determines one’s pattern of linguistic variation, there is little room for any other conclusion. The scores of subsequent studies that were modeled after the NYC study treated various constructions of class as the real objects of study, and not as stand-ins for more nuanced and multi-faceted social processes. Undoubtedly, one of the
reasons for the long (and to some extent, ongoing) over-use and reification of social class scales is that Labov himself continued the practice in one of his next major projects, the tracking of phonological variables in Philadelphia.

The stated goal of the Philadelphia study was to test the curvilinear hypothesis, the idea that the leaders of linguistic change come from the lower middle class or the upper working class, i.e. the middle groups (Labov 2001: 31-32). Accordingly, the study was “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” (34). To test the curvilinear hypothesis, Labov examines two sets of phonological variables: 1) “stable” variables which are expected to show no differentiation across age groups, but stratification across socioeconomic groups; 2) changes in progress, which are expected to show both age and class effects. Yet Labov’s view of social influences is not confined to age and socioeconomic status: “A complete account of sociolinguistic patterns must display the effects of speakers’ gender, age, ethnicity, race, social class, urban/rural status, and position in social networks” (2001: 84). Multiple dimensions of identity may be simultaneously relevant to linguistic variation, in other words, and Labov employs both socioeconomic scales and social network techniques.

Two sets of variables are examined in separate analyses: stable sociolinguistic variables and changes in progress. For both sets of variables, social class clearly emerges as a particularly influential dimension of social structure. It is therefore useful to scrutinize Labov’s approach to social class, summarized in the following passage:
The basic concept involved is that of a socioeconomic hierarchy, not a discrete set of identifiable classes. In order to test the hypothesis of the LCV study—the existence of a curvilinear social class pattern in change from below—it is necessary to divide that hierarchy into at least four sections. The independent variables of occupation, education, and house value adopted by the LCV study of Philadelphia are different measures of the relative positions of a speaker in that hierarchy which allow us to make such provisional divisions. They are not themselves determinants of social class, a concept that involves the more subjective component of status, and the more elusive fact of power (114).

From Labov’s results, we know that a scale combining occupation, education, and house value shows a stronger-than-chance interaction with stable and new linguistic variables. But what can this finding tell us about the relationship between linguistic variation and social structure? In the passage above, Labov essentially admits that the social class scale he uses does not explain linguistic variation but merely provides a sense of speakers’ places in the social hierarchy. Citing Sturtevant’s assertion that languages change when competing social groups employ competing linguistic forms, Labov claims:

This view is not distinct from the position of Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985), who see the adoption of new linguistic forms as “acts of identity,” by which speakers maximize their social advantage. Both attribute linguistic change to: (1) the association of positively regarded traits and social privileges with membership in a given social group, and (2) the association of a linguistic form with membership in that social group... While such covert attitudes and beliefs may actually be involved in linguistic change, they are not usually supported by material evidence (191).

Thus setting aside the tremendous insights contained in Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's (1985) Acts of Identity, Labov reduces the investigation of variation and change to two possibilities, the “consensual” and “competitive” models of sociolinguistic structure. In the former model, there is “a general consensus as to how people should speak; this is the dominant form of expression whenever an interview or a conversation turns to a discussion of language differences” (105). Under this view, “sociolinguistic stratification
is the result of the differential ability of speakers to produce the standard forms or inhibit the nonstandard forms” (105). The competitive model, by contrast, understands a sociolinguistic pattern “as a stable balance of competing norms. In this view, the nonstandard forms represent an alternate form of symbolic capital that carries full value in working class social networks, and serves the needs of members of that society” (105).

Labov finds evidence for both models in his Philadelphia study. As we have seen, the evidence consists almost entirely of statistical work in which frequency of linguistic variants is shown to correlate with social class and with style, or register. This study therefore maintains Labov’s focus on quantifiable social structures, first emphasized in the NYC study. Individuals are not viewed as acting as individuals per se but rather as fairly anonymous members of social classes, age groups, and genders. How and why individuals come to adopt group norms is not discussed. Similarly, although we know that the upper working class has been responsible for the innovation of some phonological changes, we do not know what motivations cause this group to innovate. Linguistic practices, therefore, are not viewed as elements of identity construction, though that possibility is not completely rejected. Group membership, or “social location,” determines linguistic behavior (149).

2.2.2 Criticisms of the Labovian framework

Labov’s study of Martha’s Vineyard was foundational in its assertion that linguistic variation interacts with social identity, and that linguistic variables can be units of investigation. Further, his quantitative approach to the study of sociolinguistic
variation has and continues to influence the field with respect to the use of statistical
techniques and sampling procedures, among other areas. Even so, many of the
assumptions underlying Labov’s approach have been challenged, and the shortcomings of
the class-based paradigm have been cited as motivation for the development of new
sociolinguistic frameworks.

One oft-condemned aspect of the Labovian paradigm is its use of socioeconomic
scales that are constructed by aggregating factors such as income, education, occupation,
type of residence, etc. Rickford (1986) correctly argues that this approach to class
introduces at least two flaws. First, class scales are usually not tailored to the
communities that they are used to study; groups that emerge from the use of an aggregate
scale may, therefore, not be recognized locally as distinct social groups. Labov’s NYC
study offers a partial exception: the scale used had been constructed by the Mobilization
for Youth project and was based on sociological research in the city, but there is no
evidence that it reflected local conceptions of social divisions. Second, multi-index
scales overemphasize prestige to the exclusion of “economic relations and power
asymmetries between classes” (Rickford 1986: 216). As a result, Rickford argues, it is
taken for granted that linguistic forms used more frequently by the higher classes index
prestige for everyone. That is, the community enjoys general consensus regarding who or
what is prestigious. This view is entirely functional, and it misses insights that are
captured by more conflict-oriented models of social structure such as those of Marx and
Weber. Rickford offers the example of two classes in Cane Walk, Guyana, and presents
evidence that the lower (“Estate”) class uses the Creole first person singular form *mi*
rather than the Standard English variant *ai* as an act of solidarity. Unlike the Non-estate
class, members of the Estate class do not view Standard English as an effective tool for achieving socioeconomic improvement. Instead, they consider a broad change in the social order to be necessary. The stratified use of *mi* in Cane Walk therefore does not rest on prestige but on differential views of what constitutes social improvement and of the means for achieving it.

Related to the second flaw identified by Rickford is Romaine’s (1982) observation that a single speech community can house competing norms. Different populations within a community can have different ideas about which linguistic forms are proper or express hostility, etc. Labov’s prestige-based explanations of linguistic variation fail to capture this possibility.

Further (but less direct) criticism of the use of class scales is found in Milroy’s *Language and Social Networks*. Referring to the practice of ordering society into a set of discrete classes, Milroy observes:

This procedure obviously does reflect social reality to a certain extent and is a sensible way of ordering large amounts of data such as those collected from a large sample of speakers in New York City. But we must not lose sight of the fact that the groups we end up with by segmenting our scale—such as ‘lower class’, ‘working class’, ‘middle class’—do not necessarily have any kind of objective, or even intersubjective, reality (14).

Further, Milroy notes that class is an abstract concept, that status groups tend to be fluid rather than discrete, and that membership in a particular socioeconomic stratum may not contribute significantly to an individual’s conception of his/her own identity. (It should be noted here that Labov 2001 shows awareness of these facts.) Smaller, locally-defined groups may be more central to personal identity. Milroy, like Rickford, calls into question the idea of “shared norms” pervading a speech community: “The difficulty of
defining one, and only one, ‘prestige’ variety of English in Belfast makes the concept of the speech community difficult to apply in Labov’s terms” (105).

More recently, Cameron (1997 [1990]) has criticized the quantitative paradigm for failing to explain observed patterns of linguistic variation. Labov-style work, she says, suffers from the implicit assumption that statistical correlations are explanations: “Someone who subscribes to the sort of account given above has misunderstood what it means to explain something” (60). Cameron also complains that it is ad hoc to claim that speakers express particular social identities through language. Do people really have definable, fixed social identities (as social class scales imply)? Finally, she questions the very general assumption that language reflects group norms, especially given that there is no account of where norms come from and that, as Milroy had observed, most “groups” employed by sociolinguists are abstract, analytical tools that have little concrete reality for speakers.

Finally, Eckert (2000) echoes Cameron’s concern about the acquisition of norms, and joins the list of those who complain that “standard” norms are not necessarily shared throughout the community. Eckert offers an alternative:

While formal style certainly requires greater attention to speech…there is every reason to believe that a similar effort is required at the extremely non-standard end of [the] repertoire as well. One might consider that the two ends of the continuum require effort motivated by different—and even conflicting—orientations, and that people have to work to ensure their participation in either market (18).

For Eckert, as for Rickford, Milroy, and many others, there are competing sets of norms coexisting in a single community. Labov’s portrait of linguistic variation as patterning according to a single, shared set of norms is seen as incomplete.
2.2.3 The social networks framework

While the class-based paradigm drew on sociological approaches to socioeconomic status (e.g. work in the Marxist and Weberian traditions), the next major framework looked to a different aspect of social structure. Lesley and Jim Milroy imported the concept of social networks from sociology and anthropology. A fundamental tenet of their use of social networks was the belief that multiple norms may coexist in a community, so that patterns of linguistic variation should not be viewed exclusively as reflecting varying degrees of prestige. L. Milroy’s (1987) *Language and Social Networks*, while it did not employ many of the quantitative techniques that are seen as valuable today, was the first to make use of networks in a quantitative linguistic project and has had the most far-reaching impact. For the moment, therefore, I concentrate exclusively on it. Milroy notes:

…we may…reinterpret [Labov’s] New York City data in the light of what appears to be a tendency for low-status people in communities to use vernacular as symbols of local loyalty. …low-prestige ethnic and status groups everywhere perceive their language or dialect as a powerful symbol of group identity, despite long-term pressures from the standardized code (18).

Therefore, instead of assuming, Labov-style, that individuals strive for a prestige dialect at the top of a sociolinguistic continuum, Milroy argues for the following perspective:

“…we may view the vernacular as a positive force: it may be in direct conflict with standardized norms, utilized as a symbol by speakers to carry powerful social meanings and so resistant to external pressures” (19). It should be noted that Milroy is alluding to the familiar notion of “covert prestige” (Trudgill 1977), which was used to explain non-standard dialect use well in advance of the social networks paradigm.

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In theory, the social network approach operationalizes this perspective by studying speakers as individuals who interact with one another, and by shifting the focus from the social or personal attributes of those individuals to the characteristics of ties that make up their social networks. Milroy understands the social network to be “a mechanism both for exchanging goods and services, and for imposing obligations and conferring corresponding rights upon its members” (47). Some of the obligations imposed by social networks are norms of behavior, so that “…the patterns of social organization commonly founded in urban working-class communities are able to function as a mechanism of norm-maintenance. These norms may not be the same as those which are publicly accepted by the more mobile social groups” (86). For instance, in Ballymacarrett, one of the three working class Belfast neighborhoods where Milroy conducted fieldwork, speakers predominantly used the vernacular variant of (a) both in spontaneous style and word list style, despite the fact that they used it significantly less often in interview style. If speakers were style shifting toward a prestige norm, they would be expected to use the standard variant most frequently in word-list style. Conversely, only one Ballymacarrett speaker deletes (dh) (i.e. produces the vernacular variant) in word list style, despite the fact that nearly all speakers delete (dh) in the spontaneous and interview styles. Milroy’s explanation for these facts is that dual norms (prestige and local) operate on the variation of (dh), while in the case of (a), the speakers recognize no “correct” reading style distinct from the vernacular.

Milroy argues specifically that dense, multiplex networks associated with territorial boundaries are able to “maintain a set of communicative norms different from those which govern the behaviour of people not linked to a localized community by a
large number of ties” (108). Further, she concurs with Le Page in that numerous dimensions of identity such as sex, age, and social class interact with social networks so that patterns of linguistic variation are likely to be quite complex. She summarizes her approach to variation as follows:

The analysis…presupposes a point of view (although not an analytic method) similar to Le Page’s—that speakers use the resources of variability in their language to express a great complex of different identities. No method of analysis in the present state of knowledge is likely to capture completely the complexity of the way speakers use variability; but to add in a necessarily limited way the dimension of individual choice to those variables already considered (which may be seen as lying outside the speaker’s control) we use here the analytic tool of social network analysis. This allows to some extent quantification of the character of an individual’s everyday social relationships—the influences to which he is constantly open (115).

For Milroy, then, individuals have some autonomy in the use of linguistic variables, outside of the effects of social categories. Individuals make linguistic choices in order to identify with particular groups (133). This is probably the most important ideological difference between those working within a traditional Labovian paradigm and those who work within more recent models.

Milroy’s stated hypothesis is that “closeness to vernacular speech norms correlates positively with the level of integration of the individual into local community networks” (134). Social networks are used as a tool for approximating individuals’ integration into their communities, and three working-class Belfast neighborhoods—the Hammer, the Clonard, and Ballymacarrett—are studied separately. The concept of social networks is operationalized by means of a six-point network strength scale based on density and multiplexity. It is noted that “…network structures in the three areas with which we are principally concerned seem likely to co-vary to some extent with factors
like the stability of the area and availability of male employment locally” (144). Any effects of network structure, therefore, may in reality result from related factors that were already familiar to sociolinguists.

In the chapter “Conclusions and Theoretical Implications,” Milroy observes that “…a body of evidence emerges from several different kinds of society to suggest that a close-knit network structure is an important mechanism of language maintenance, in that speakers are able to form a cohesive group capable of resisting pressure, linguistic and social, from outside the group” (182). This finding is consistent with LePage’s argument that cultural focusing is favored by solidarity, constant interaction, and a confined territory (183). Milroy observes further that close-knit networks can form at any level of society, but are especially likely at either end of the social continuum. And if we can account for patterns of linguistic variation at both ends, then we can account for the middle, more mobile groups (187). Independent norms may occur at intermediate levels of society as well, however, and these must be taken into account. In a particularly significant section of the conclusion, Milroy addresses essentially the same issue that Labov (2001: 191) confronts when he dismisses Le Page’s claim that personal identity is one of the driving forces in linguistic variation (see above): Are we subscribing to an implicit linguistic determinism by adding yet another constraint on variability to the better known ones such as ethnic group, social class, age and sex? Does a person choose to be more or less closely integrated into his community and to signal his choice when he speaks? If this does happen should a personal network score be interpreted as reflecting a psychological fact, or simply as characterizing in a neutral way the structure of a speaker’s informal social relationships? (214) Unlike Labov, Milroy adopts Le Page’s
“acts of identity” stance and warns readers against viewing social network patterns as true explanations for patterns of linguistic choice, stating:

It is important to interpret the network measure used in this book as one of social structure. It cannot claim, unfortunately, to reflect consistently and individual’s attitude to status or solidarity ideologies although many would consider that characterizing the relationship between these attitudes and language use was a task of fundamental importance (214).

Even so, Milroy treats individuals as interacting in meaningful ways that are not captured by aggregate social class scales. Instead of looking to abstract, supra-local social structures to find and interpret patterns of linguistic variation, the social networks framework, as Milroy applies it, aims to uncover patterns of local social interaction that have concrete, quotidian meaning for individuals.

2.2.4 Weaknesses in Milroy's (1987) approach

Milroy’s use of social networks, while groundbreaking for its time, left ample room for improvement, as explained in Murray’s (1993) caustic critique. Here I summarize only the points that specifically address the use of social networks, and ignore those having to do with general statistical methods. First, Milroy’s six-point scale of network strength creates a situation in which working at the same place as at least two other persons of the same sex from one’s residential areas makes one twice as integrated (network-embedded) as living in the same area as one other household containing (an unspecified degree and number of) kin, which is itself twice the (integration) value of ‘membership of a high-density, territorially-based cluster’ (Milroy 1980:141-42) (165).

In other words, Milroy’s criteria for determining network integration probably do not correspond very well to social groups that are relevant to people's everyday experiences.
Murray complains further that Milroy makes no attempt to distinguish people who have no social ties from people who have no local social ties, thereby conflating upwardly-mobile people with isolated people. (Milroy does not, in fact, investigate non-local ties, so we do not know whether any of her speakers were upwardly mobile). Next, Murray notes that although the Milroys claim in several publications that weak ties carry linguistic innovations (citing Granovetter’s 1973 article about the potential of weak ties), they never provide evidence that weak ties actually play this role in linguistic diffusion. The same criticism applies to Milroy and Milroy 1992, summarized below. (Murray failed to mention, however, that previous social network studies outside the field of linguistics – cf. Lin, Dayton, and Greenwald 1978 – had provided evidence for the importance of weak ties in communicative phenomena.) Finally, Milroy (1987) does not show correlations between the density or multiplexity of network ties and phonological variables. Instead, as Murray notes, her network strength scale measures a kind of social involvement that only indirectly indexes density and multiplexity, and it is this aggregate index of involvement that is shown to correlate with linguistic variables.

Although these criticisms of Milroy 1987 are justified, the Milroys have introduced a valuable concept into sociolinguistic research. Their most promising line of thought appears in a 1992 article titled “Social network and social class: Toward an integrated sociolinguistic model.” Here the Milroys observe that social networks were originally used as more concrete, contextualized alternative to social class. Yet they caution that the social network construct “is wholly methodological and does not reflect an ontological reality; no one claims that personal social network structure is independent of the broader social framework that constantly constrains individual behavior” (2). So
social networks cannot stand alone as an explanatory device; they must be united with the
generalizations that the more abstract notion of social class offered. It is therefore
important to realize that “…although many impressively consistent patterns of variation
have emerged from urban sociolinguistic work, an adequate social framework within
which to interpret their results is still lacking” (2).

As a first step toward addressing the problem, they note that the social network
concept has trouble accounting for linguistic activity among networks with low density.
However, they make use of Granovetter’s (1973) insight that weak ties can serve as
bridges for information flow. Weak ties tend to be found predominantly in upper- and
middle-class networks, but, as Labov has shown, innovating groups are found centrally in
the class structure. In Højrup’s (1983) life-mode analysis, class is seen as a process, and
“…different types of network structure emerge from the conditions associated with the
life-modes of these subgroups, and local and individual social behavior is seen as
mediated through these smaller-scale structures rather than directly related to class” (18).
Life modes, in the Milroys’ analysis, give rise to a range of network structures. Certain
types of life modes tend to generate networks with weak ties, giving rise to particular
kinds of linguistic behavior.

Though preliminary, these ideas suggest ways of viewing connections between
local and supra-local social processes. If individual practice is to be related to group
identity, then it is essential to link these various levels of social activity. Lisa Lane’s
(1998) dissertation comes closer to this goal than any other community-wide social
network study, employing a combination of ethnographic, social network, and Labovian
statistical techniques to document and interpret the patterning of five linguistic variables
in a dialect of Danish spoken in Thyborøn, Denmark. It is immediately clear that her use of the social network concept differs considerably from Milroy’s. Lane conducts what she calls “ethnolinguistic interviews” with individual community members, asking for, among other things, “a rank-ordered listing of the first four levels of network ties (this information includes data about frequency, duration, place and type of conversations between the informant and the network tie)” (135). In addition, she asks about involvement with local groups and contact with other community members, information which sheds light on the density and multiplexity of local ties. In collecting this information, Lane draws on network-theoretic concepts as understood by Boissevain (1974), who conceptualized multiple network spheres, or zones, radiating outward from ego. Her use of social networks is thus much less artificial and much more intricate than Milroy’s insofar as she does not construct any kind of “network strength scale” that has no reality for community members, drawing instead on their own accounts of the degree and multiplexity of their ties.

But information about social networks is insufficient by itself, as is demographic information. As Lane notes:

It is clear from [Pedersen’s 1994] study of Fyn, that although social network theory is successful in determining patterns based on individuals’ ties to the community, and although traditional sociolinguistic theory is successful in describing the regularities found along socioeconomic class, sex, occupation, and age, neither approach provides a clear model of the use of different degrees of dialect within individuals. What is needed, Pedersen (1994) proposes, is a theory or model which can measure the degree of mental and physical (that is, ideological and material) social and linguistic orientation (141).

Specifically, “...the socio-history of the community, the identifying power of the dialect, and the self-consciousness of the residents must be considered together” (144). This
represents one of the first times, to my knowledge, that “self-consciousness” had been invoked in the variationist literature since Labov’s Martha’s Vineyard study, even if many scholars have mentioned it in passing. It turns out that Lane does not investigate self-consciousness in Thyborøn with much depth, and makes use of it only *post hoc* to account for patterns of linguistic variation. Even this, however, represents an advance over the Milroys’ work because it considers a subjective dimension of identity.

In answer to Pedersen’s (and her own) call for a catholic approach to dialect studies, Lane draws on the social theory of Højrup (1983). Under this analysis, society is understood as consisting of various “life-modes.” In Danish society, there are three life-modes defined according to the relationship between work and free time. Each life mode produces different types of social network structures. Lane argues that changing economic conditions across three generations in Thyborøn have produced the ebb and flow of different kinds of life modes, which in turn have determined the kinds of network structures that exist among each generation. For instance, the youngest of the three generations studied has the most symmetrical set of ties with respect to sex (i.e. men have nearly as many ties with women as with men, and vice versa), but among women of this generation, there are fewer ties, and a lower proportion of multiplex ties, than in the previous generation. Young women, in other words, no longer work and socialize (for example) with the same group of people to the extent that their mothers did, resulting in more compartmentalized life experiences. By contrast, the percentage of multiplex ties has remained stable across three generations of men, and the percentage of men's multiplex ties with women is increasing. These patterns are explained by reference to changing economic and educational conditions: the youngest speakers have had the most
contact with members of the opposite sex because they have had the most institutional
education, and more women of that generation work outside the home. It is also
important to note that the youngest speakers grew up during a time of economic
depression and so have differing ideologies about the town and local culture.

Five linguistic variables are shown to interact with the dimensions of age and sex.
Lane explains the correlations by appealing to differential network structures. The
linguistic variation, therefore, is not linked directly to network characteristics, as it is in
Milroy’s study, but only indirectly through other dimensions of identity. Two of the
variables (morpho-phonological forms of ‘I’ and ‘not’) are identified as “markers” (in the
Labovian sense; though they are better described as “indicators”) because the vernacular
variants are used categorically. The other three variables (palatalization, frication, and
pre-posed vs. post-posed articles) are declared “indicators” because they show
stratification by generation and sex. Lane interprets these findings in the following way:

I believe that these complex means of indexing and maintaining the various
identities are fundamental in these residents’ lives. Membership in a community,
be it a (socio-cultural) community, speech community, and/or linguistic
community (cf. Silverstein 1996) is, by its very nature, a continuous
transformational process that exists along a number of continua that cannot be
understood in qualitative or quantitative terms alone. I further believe that these
data highlight this view and understanding of language and society as not
reducible to discrete counts along any given axis without the simultaneous
consideration of the other axes of membership criteria as constructed within the
community” (300).

Note the presupposition in the first line: “these complex means of indexing and
maintaining the various identities” presupposes that linguistic variation both reflects and
constructs group identity. This assumption is present but questioned in Milroy 1987, and
not found at all in Labov’s early work except in the Martha’s Vineyard study. In the rest
of the passage, Lane conjures up an image of multiple, continuous dimensions of identity interacting with one another in ways that are constantly shifting. Membership in the community is not a core/periphery issue, as network theorists previously suggested. In fact, Lane uses the concept of social networks only to link economic processes and trends to individual-level interaction and practice. Thus we begin to see individual linguistic practice as linked in concrete, specific ways to macro-social processes. Lane goes on to note that so-called “outliers” or “lames,” in Labov’s sense, may not be socially peripheral but instead may simply exhibit sociolinguistic behavior that responds to different influences. The following statement is particularly forward-looking:

As sociolinguists and dialectologists, our main goal is not only to gain an understanding of the frequency distributions of linguistic variables, which constitute a shared linguistic norm for a specified group of individuals, but also to gain an understanding into why the individuals in a local linguistic community use their denotational code in a certain way, and how their localized use of a denotational code indexes changing internal and external social concepts of groupness.... In other words, asking why and how change happens and what it means to those involved (309).

Unfortunately, Lane devotes very little attention to specific individuals’ linguistic differences, choosing a more aggregate approach. Yet it is significant that she recognizes the need for investigating individuals’ motivations; in this sense, her dissertation foreshadows recent community of practice work.

2.2.5 Communities of practice

In an article titled “Think practically and look locally: Language and gender in community-based practice,” Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) introduce the
community of practice concept to sociolinguistics. In the midst of their critique of previous language and gender work, they explain:

To think practically and look locally is to abandon several assumptions common in gender and language studies: that gender can be isolated from other aspects of social identity and relations, that gender has the same meaning across communities, and that the linguistic manifestations of that meaning are also the same across communities (462).

These assumptions could easily describe the study of language and other facets of identity such as class or age, so it is clear that the article extends to all types of variation studies.

They motivate and define the community of practice concept as follows:

To explore in detail how social practice and individual “place” in the community interconnect, sociolinguists need a conception of a community that articulates place within practice. We therefore adopt Lave & Wenger’s notion of the “community of practice” (69, 116). A community of practice is an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations—in short, practices—emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor. As a social construct, a community of practice is different from the traditional community, primarily because it is defined simultaneously by its membership and by the practice in which that membership engages” (464).

Their assumption that “social practice and individual “place” in the community interconnect,” is found in Labov’s work only insofar as individuals belong to social classes, generations, etc. Further, they assume that this interconnection is relevant to language use. The type of community at issue here is different from the speech communities that were the foci of earlier work in linguistic variation; it is defined in relation to an endeavor around which people come together, and has no necessary ties to geographic boundaries despite the focus on “place.” What is being proposed here is a view of individual identities as composites of communities of practice (cf. Boissevain’s conception of an individual’s social network as a series of overlapping fan blades), many
of which are bound to be locally oriented because by definition, the members of a community of practice must come together around a shared goal. The Labovian view of individuals as anonymous members of social classes is supplanted here by a focus on groups with everyday reality for people.

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet criticize earlier variation studies for their rigid view of identities: “In all these cases [of quantitative variation studies], identity, interpreted in terms of place in the social grid, is seen as given, and manipulation of the linguistic repertoire is seen as making claims about these given identities” (469). In their framework, by contrast, linguistic variables are used in the daily construction and negotiation of personal and group identities. Each dimension of an individual’s identity interacts with the other dimensions, and all dimensions are subject to change as group dynamics and membership shift. Under this view, linguistic variables acquire highly contextualized meaning which is subject to as much intricacy and flexibility as the communities in which it is used. As Eckert and McConnell-Ginet say (clearly taking issue with Labov’s work), “…the social meanings of linguistic variables cannot be ascertained merely on the basis of the social address of those who use them most frequently….A variable acquires multiple meanings through the uses made of it in communities of practice” (470). Therefore, it is no longer sufficient to say that linguistic innovators are found in the upper working class, or that members of the youngest generation with the least multiplex network ties use vernacular forms the least. Instead, it is necessary to study the full range of contexts of a linguistic variable and its various uses in those contexts. Linguistic variables cannot be viewed as distinct from the meanings they index: “Ultimately the view that males have made language an instrument of their
own purposes also misses the real potency of language by assuming its meanings float in
the ether, unattached to social and linguistic practices” (482).

The section of the article that perhaps has the most relevance for this project is the
“Epilog,” which speaks to the neglected interface between linguistics and social theory.
Eckert and McConnell-Ginet complain that “with only a few exceptions, linguists have
ignored recent work in social theory that might eventually deepen our understanding of
the social dimensions of cognition (and of the cognitive dimensions of social practice)
(484, my emphasis). The italicized phrase is particularly significant because it suggests
that linguistic research could contribute to other social sciences, whereas often only the
reverse is heard.

In the first article of a (1999) Language in Society issue devoted to the community of
practice concept, Janet Holmes and Miriam Meyerhoff flesh out the concept, comparing
it to other sociolinguistic frameworks. There are three necessary dimensions to a
community of practice (from Wenger 1998: 76):

1. mutual engagement, or regular interaction
2. a joint negotiated enterprise, a process
3. a shared repertoire, accumulated over time, of resources for negotiating meaning

Wenger (1998:130-1) argues that a range of more specific features instantiate the three
main criteria, including, but not limited to:

• absence of introductory preambles, as if conversation and interactions were merely
the continuation of an ongoing process
• substantial overlap in participants’ descriptions of who belongs
• the ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products
Holmes and Meyerhoff observe that some of the ideas captured by the community of practice are familiar to sociolinguists:

Recent research on the relationship between language and gender has been dominated by approaches that examine the ways in which gender is socially constructed in interaction, rather than existing as a fixed social category to which individuals are assigned at birth...The concept of CofP is clearly much more compatible with this kind of social-constructionist approach than are other less dynamic or activity-focused concepts (180).

The most promising aspect of the community of practice, they argue, is its potential to link the micro and macro levels of investigation. Its use requires ethnographic work and analysis of discourse in context, but it must also be situated within a larger context which gives it meaning. The concept’s usefulness for linguists is summarized in the following passage:

With its criterial characteristics, [the community of practice] provides an ideal framework for exploring the process by which individuals acquire membership in a community whose goals they share; it provides a means of studying the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence, as individuals locate themselves in relation to other community members; and, for similar reasons, it provides a framework for examining language change (182).

In another article in the special Language in Society issue, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet argue that communities of practice mediate individuals’ relationships with others and with the broader social context. The clearest statement of this is in the following rather lofty passage: “The community as a whole constructs a joint sense of itself through the relation between its practices and those of other communities. Thus a CofP is not isolated and inward-looking, but shapes its participants’ relations both among themselves and with the rest of the world” (186). Therefore, they do not claim that research should be confined to the level of the CofP; at the end of the article, they call for work
addressing “inter-community relations, institutional forces, and individual differences” (200).

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet emphasize individual agency, in explicit contrast with Labov’s post-Martha’s Vineyard work. Note in the following lines that individuals “negotiate” and “construct” identities: “Individuals negotiate identity—a place in the world—by negotiating their participation in multiple communities of practice... Individuals construct identities through the resolution of their various forms of participation in various communities of practice” (188-189). This focus on action, or practice, is clearly what the authors consider a breakthrough inherent in the community of practice framework. They argue that “although the notions of speech community and of social network have both been very useful in sociolinguistic inquiry, neither directs attention to what people are doing as they engage with one another. It is what people are DOING which gives their interactions real bite, and which constructs language and gender (and much more)” (190). They do not explain what they mean by “what people are DOING,” but in view of their (somewhat misinformed) understanding of social networks, it can reasonably be assumed that they are referring to something emic. That is, they consider it important to know what goals (cultural, personal, etc.) underlie people’s practices, or, more bluntly, what people are thinking when they do things. Why, for example, do Eckert’s Burnouts hang out in the courtyard at Belten High? Answering this question required a great deal of ethnographic research (and also a great deal of inference). In Eckert’s and McConnell-Ginet’s view, then, the CofP not only places emphasis on individuals’ agency, but also considers their motivations.
Another point of contrast between Labovian techniques and the community of practice made explicit in this paper has to do with studying dimensions of identity in isolation. Labov found correlations between patterns of linguistic variation and the types of demographic information that can be conceived of in a monolithic way across multiple communities. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet argue that we will find explanations for linguistic variation only when we look for patterns connected to the practices of individual communities. Further, by contextualizing the study of variation in this way, we necessarily study social variables in interaction:

The crux of the issue is this: Because the social practices that construct gender are at the same time also constructing other aspects of identity—such as life stage, heterosexuality, ethnicity, or social class—illuminating generalizations involving gender are most likely to emerge when gender is examined not in isolation, but in interaction with other social variables (191).

By investigating a range of particular instances, they argue, we will eventually shed light on the relationship between global and local processes and institutions, and how local meanings are constructed by them. Here they concur with Holmes and Meyerhoff, who view the community of practice as a way of uniting the local with the global.

This article’s summarizing statement about the potential that the community of practice holds for gender studies applies to all dimensions of social identity: “Whatever new generalizations about language and gender may ultimately be made, they will shift the focus—away from attributes, and toward actions, strategies, and values; away from properties that women and men might have, and toward their social practices and social relations, both same-sex and cross-sex” (198). The new wave, so to speak, is dynamic. Identity is no longer about sets of characteristics, however complex, and however sensitive to considerations of the group vs. the individual. Identity is now about
negotiation, the constant evaluation of self and other, the continual redefinition of abstract notions like gender through the manipulation of observable symbols. Some of those symbols are linguistic variables.

In a third article in the special issue of *Language in Society*, Bucholtz outlines six ways in which the speech community is an insufficient model for language and gender work (and sociolinguistic work generally) when compared with the community of practice framework:

1. The speech community takes language as central. Linguistic norms of some kind are shared by all members. By contrast, the CofP makes practice—“the social projects of participants”—central. “Whereas the speech community model understands language as fundamentally disembodied—as detachable from the physicality of speakers—the community of practice quite literally reincorporates language into the physical self” (208).

2. The speech community takes consensus, as opposed to conflict, to be the community’s organizing principle. “The invocation of “norms” obscures the fact that these are successfully imposed ideologies favoring the interests of the powerful (Bourdieu 1992)” (208).

3. The speech community favors the study of central over marginal members, giving no attention to the possibility of interaction between speech communities. The emphasis is on sameness, not difference, so the full range of difference goes unexplored.
4. The speech community focuses on the group at the expense of individuals.

In such an approach, the role of the individual is merely to instantiate the practices of the group. Individual actions result less from choice and agency than from a social order that impinges on individuals from above. The traditional model’s strong preference for structure over agency means that individual variation, or style, is interpreted as the mechanical outcome of structural forces such as situational norms (209).

Instead, style should be seen in terms of self-presentation, which is constrained but not fully determined by social structures.

5. The speech community views identity as a set of static categories. Individuals’ position in the social structure determines their identity. This is incompatible with recent work suggesting that identities are fluid, and that they “emerge in practice,” influenced by both structure and agency (209).

6. The speech community places greater faith in researchers’ interpretations of practices than in participants’ own interpretations. The alternative is ethnography, which makes local interpretations central.

It is important to note here that—although Bucholtz clearly suggests otherwise—most of her criticisms of the speech community do not apply to the theoretical construct speech community but rather to the ways in which it has been implemented, especially by Labov. Consider the following definitions of speech community, all taken from Hudson (1999: 24-25):
Bloomfield (1933): A group of people who interact by means of speech.

Hockett (1958): The whole set of people who communicate with each other, either directly or indirectly, via the common language.

Gumperz (1962): Any human aggregate characterized by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant differences in language use.

Labov (1972): The speech community is not defined by any marked agreement in the use of language elements, so much as 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 in respect to particular levels of usage.

It is useful to assess each of Bucholtz’s criticisms in light of the definitions above, in particular Labov’s, which has been the working definition for sociolinguists. First, it is true that the speech community concept focuses on shared linguistic norms, but nothing about the concept itself requires language to be “disembodied.” The fact that Labov does not investigate specific interactional contexts, in which he could link language use to social roles enacted by physical beings, does not entail that this feat was impossible under the speech community framework. The second criticism is that the speech community takes consensus rather than conflict as an organizing principle. While Labov’s notion of “shared norms” certainly has a consensus-driven flavor, his definition does not require that the linguistic forms associated with those in power be viewed as the only standard ones. The shared norms could be—and are, I would argue—more complex than that. As Labov argues in his Philadelphia study, the speech community is composed of smaller subgroups. Why not hypothesize that each group has its own way of incorporating the norms into its linguistic practices? This idea is not fundamentally
different from a conflict-based perspective. Further, “participation in a set of shared norms” may be fulfilled without absolute uniformity across individuals; the definition does not exclude the possibility of there being multiple sets of norms, only some of which are shared.

Similarly, the focus on central as opposed to marginal members of speech communities (the third point of criticism) is in no way required by the theoretical construct. The definition obviously says nothing about those who deviate from the set of shared norms, but by the same token, the definitional criteria for the community of practice say nothing about people who lack the ability to engage in the type of cognition required for manipulating abstract symbols. Both frameworks leave someone in the margins.

Bucholtz’s fourth criticism of speech communities, that they focus on groups and structures at the expense of individuals and agency, is somewhat theory-driven in the sense that having shared norms constrains individualism. But again, this bias need not be as extreme as Labov’s work suggests. Attention to intra-group variation, as all variationists know, would have nicely complemented Labov’s work without overriding the assumption that the speakers shared certain linguistic norms and acted within a common set of social structures. In fact, Labov 2001 takes exactly that approach.

The fifth and sixth points of criticism are that the speech community views identity in terms of a static set of categories, and that community members’ own conceptions of identity and practice are ignored. True enough for Labov. But it is important to recognize that no definition of the speech community (at least, none that I have seen) establishes any parameters for identity. Instead, the definitions focus on
language—as Bucholtz herself complains—and leave the matter of social structure and identity open. Methods for interpreting the meaning of linguistic variation are left to the researcher, who is free to choose ethnography or any other approach. Crucially, the community of practice framework shares this quality: it leaves the mode of investigation up to the investigator.

I make these arguments not in order to shield the speech community from productive critique but rather to show that particular theoretical frameworks may be neither the problem nor the solution. Reviewing the major criteria for classifying a group as a community of practice:

1. mutual engagement, or regular interaction

2. a joint negotiated enterprise

3. a shared repertoire, accumulated over time, of resources for negotiating meaning

There is a critical point to be made here. Despite being dressed in trendy phrases, the three criteria are identifiable as common-sense ideas that sociolinguists have used for decades. The first, mutual engagement, means that people get together. Even Bloomfield’s 1933 definition of speech community mentions interaction. What sociolinguist has ever not thought that linguistic variables have meaning only by virtue of people coming together and using them? The second, a joint negotiated enterprise, means that people do things together: they don’t just get together, they get together to do things. The people who come together to do things also have some common goals. This reminds linguists that when people talk to each other, they have shared reasons for doing so. Every linguist who has ever studied the situated use of language has (presumably) taken this idea as fundamental. Third, people have a shared repertoire of resources for
negotiating meaning. For sociolinguistics, this means that people have caught on to the idea that they make choices about the way they say things, and that their choices have social significance. This idea has been one of the driving forces behind variationist sociolinguistics, and it is stated in various forms in Labov’s Martha’s Vineyard study as well as in all of his later work.

But the familiarity of the community of practice concept goes far beyond sociolinguistic assumptions and recent education theory. The concept, at least in the way it has been used, is implied by the three foundational premises of the 50 year-old, familiar sociological framework of symbolic interactionism. James Spradley, author of two handbooks on ethnography (1979, 1980), notes that the concept of culture as a system of meanings, which underlies ethnography, “has much in common with symbolic interactionism, a theory which seeks to explain human behavior in terms of meanings” (6). Ethnography, of course, is not a new concept to sociolinguists, having been around at least since 1963, and it necessarily accompanies every linguistic study cast in the community of practice framework. In order to emphasize the recognized connection between ethnography (and thus community of practice work) and symbolic interactionism, I will use Spradley’s quotations from Blumer 1969 (a sociologist closely associated with symbolic interactionism).

First premise: “Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them” (Blumer 1969: 2; quoted in Spradley 1979: 6).
Second premise: “The ‘meanings of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows’ (Blumer 1969: 2). Culture, as a shared system of meanings, is learned, revised, maintained, and defined in the context of people interacting” (Spradley 6).

Third premise: “Meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person dealing with the things he encounters” (Blumer 1969: 2; quoted in Spradley 1979: 7).

Beyond recognizing the similarity between these premises and the three criteria for communities of practice, it is enlightening to compare the premises with the following zealous argument for the usefulness of the community of practice concept; the passage is from Eckert 2000, easily the best-known community of practice study:

The process of making meaning in the world, then, can be seen in the meanings being constructed in and around communities of practice. In the course of joint engagement, activity is structured and made meaningful through the continual joint recognition of salience. As they facilitate community activity, abstractions, material artifacts, symbols, repeated actions, verbalizations, specialized lexical items, and so on become part of the joint ways of doing things. They mark, or reify (Wenger, 1998), the special nature of community activity. Tied as they are to community practice, they can serve simultaneously as symbols of community membership and as a basis for the further building of joint meaning and activity” (42).

We can immediately recognize the second premise of symbolic interactionism in Eckert’s third sentence (“As they facilitate…”). Things like material artifacts and specialized lexical items index group identity because they facilitate group activity. In other words, people adopt things as symbols because they recognize those things as important to group
activity. The third premise of symbolic interactionism is contained in Eckert’s last sentence (“Tied as they are…”). Joint meaning, in other words, is built by things that people encounter in community practice. The first premise of symbolic interactionism follows from these two sentences: people’s behavior with respect to things like specialized lexical items is determined by the meanings that those things have for people. If those things are part of group practice, i.e. if they mean group practice, then people use them to index group membership. These ideas are found throughout Eckert’s book, serving as the foundation for her use of the community of practice.

I have been trying to show clearly that the ideas defining the community of practice have long been some of the most basic and important ideas in sociolinguistics, and influential ideas in sociology and ethnography as well. Extrapolating from Wenger, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet took the step of making the ideas explicit and stating them in a way that harmonized with current trends in sociolinguistic thought: negotiate, interaction, and practice have been catch-words in the field for some time. This is not to say that the introduction of the community of practice has not advanced the field. It has effectively brought praxis to the forefront of sociolinguistics; researchers now focus almost exclusively on what people are doing when they make linguistic choices, as Eckert and McConnell-Ginet say. This is in part because the community of practice framework has made certain critical ideas more salient within the field even if those ideas are not entirely original. For instance, it has become common to speak of an interactional level mediating between the individual and institutional levels. The introduction of communities of practice has also made ethnographic work more common among
variationists. As a result, personal and group identities are seen as more flexible, more complex, and more open to negotiation, and so is the meaning of linguistic variables.

Many researchers are currently intent on identifying “communities of practice” among their informants as a way of licensing locally-oriented, practice-based accounts of linguistic variation. Much work is devoted to showing that the community of practice concept “allows” us to view linguistic variables as resources used to construct meaning (cf. Bucholtz 1999, for instance). Had we just developed the underlying ideas in the first place, we would never have had to “discover” the community of practice concept and shift our thinking to fit its mold.

Variationists who use the community of practice concept might argue that I am neglecting one of the most important aspects of their work: the effort to link the micro with the macro, or the interpretation of linguistic practices in a way that contextualizes them both locally and non-locally. I address this issue in the following discussion of Eckert 2000.

Eckert’s *Linguistic Variation as Social Practice*, while covering a broad range of anthropological and sociolinguistic topics, is explicitly devoted to a single overarching goal: “to establish that variation carries social meaning that is very local, but embedded within a socio-geographic context, and systematically related to global patterns” (222). Eckert both conceives of and approaches this task through the community of practice construct, which she takes as the critical, intermediate level of social organization linking the individual to the rest of the world. In fact, she claims, “it is the collection of types of communities of practice at different places in society that ultimately constitutes the assemblage of practice that is viewed as class culture, ethnic culture, gender practice,
etc.” (39). Eckert thus views all social categories, both local and global, in terms of practice. Her initial discussion of how the community of practice links the local and the global is both ambitious and vague:

I introduce the concept community of practice not because I believe that it will replace current constructs so much as because it focuses on the day-to-day social membership and mobility of the individual, and on the co-construction of individual and community identity. In this way, it ties social meaning to the grounded social aggregate and the same time that it ties the grounded aggregate to abstract social structures (40-41).

With this goal, Eckert embarks on a sociolinguistic analysis of phonological variables and negative concord in the context of what she calls Belten High, a suburban Detroit public high school. The social analysis is rooted in two locally-recognized adolescent groups, jocks and burnouts. Jocks are known for their participation in the school’s institutional (adult-driven) norms and activities and their identification with middle-class suburban culture. Burnouts are the opposite: they resist institutional norms, tend not to participate in school activities, and identify with working-class urban culture.

Prototypical jocks and burnouts also make up two of the network clusters, or communities of practice, that Eckert identifies.

There are three classes of linguistic variables examined: new changes in progress, advanced changes, and those in between. Although none of the variables is interpretable in terms of social class (parents’ social class, actually), most of them pattern according to the jock-burnout dichotomy. The most critical point for Eckert’s analysis is that the burnouts lead the newest changes in progress. Specifically,

[The new linguistic changes] are more advanced closer to the urban center. If one takes these geographic patterns to be evidence of geographic spread, then these new changes appear to be spreading outward into the suburbs from the urban center. And in schools across the suburban area, burnouts are leading locally in
these changes. This could be taken as an indication of greater access to these changes stemming from the burnouts’ urban-oriented lifestyle. It can also be taken as an indication that these urban-led changes have urban-related social meaning that gives them positive symbolic value for burnouts, and possibly negative symbolic value for jocks (136).

Frequent use of the newer variants is identified as a type of practice that defines the burnout community of practice and encodes its orientation to urban culture. The variables also showed effects of sex; roughly speaking, girls used the new variants more often than boys, excluding negative concord.

Eckert aims to fulfill her promise to link the local to the global by relating the local jock-burnout division to broader socio-geographic processes and perceptions. She first argues that the burnouts’ attraction to urban Detroit springs from a fundamental orientation to neighborhood as opposed to institution, drawing on Milroy’s (1980) conclusion that dense, multiplex networks occurred often in working-class neighborhoods where spatial boundaries were important. She claims “urban orientation in the Detroit suburban area is an extension of neighborhood orientation” (143). It is therefore relevant to suburban burnouts that the Detroit region has experienced a racialization of space characterized by white flight to the suburbs and an influx of people from the south looking for work in the automotive industry. Suburban residents view Detroit as a fast-paced, dangerous place, which, according to Eckert, attracts burnouts but repels jocks for the most part. Eckert is careful to note that there exists a continuum between urban and suburban spaces: “In some sense, Detroit is less a precise location than a state of mind, or a general direction. The urban-suburban continuum defines towns as more or less “Detroit,” and to many, the closer suburbs count as Detroit” (146). That being said, Eckert finally links geography to linguistic variation:
The relation between geography and social practice—the association of urbanness with daring and with trouble—connects suburban kids to the broader social and cultural geography of the urban-suburban area…Ideology is built into this geography, as the urban area stands in stark contrast to the school institution. Inasmuch as the urban-suburban continuum provides a powerful merger of social and geographic space, a crucial aspect of social and linguistic identity in this area is tied up with the way in which kids locate themselves and operate in this space… Understanding the relation between urban mobility and other aspects of social practice is crucial to understanding the social meaning of variation and the spread of linguistic change in the urban area (147).

In other words, the ideology underlying linguistic variation is linked to the values associated with the opposite ends of the urban-suburban continuum. When burnout kids use variants that occur most often near the urban center, they are taking on the meanings associated with urbanism—daring, trouble, working class, and adulthood, to name a few of the urban themes that Eckert discusses. The evidence for these claims consists mostly of scattered quotations from kids who moved to the community from Detroit during junior high or high school. There is no direct evidence that the linguistic variables in question index the social meanings that Eckert claims all adolescents in the suburban area recognize. There is, however, some correlational evidence: kids who “cruise” in Detroit are shown to lead the new changes in progress, while those who do not cruise lead in an advanced variable. Yet it appears that the set of cruising kids is nearly coextensive with the set of burnouts, so the reasoning here is a bit circular.

By contrast, the kids with the most involvement in academic activities exhibit the least negative concord and the most (ay) raising. Eckert argues that these variables show the most robust patterns of variation and are the most subject to conscious control.

Eckert’s network study (chapter 7) identified five clusters each of boys and girls, all of them defined in relation to the jock-burnout dichotomy. For the most part, it does
not appear that cluster membership has a strong effect on linguistic performance, though the prototypical jock and burnout clusters show opposite deviations from the means. The girls in particular show polarized linguistic practices:

The most striking result of the network study is the overwhelming community lead of the burned-out burnout girls in the use of almost all variants…They are linguistic icons, representing in the school what is the farthest out from the institutional, and placing a big red flag on the social and linguistic map. As icons, they constitute a local nexus for the construction of social and sociolinguistic meaning (211).

At the heart of Eckert’s analysis lies the assumption that the local social order mediates the relationship between individuals and society at large. The local community’s norms and structures thus take precedence over—but interact with—global ones. Using this pivotal idea, Eckert unites the results of her quantitative linguistic analyses with her ethnography and the community of practice construct. She first concludes that “the relation between the urban distribution of the variables and the local deployment of the variables in this study suggests that the change in the social distribution of variants over the life span of linguistic change is directly related to speakers’ recognition of the urban distribution” (222). This is not to say that there exist unmediated links between individual speakers' linguistic choices and their understanding of Detroit's linguistic norms. Instead, speakers both recognize the urban distribution and negotiate their participation in the linguistic changes through communities of practice, which are constructed in response to institutions such as high schools. It is here that Eckert aims to link the local to the global:

As extremes with respect to institutional and local engagement, the jocks and burnouts of the schools across the metropolitan area connect their respective social landscapes to the urban-suburban continuum….The social meaning of variation is built into the very means by which individual speakers are connected
to their closest friends on the one hand, and to the most abstract level of social organization on the other (228).

Specifically, burnouts consciously adopt urban, working-class stylistic—including linguistic—practices as a means of resisting the school institution, demonstrating that they are no longer children, and identifying with the social class that they expect to join after high school. This progression into adulthood occurs within communities of practice.

Eckert’s study draws quite a few significant conclusions about the relationship between individual identity and group practice. It proves fruitful to question some of her claims about the link between the local and the global. I begin with the claim that burnouts at Belten High and in suburbs across the Detroit area are consciously imitating urban working-class practices. Eckert provides plenty of evidence that burnouts at Belten spend time in the city, but she does not tell us much about whom they talk to there. Do they interact regularly with people who live in urban neighborhoods and are members of the “working class,” or do they mostly spend time with kids from other suburbs who also hang out in the city? Is their contact with urban residents regular enough that they manage to accurately acquire urban vernacular norms, or do the burnouts merely come up with their own approximation? Do we know how working-class city residents in Detroit speak? A more fundamental question is whether burnouts even think they are imitating working-class urban style. Do jocks consciously imitate their middle-class parents’ style? Do jocks and burnouts think about the world in terms of working class vs. middle class? Despite the wealth of ethnographic information that Eckert provides, we know very little about the way Belten High students think about the practices that are very
clearly relevant to social identity. Given this uncertainty, it seems premature to claim that the jock and burnout communities of practice mediate the relationships between individuals and *specific social classes*. There is no doubt that those groups both spring from and reproduce particular orientations to the world outside of high school. But orientations to what?

Another of Eckert’s claims, quoted above, is that “the change in the social distribution of variants over the life span of linguistic change is directly related to speakers’ recognition of the urban distribution” (222). This claim presupposes that speakers recognize the urban distribution of linguistic variants. In other words, speakers have noticed (consciously or not) that the advanced phonological variables associated with the Northern Cities Chain Shift have become so widespread that it no longer makes sense to use them to index urban orientation. Similarly, speakers understand that certain newer variables, including (ay) fronting and negative concord, are more robust in the city than in the suburbs, and more robust among the working class than among the middle class. These observations, while certainly possible and even likely among Belten High students, cannot be made in the absence of a shared social consciousness that links such concrete linguistic practices to abstract notions such as class. Eckert provides no direct evidence concerning the nature of individuals’ social consciousness beyond quotations from speakers linking notions such as popularity with specific objects such as shoe brands. The concept of the community of practice, with its emphasis on symbolic resources and joint endeavors, does not necessarily help us understand the connections speakers actually conceptualize between local practice and supra-local social structures.
Still, the very fact that Eckert’s study demonstrates the need to investigate social consciousness makes it important and groundbreaking work. To my knowledge, the only other study that clearly demonstrates this need (and even takes steps toward accomplishing it in a discourse-oriented way) is Le Page and Tabouret-Keller’s (1985) *Acts of Identity*, a study carried out within no pre-established theoretical framework.

Further, Eckert's use of the community of practice certainly does not prevent a more far-reaching analysis; as Mallinson (ms) demonstrates with her “intersectional” approach to social variables, the community of practice is rooted in a sophisticated social-theoretic tradition.

2.2.6 Summary of literature review

In the Labovian class-based approach to sociolinguistic variation, individuals were merely members of broad social categories, and linguistic variation was understood to reflect static dimensions of identity such as social class, age, sex, and ethnicity. Labov explicitly cast doubt on perspectives that appeal to personal constructions of identity through the manipulation of linguistic variables. In the Milroys’ version of social network analysis, individuals’ level of integration into groups affects their level of participation in group practices, and network structures have differential effects on local groups’ linguistic conservatism. In Lane’s version, social networks, as theoretical constructs, are used to link community-wide economic processes to patterns of daily interaction, including the changing patterns of linguistic variation. Finally, in the community of practice framework as understood by several scholars, especially Eckert,
the individual is a member of multiple local groups whose members co-construct the meanings of linguistic variables and other stylistic practices. These local groups mediate the individual’s relationship with the rest of society.

2.3 Speaker agency, realism, and social constructionism

The progression from the class-based paradigm to the local-group paradigm is perhaps best described as the gradual rise of the individual’s agency as a variable in quantitative analysis. While the Labovian approach generally treated individuals as governed by social hierarchies, the social network approach required greater attention to the kinds of social practices – such as visiting neighbors or participating in group activities – that are not constrained a priori by socioeconomic status, despite the demonstrated link between network density and class. The community of practice approach places further importance on individual agency by defining local networks as the primary sites for the construction of social meaning, brought about by individuals’ negotiation of personal identities in relation to such groups. Thus the individual as an active social being has become central in the search for the meaning and the progression of sociolinguistic variables. Coupland (1998: 115) insightfully locates the Labovian paradigm in the social structuralist and behaviorist traditions, contrasting it with other sociolinguistic approaches that assume a theory of social action, in which social meanings are constructed by speakers either intentionally or through negotiated co-construction. The community of practice model is a particularly clear instance of an approach in the social action tradition.
Yet the nature of agency and its relationship to social structures remains underexplored in the field. The shift from a deterministic model of social action to a more agentive model is occurring without widespread discussion of these types of models as they are understood in social science generally. Agency is a pivotal topic in the social science debate between realists and social constructionists (also known as relativists, though this term often denotes an extreme version of social constructionism). As the critical realist Vivien Burr (1998: 13) summarizes it, the focus of social constructionism is “not upon some objective reality but upon the different meanings with which our worlds become invested…it becomes possible to think not only of individuals re-construing aspects of themselves, but of re-thinking whole social categories, such as gender, sexuality, race, disability and illness”. By contrast, social realism posits and attends to a reality independent of human perception and culture, while recognizing that humans cultivate their own meanings within that reality.

Although this characterization of the debate obscures considerable variation within each side (cf. Parker 1998), it is enough to suggest the conflict surrounding agency. In a sense, agency looms larger in social constructionism than in realism. In the former, social reality is what people make of it; in the latter, reality is given to people, and they mold it to some extent. However, as Burr notes, in social constructionism “agency' becomes transformed into a language game, a way of talking which in itself is part of the social construction of the western individual, and the ‘self’ to which it relates becomes an effect of discourse” (14). Do humans’ choices have concrete effects? Although the social constructionist approach may be viewed as ultra-focused on agency, it may also be viewed as removing a priori the human capacity for “real” change.
Recent ethnolinguistic work, in particular the work that explicitly seeks to bridge the so-called theoretical gap between the local and the global, straddles the realist and constructionist approaches. Ethnographic investigation is by definition constructionist, but the current trend among variationists is to consider links between local, emic social categories and social structures such as class that are thought to operate above the level of the local community. Greater attention to social science debates about the nature of agency could both lend insights to ethnolinguistic work and help establish connections between it and other social science fields. Specifically, Carter and Sealey (2000) suggest that a particular brand of sociological realism could advance our understanding of the relationship between language and society. The view of sociological realism that they champion holds that “structured social relations provide the contextual conditions for social action, and are a feature of social reality which extends beyond individual consciousness and control” (5). Stated as such, their view is compatible with the community of practice framework insofar as the latter recognizes the local significance of so-called “global” social structures such as class and gender. Carter and Sealey also implicitly agree with the community of practice framework in noting that “it is only human beings who can act in the world and are thus the ‘agents’ of social action” (5). However, they begin to diverge from community of practice theorists by holding human interaction and social structures as distinct, whereas variation theorists such as Eckert takes the more relativistic, social constructionist position that constructs such as class are the negotiations of (class) identity among people. Carter and Sealey, relying heavily on Laydner’s (1993, 1997) more realist-oriented domain theory, specify that “the limits of the social world are not determined by what the participants perceive them to be” (9).
Social structure, for them, is clearly more influential than human agency:

The social world is stratified, each domain within it has distinct properties, and the different domains are not reducible to each other. People act within this stratified social world, whose complex mediation of what they do results in social action having all kinds of unintended consequences – and generating further emergent features and properties – which in turn help to shape the social environment for subsequent actors. Language is indispensable to social life, and plays a crucial role in each of the domains (16).

Although the authors admit to being unfamiliar with quantitative sociolinguistics, they propose that applying their model to that area

…would involve separating analytically the domains of speakers’ psychobiographies (experienced in phenomenological time) and the contextual (in this case linguistic) resources available to them (pre-existing them in time and distributed unequally). It would recognize the influences of speakers’ individual and collective social locations, and the potentially conflicting influences of social integration and system integration … Thus, the application of the theory we are proposing would, we suggest, offer plausible explanations of the probabilistic patterns of speaker behaviour found in many sociolinguistic studies (17).

Most variationists, I believe, already assume some version of this realist approach, though probably without a formal model of structure and agency. (In practice, few if any have accomplished such a thorough analysis; a near-exception is Lane’s dissertation, discussed above).

Responding directly to Carter and Sealey’s proposed version of realism and its application to sociolinguistics, Jonathan Potter (2000; see also 1998) argues that “the danger from the proposed enterprise of realist sociolinguistics is that it forces the analyst away from taking participants’ activities and orientations seriously. The constructive and active business of talk and texts is constrained by the requirement that they fit into the analyst’s prior ontology” (23). “The analyst’s prior ontology,” of course, springs from the analyst’s lived experiences and is not “real” in the realists’ sense.
Without proposing any particular dominance relation between social structure and human agency, I adopt a critical realist perspective, which allows for the existence of real social structures and their influence on social action. Nevertheless, I consider human agency and the cultural constructs that shape it to be of critical importance in the study of linguistic variation, as recent ethnolinguistic work suggests. (Here I reject Labov’s (2001) expressed doubt as to the validity of personal identity-based analyses, though I recognize that the effects of broad social structures cannot be neglected.) A critical step in understanding the relationship between human agency and social structures will be the investigation of the factors underlying human agency. My critique of Eckert 2000 argues that despite recent claims from several studies cast in the community of practice framework, that construct has not given rise to a sufficient exploration of subjective worldviews. In the following section, I argue that sociological consciousness is central to agency and thus to the study of sociolinguistic variation, particularly to the question of how linguistic variation fits into the micro/macro opposition that is central to Eckert 2000.

2.4 The sociological imagination

I use the term "sociological consciousness" to denote the awareness that lived experiences and social structures are mutually influential. I draw the concept from the 20th-century sociologist C. Wright Mills, whose 1959 book The Sociological Imagination puts forth sociological consciousness as a quality of mind necessary for
meaningful social science research. This section presents a summary of relevant parts of Mills (1959) followed by a discussion of their potential for the study of linguistic variation.

In Chapter 1 of *The Sociological Imagination*, Mills introduces the notion of the sociological imagination in the context of the post-WWII era, which is described as a time when uneasiness and indifference gripped both everyday life and the social sciences. The sociological imagination, Mills thought, was beginning to emerge as a kind of “common denominator” of cultural life at least in the U.S., and he saw it as a means by which social scientists could ultimately help people become free and reasoning individuals.

The importance of the sociological imagination, for Mills, rests on the following observation: “The facts of contemporary history are also facts about the success and the failure of individual men and women” (3). This is followed by a stronger statement: “Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both” (3). In the post-modern U.S., Mills claims, a vague uneasiness and a sense of being trapped afflict many individuals; others are indifferent to public issues. People who feel uneasy or indifferent need a quality of mind that allows them to make sense of the things that are going on in the world and in themselves. This quality, argues Mills, is the *sociological imagination*. It is described as follows:

The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. It enables him to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions. Within that welter, the framework of modern society is sought, and within that framework the psychologies of a variety of men and women are formulated. By such means the personal uneasiness of individuals is focused
upon explicit troubles and the indifference of publics is transformed into involvement with public issues (5).

The sociological imagination is thus portrayed as a two-fold remedy for the most serious problems of Mills’ time. On one hand, sociological imagination seeks at the societal level an explanation for the vague uneasiness that individuals in contemporary society feel. The “false consciousness” that individuals may develop by viewing life only narrowly, in purely local contexts, may thus be understood as misguided. On the other hand, mass indifference to “public issues” is replaced by engagement, as people realize and feel the connections between societal processes and individual lives.

The notion of false consciousness may seem prescriptive, and therefore invalid, to sociolinguists. Yet I contend, following Mills, that there are accurate and inaccurate ways of understanding how social structures and historical processes affect one's personal experiences. Awareness of social structures, for example, is not equal across individuals. The recognition of such inequalities is reflective of the critical realist approach I adopt here. It is worth emphasizing, however, that this study is not an attempt to reform anyone's consciousness, nor is it the slightest bit prescriptive from a purely linguistic perspective.

According to Mills, the best social analysts, professional or otherwise, structure their thinking around the three “coordinate points” of biography (personal experiences), historical processes, and social structures (6-7). A well-developed sociological imagination, then, conceptualizes each point in terms of the other two, never seeking to understand one in isolation from the others. The task is not simply one of recognizing
correlations between personal experiences and social categories. Instead, the inquiry must be more thorough at both ends:

For that imagination is the capacity to shift from one perspective to another—from the political to the psychological; from examination of a single family to comparative assessment of the national budgets of the world; from the theological school to the military establishment; from considerations of an oil industry to studies of contemporary poetry. It is the capacity to range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the most intimate features of the human self—and to see the relations between the two (7).

The concept of the sociological imagination is ambitious and is understood here as an ideal which is not fully achieved (or even achievable) by anyone. Still, Mills' three “coordinate points” encompassed by the well-developed sociological imagination are used in this study as a framework within which to evaluate sociological consciousness among residents of Worthington, Ohio. At the heart of the framework as it is applied here lies the connection between what Mills calls “personal troubles of milieu” and “public issues of social structure” (8). The individual-society, or micro-macro link is a recurring theme both in Worthington residents' comments about the local community and in my assessment of them.

The sociologist Steven Dandaneau has employed the notion of the sociological imagination in two major studies (1996, 2001). The first, *A Town Abandoned: Flint, Michigan, Confronts Deindustrialization*, critiques three types of ideology that developed in response to Flint’s loss of tens of thousands of General Motors jobs and its consequent economic decline. As “an extreme case of dependent deindustrialization,” Flint provides an ideal site for a case study of ideological responses to powerlessness (xxi). Three types of (flawed) ideology, exemplified mainly by institutions geared toward economic revitalization or educational assistance, are discussed in terms of their:
(a) temporal orientation or relation to history; (b) conception of self or identity; 
and (c) conception of dependency relationships in capitalist society, or general 
representations of social structure. In effect, the structure of C. Wright Mills’ 
sociological imagination—with its attention to the conceptual interrelationships 
between history, biography, and social structure, is imputed to each response 
(xxii).

Dandaneau explains that these three “coordinate points,” as Mills called them, “form a 
constellation of the human imagination that is oriented to thinking the life of the 
individual back into the history and society that appear alien to the individual” (95). The 
three types of ideology, therefore, are critiqued with respect to the ways they treat the 
tensions among biography, history, and society. Each ideology is found to be lacking 
because it collapses these tensions in some way. The GM/UAW Local Paid Education 
Leave program, for instance, views the concepts of class, work, and class consciousness 
in Flint as virtually unchanged since Flint’s economic peak, thus failing to consider the 
effects of history on social structures. Its solution, essentially, is bureaucratic: it cynically 
replaces individuals’ sociological consciousness with institutional organization.

In Taking It Big: Developing Sociological Consciousness in Postmodern Times 
(2001), Dandaneau motivates the need for a sociological imagination in postmodern 
society, both from a macro-level (global, in fact) perspective and at the level of the 
individual. The concept of the sociological imagination is then applied in three ways, 
again corresponding to Mills’ “coordinate points.” First, it is argued that the notion of 
“disability” speaks to biography in postmodern society. Second, the intermediate group 
Generation X, as an example of a set of people with a “common destiny,” informs the 
relevance of history for biography, and vice versa. Third, religion is analyzed as a social
institution situated within social structures. The book’s final section identifies some obstacles to the development of a sociological imagination in postmodern society.

2.5 Applying the framework

In Dandaneau’s work, the sociological imagination is put forth as a quality of mind that most people lack, as well as a trait that could improve quality of life by permitting greater engagement in one’s surroundings. Like Dandaneau, I propose that people generally lack well-developed sociological imaginations. However, rather than suggesting ways that enhanced sociological consciousness could improve quality of life, I use Mills’ concept as a framework for investigating the kinds of consciousness that people do have about the links between their lived experiences and social structures in Worthington. Specifically, I assess sociological consciousness with respect to the public and very salient phenomenon of urban sprawl, which continues to affect Worthington's social and geographic space. Sociological consciousness subsequently becomes an independent variable in the quantitative analysis of linguistic variation. There are four variants: individual-centered, social structure-centered, integrated (recognizing links among individuals, social structures, and historical processes), and none (no critical awareness of urban sprawl).

In exploring sociological consciousness, I build upon previous work in sociolinguistics that takes the subject – including his/her orientation to the community and unique set of ethnic, gendered, and socioeconomic personae – as primary in determining the meaning of linguistic variants. How individuals conceptualize the ways
that they, as individuals, fit into social structures is, I argue, another subjective dimension of personal experience having implications for linguistic practice. Yet the categories of sociological consciousness do not have emic validity; they are imposed both by the framework and by my analysis of ethnographic interviews. It cannot, therefore, be considered the same type of social variable as those based purely on locally-recognized categories. As noted, a critical realist approach guides this study, by contrast with the social constructionist approaches that are coming to dominate the field of sociolinguistic variation. Still, sociological consciousness, by definition, entails that the individual be viewed as subject and agent in the recognition of links among levels of social structure, however influenced that recognition may be by outside forces. Further, its complexity is accessible to the analyst only through ethnographic methods.

2.6 Looking forward

Chapter 3 will provide an ethnographic description of Worthington, focusing on the effects of urban sprawl from Columbus and their description in local media and by Worthington residents. The categories of sociological consciousness are described in detail, and, drawing on ethnographic interviews, each of 17 speakers is placed into one of the categories on the basis of his/her discourse about Worthington's confrontation of urban sprawl. In examining the types of connections people conceptualize among themselves, social structures, and history, I seek to better understand the types of motivations that underlie linguistic practice. A critical realist approach will be apparent
insofar as some speakers' conceptions of the urban sprawl situation are described as inaccurate or incomplete.
CHAPTER 3

WORTHINGTON

3.1 Introduction

The first part of this chapter is an ethnographic description of Worthington focusing on the social and geographic influence of urban sprawl, and reactions to it, with the purpose of situating the subsequent discussion of speakers' discourse about the community. The results of a previous study of /l/ vocalization in Worthington (Dodsworth 2005a) are presented as evidence that orientation toward the community's preservation is, as might be expected, accompanied by linguistic conservatism. Finally, four types of sociological consciousness—based on Mills' (1959) “coordinate points” — are identified, and the 17 speakers are grouped accordingly.
### 3.2 Historical and demographic overview

In 1803, settlers from Massachusetts and Connecticut founded the village of Worthington in central Ohio beside what is now called the Olentangy River, modeling it after a traditional New England village (McCormick & McCormick 1992). Nine years later, the city of Columbus was established south of Worthington. At first glance, Worthington typifies the homogeneous, upper-middle-class suburb. 94 percent of its residents identify as white, in contrast to 67.9 percent in Columbus, and its 2000 median annual household income of close to $70,000 dwarfed the Columbus median of under $40,000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2000). Yet Worthington’s relationship with Columbus is dynamic and evolving. In the mid-20th century, Columbus adopted a policy of outward growth, annexing land between and beyond its suburbs. As noted in the weekly *Worthington News* (hereafter WN), the policy had dramatic effects:

> The year 2004 marks the golden anniversary of former Columbus Mayor M. E. Sensenbrenner’s creation of an aggressive annexation policy. Annexation made a 40-square-mile city into today’s 220-square-mile metropolis, the 15th largest in the United States. (WN 12/31/03: 13)

While the outward growth has slowed in recent years, Columbus city officials remain eager to expand and to develop the annexed land. A WN article cites the mayor of Columbus, Michael Coleman, as claiming “(The development) is good because it creates jobs and alleviates traffic. In Columbus, we need to grow outward with a plan and inward with a passion” (WN 9/15/04).

Columbus has annexed not only the land that used to separate it from Worthington, but also the land to Worthington’s north, east, and west, thus completely...
enveloping Worthington. During the 1970s, Columbus and Worthington constructed what is locally known as the “win-win,” an agreement to define Worthington’s school district boundary such that it encompassed not only the city of Worthington but also a great deal of the surrounding annexed areas. Since then, countless residential neighborhoods have sprouted in those areas, where the relatively high Worthington city taxes do not apply. According to the Worthington school district’s website, the district’s population grew from 28,648 in 1980 to approximately 58,000 in 2000. The majority of students attending the very prestigious and well-funded Worthington City Schools live in Columbus, and two-thirds of the district’s school buildings lie on Columbus land.

Recent development plans will further increase the population density in the annexed areas. For instance, a WN article dated 1/14/04 reports on a proposal to house 800 residents on a congested state route just west of the Worthington city boundary. Far more significant for the local social space, however, is a huge construction project on Hard Road, the primary link between the city of Worthington and the western part of its school district. The weekly newspaper This Week in Worthington (hereafter TWW) reports on the 94-acre purchase of annexed Columbus land by the residential construction company M/I:

The land will be developed in four phases – the first to be a 13-acre subdivision to be built beginning this fall. It will be called Lakes of Worthington and will include 37 “upper-end M/I homes,” according to Worthington schools assistant superintendent Paul Cynkar … The Lakes of Worthington will be developed at three homes per acre. If all of the land is developed at that density, it will mean 279 new homes. (TWW 4/1/04: 1) [A WN article dated 6/2/04 reports that 174 units are planned.]

In quoting a Worthington schools administrator, this article alludes to the development’s significance for the school district: as the Worthington-area population ages, the schools
suffer from what is known locally as “declining enrollment,” sparking heated and ongoing debates about the reallocation of resources away from buildings with the fewest students. One proposed solution, discussed publicly during 2003 and 2004 and ultimately realized, has been to merge two of the district’s west-side elementary schools, closing one altogether. For western areas of the district threatened with revenue loss, the development promises new students and thus entitlement to resources. However, the local media do not uniformly portray the construction as positive. A later TWW article speaks of the Hard Road project and others in terms of destruction:

Over the past six months, the rolling pastures of Hard Road have been transformed into one large, dusty construction site. And the changes are just beginning. If the three developers building subdivisions are successful, there will be 438 new houses or condos completed in the next six years. Except for some ponds and grassy areas, a park being developed by the city of Columbus on the north side of the road, nearly all of the 160 acres will be developed between Linworth Road and Worthington Kilbourne High School. (TWW 11/11/2004: 1)

Development continues not only to the west of Worthington but also in the annexed areas to the north and east. For example, a deluxe apartment community is under construction in a crowded, upscale district just north of the city boundary, often referred to as Far North Columbus (WN 10/13/04: 33). Both residential and commercial development as well as a public recreation center are planned for an area nearby (TWW 8/5/04: 1).

As housing and commercial developments claim the land that once separated Worthington from Columbus and surrounding towns, traffic patterns and volume follow suit. Columbus is surrounded by the circular Intrastate 270, known locally as the Outerbelt. The Outerbelt provides (usually) quick access to the suburbs and intersects three other high-volume freeways. At its Worthington exit, the Outerbelt intersects High Street – the central Columbus-area artery – just north of the Worthington city boundary.
Figure 3.1 shows the Columbus area, including the Outerbelt. Worthington can be seen just south of the Outerbelt in the north-central part of the map.

Figure 3.1. Map of the Columbus area.
http://www.dot.state.oh.us/map1/ohiomap/images/city/columbus.jpg
A TWW article reporting on the planned widening of the Outerbelt at the Worthington exit claims that

…the North Central Outerbelt is the fourth most congested, high-crash freeway section in Ohio, with 180,000 vehicles per day and 542 accidents per year, mostly caused by the outdated design and close proximity of the interchanges, which cause excessive weaving and congestion. The interchanges were built in the 1960s and serve up to 20 percent more traffic than they were designed to handle. (TWW 6/3/04: 1)

A WN article calls the project “the second largest road construction project in Ohio’s history” (WN 8/25/04: 22A). The stretch of High Street from the center of Worthington northward to the Outerbelt now serves so many residential and commercial areas that rush-hour traffic often slows to a standstill. Before the 1960s, when some of the speakers in this study were growing up in Worthington, there was no development to speak of north of the city boundary, no Outerbelt, and virtually no traffic. Whereas Worthington was once isolated from the urban center, the urban center has now swallowed Worthington.

Yet Worthington, now a city of close to 15,000 people compared to over 700,000 in Columbus, remains somewhat socially distinct. An important component of its distinctiveness is what many residents call its ‘colonial feel,’ or the collective consciousness of its New England roots. Old Worthington, the space occupied by the original 1803 village, is governed by a set of strictly-enforced architectural guidelines geared toward maintaining a colonial atmosphere. A four-quadrant village green lies at the center of Old Worthington, and several of the New England-style buildings constructed by the founding settlers still stand, some of them maintained by the Worthington Historical Society. Regular public events refer to the city’s heritage: the
annual Founder’s Day, for example, celebrates the establishment of the village and involves a week-long educational program for elementary schools.

Yet in large part, these traditions preserve collective imagination rather than historical knowledge. The following two sections discuss, first, the ethnographic methods used to explore Worthington’s social space, and second, Worthington residents’ individual and collective conceptions of local social issues.

3.3 Ethnographic methods

From January 2003 through December 2004, I carried out an ethnographic investigation of Worthington. The first several months were devoted to uncovering local political, geographic, demographic, and historical issues that held social importance for residents, while the remaining period was used to focus on perceptions of the local effects of urban sprawl. The ethnographic methods employed fall into three categories: participant observation, examination of locally-produced documents, and ethnographic interviews. Each is discussed in turn.

As a participant observer, I attended public events such as meetings organized by the school district to address financial concerns prior to the passage of a levy, many committee meetings and festivities surrounding the city’s year-long bicentennial celebration, Saturday-morning farmers’ markets, a Veterans’ Day ceremony, a high-school drama performance, and a church service. Meetings organized by the school district, the bicentennial committee meetings, and the Veteran’s Day ceremony were recorded on analog cassettes. In addition, I acted as participant observer at least one
evening a week at a coffee house in Old Worthington that attracts residents of all ages but teenagers in particular. Members of one closely-knit group of friends, most of whom either attended or had graduated from Worthington’s alternative (i.e. politically and culturally progressive, independence-promoting) high school, could be found drifting in and out nearly every night. I became friends with several members of this group, a few of whom are speakers in this study.

In addition to public events, I participated in private gatherings when I was invited. For example, a member of the coffee house group invited me to her family’s home for an annual tea party for female friends from school, where I was introduced as a friend; I recorded that event on analog cassette. In addition, I attended two weeknight gatherings at an upscale bar with a group of middle-aged friends where I was introduced (truthfully) as a relative of one of the participants, and I observed two high school classes taught by one of the speakers. Finally, members of the Worthington Historical Society generously gave me private tours of two buildings in Old Worthington that have stood for approximately 200 years: the Rectory, which houses a doll museum, a 19th-century parlor, and the Worthington Historical Society’s archives, offices, and bookstore; and the Orange Johnson House, a restored 19th-century home serving as a museum. Aside from planned meetings and social gatherings, I spent many weekend afternoons and evenings driving and walking around Worthington and the school district, becoming familiar with both newly-constructed and older neighborhoods and visiting shops and restaurants.

During the nearly two years that I spent studying Worthington, I collected several types of locally-produced documents. The city’s two weekly newspapers, cited above, proved most useful as sources of both “objective” information — i.e. local statistics,
event announcements, etc. — and subjective data, such as opinions stated in letters to the
editor. Other types of documents included pamphlets advertising stores or bicentennial
events, campaign materials, and information sheets produced by the school district. From
an ethnographic perspective, one of the most interesting local documents is the
Worthington city website, which includes a substantial section on the school system.

While participant observation and the collection of documents informed my
understanding of Worthington’s present and past social setting, the most significant
source of ethnographic data for this study is the set of 42 ethnographic interviews
conducted with individuals living in Worthington or its school district. The majority of
informants were selected via a friends-of-friends method, beginning with two
Worthington residents I knew before beginning the study. The 17 on whom I focus here
are lifelong Worthington residents, or nearly so. Interviews were typically carried out
either in speakers’ homes or in the local coffee shop with only myself and the interviewee
present, though two speakers were interviewed with their spouses present, two with their
children present, and five with friends wandering in and out of earshot. There were
occasional indications that those interviewees were conscious of others’ imagined or
actual responses to what they said during the interviews. The most severe and also the
most revealing such indication occurred during the 18-year-old Peter's interview at the
coffee shop. As he gave a remarkably insightful and broad-minded analysis of
Worthington’s local culture, some friends passed by and made teasing remarks about his
academic-sounding views. Peter whirled around to face them and said sharply “Oh, shut
the fuck up. I’m trying not to be completely full of shit here.” He then turned back
around and continued his analysis. His reaction suggests not only sensitivity to friends’
reactions, and awareness of the persona he was inhabiting during the interview, but also willingness and even desire to voice his thoughts in spite of the repercussions. The other interviewees who had family or friends listening uttered similar, if more muted, comments such as: (looking at husband) “You’ll think I’m only saying this because I’m a realtor, but I really believe …”

As noted, a total of 42 ethnographic interviews contribute to this study. The first 27 interviews were conducted approximately a year earlier than the latter 15 and were part of a network-based study of social perceptions in Worthington, reported as Dodsworth 2005a. During the first set of interviews, I asked general demographic information and, more important for that study, what kinds of social categories, issues, or personal characteristics were salient to the interviewee in Worthington. One of the primary conclusions was that the relationship between the city of Worthington and the school-district areas in Columbus was a source of widely-felt tension and conflict. The subsequent 15 interviews, as well as two of the first 27 that were intended as pilots for the second set of interviews, were different in two significant ways. First, they were informed by the conclusions from the earlier network-based study, so I was better able to participate in discussions of Worthington’s perceived social space. A central insight, detailed in the next section, was that urban sprawl played an important role in community and personal identity; residents classified the various geographic regions of Worthington as either old (i.e. within the political boundary) or new (outside the political boundary but inside the school district; also the products of sprawl), and the new areas were the objects of resentment among some people living in the old sections. Therefore, the second difference between the first and second sets of interviews was that rather than being
asked to describe Worthington’s social space in general, the 15 interviewees were asked specifically about the local effects of urban sprawl from Columbus, including the ways it might affect community and personal identity. The following questions are representative:

1. I’ve heard some people talk about how Worthington used to be separate from Columbus before the new neighborhoods started going up in the school district. Do you know what they’re talking about?

2. How do you feel about all the new development around Worthington? Why do you think some people are unhappy with it?

3. Do you think the new development in the annexed areas has affected Worthington? How?

4. Do you think Worthington still has a colonial feel? Why do you think the city is trying to maintain a colonial atmosphere in Old Worthington?

5. Why do you think Worthington used so much money and energy for the bicentennial events? Did you participate in any of them?

It was assumed from the outset that not all residents would have equally textured or balanced views of the local social conflict as the product of a broader process of sprawl and the loss of community identity. By the same token, it was assumed that some but not all informants would recognize local personal identities as intertwined with social structures, both local and supra-local.

Following the ethnolinguistic tradition, my approach in this study takes for granted that socially-meaningful linguistic variation has (some of its) roots in, and contributes to, emic social differentiation at the local level. Detailed knowledge of
locally-recognized personae, categories and processes is therefore considered essential to
the analysis of linguistic variation. Accordingly, the next section provides a thorough
description of the aforementioned early study of /l/ vocalization in Worthington which
lay the analytical groundwork for the present study.

3.4 The attribute networking study

The preliminary study of /l/ vocalization in Worthington (Dodsworth 2005a) had
two primary goals: 1) to document the variable's status in a central Ohio community
following Ash's (1982) finding that young Columbus speakers exhibited a vocalized
variant; and 2) to identify, using ethnographic methods, social parameters recognized by
Worthington residents that correlated with /l/ vocalization. Seeking to organize speakers'
conceptions of the local socio-geographic space using a system that could represent
disagreement across speakers, show connections among seemingly disparate perceptions,
and identify the oppositions that are critical from an emic perspective (such as
Worthington proper vs. the outskirts), I developed a technique dubbed attribute
networking. The technique represents an attempt to combine the interpretive power of
subjective perceptions with the replicability of quantitative data. In a sense, subjective
information was objectified, making it amenable to quantitative analysis like social
networks are. The approach was thus intended to maintain the importance of individuals’
everyday experiences while opening the door to empirical justifications for delineating
social categories that could be used in a quantitative analysis of linguistic variation.
Attribute networking is based heavily on Bearman, Faris and Moody’s (1999) network-based representation of a series of events in the Chinese Revolution according to segments of 14 life-story narratives. In their model, nodes represent single events, and ties between nodes represent temporal relationships. Similarly, attribute networks encode community members’ stated conceptions of local social processes and categories and are therefore not social networks: the nodes represent socially-meaningful characteristics of people in the community, and a tie between two nodes indicates the perceived co-occurrence of the two characteristics that those nodes represent. The social perceptions represented in the network are extracted from ethnographic interviews during which informants are asked to talk about the community’s social space as they perceive it. For example, Figure 3.2 represents speaker A's stated perception that people living in her neighborhood tend to be professionals.

![Figure 3.2. Hypothetical attribute network dyad.](image)

Crucially, a link between attributes does not indicate that the co-occurrence is perceived as necessary or permanent; Figure 3.2, for instance, does not mean that everyone living in
A’s neighborhood is a professional. In this respect, attribute networks are similar to social networks: a tie between two people in a social network does not indicate that they socialize exclusively with each other, nor that they spend all or even most of their time together. In social networks, the difference between strong and weak ties partially captures the fact that ties are not identical in strength, but it remains understood that two strong links need not be quantitatively or qualitatively identical.

However, attribute networks are quite distinct from social networks in content. Whereas social networks represent real or perceived relationships among people, attribute networks represent perceived relationships among characteristics of people or places. By the same token, while social networks represent some of the community's cliques, outsiders, and central figures, or social hubs, attribute networks represent some of the personal characteristics that unite members of cliques, alienate outsiders, and make social hubs valued people in the community. In other words, attribute networks step beyond social networks in that they represent the social conceptions underlying the group dynamics visible in social networks. In spirit, the community of practice framework acknowledges such conceptions, defining group boundaries according to members' own definitions of group identity. Yet the community of practice framework is not itself an attempt to systematically represent conceptions of social space; nodes still represent people, and ties still represent human relationships.

Each community member’s perceptions are encoded in a single network. The network need not be connected; that is, some nodes may not be reachable from others. The individual networks are then intercalated to form an aggregate network. The goal is to unite individuals’ conceptions of the social space to form a system in which diverse
views are represented, points of agreement are apparent, and the elements of the social space can be seen in relation to one another. Intercalation consists primarily of two processes. First, if two networks have the same set of nodes but do not share any dyads (i.e., no ties connect the same two nodes in both networks), then the ties from one network can simply be added to the other network. Second, if two networks share a dyad, then that dyad’s link has a value of 2 in the aggregate network, reflecting the number of speakers who expressed a perceived association between the characteristics represented by the nodes. When two networks do not share any nodes, then intercalating them is a matter of calling them a single, unconnected network.

The aggregate network is considered a rough model of the community’s perceived social structure according to the informants whose interviews contribute to it. Several characteristics of the aggregate network make it an advantageous model. First, it can represent disagreement among community members because a node may be linked to other nodes that are mutually conflicting. Another potential advantage is that the model does not require discrete social categories a priori because all nodes may be connected. In the Worthington aggregate network, the largest component includes nodes that represent relative affluence and nodes that represent relative poverty, as well as nodes represented a diverse range of locations and levels of engagement in the community. The fact that all of these nodes are reachable from one another suggests that they are separate yet connected parts of the same fluid social system, just as members of a social network may be more or less central but still linked, directly or indirectly. Although this characteristic is not fully exploited in the illustration below, it has the potential to facilitate a treatment
of social categories as fluid, overlapping entities with dynamic, negotiable boundaries, as in the community of practice tradition.

A critical assumption underlying attribute networking is that nodes or subsets of nodes which are structurally important in the aggregate network are the most salient social attributes in the community. Several quantitative measures of node importance, all of them focusing on individual nodes rather than sets, are illustrated in the following section. Structurally-important nodes are likely to represent characteristics that many community members consider socially meaningful, because they are mentioned by multiple speakers and/or are linked to multiple nodes. Other nodes are likely to be connected to one another only through these important nodes, except in particularly dense networks. For those reasons, the characteristics associated with important nodes are good candidates for social variables in quantitative analysis.

Intercalating individual networks from 21 interviews yielded an aggregate network with 138 nodes, pictured in Figure 3.3.
The aggregate network consists of one large component containing 100 nodes, and 14 smaller components. Among the smaller components, there are no ties valued greater than 1, a sign that they represent connections that are not broadly recognized in the community. The large component can be viewed as having two sections which are connected only through the nodes labeled ‘live in Worthington proper’ (the space inside Worthington’s political boundary) and ‘sense of community.’ The larger of the two sections roughly corresponds to living in what some informants referred to as ‘the
outskirts,’ or the areas of Columbus lying inside the Worthington school district. The smaller section roughly corresponds to living in what many speakers called ‘Worthington proper,’ or the area inside the Worthington city boundary.

A striking characteristic of the network is its low number of ties valued greater than 1. Recall that a tie’s value indicates the number of speakers who have stated an association between the nodes it connects. Only 17 ties have values greater than 1, and the highest value is 5 out of a possible 21 (the number of speakers). This characteristic has multiple interpretations. It may, for instance, indicate disagreement: if all informants had been in perfect agreement as to the community’s social structure, then many ties would have values near the maximum of 21, the only low values resulting from differences in the ways that informants stated their perceptions. For instance, the node labeled ‘live west of the Olentangy River’ lies adjacent to nodes labeled both ‘wealthy neighborhood’ and ‘live in an apartment,’ and the node labeled ‘live in an apartment’ is adjacent to several nodes having to do with low socioeconomic status. This configuration reflects speakers’ differing overall impressions of the outskirts: some speakers broadly conceive of the area as a wealthy suburban space, while some view it as less affluent than Worthington and beset by more crime. Many speakers perceived socioeconomic differences among specific places in the outskirts, which are also represented in the aggregate network. One implication of this range of views is that the areas in the outskirts are in social flux as suburban development continues and Worthington residents have more and different kinds of contact with Columbus residents. Thus perceptions of the social space are constantly changing, with its various social attributes being defined and redefined with respect to one another. As Mendoza-Denton
(1997: 37) says, ‘the social categories here described are not conceived of as bounded sets, but rather as parts of a single coherent system that is always fluid, always changing, precariously equilibrated, and constantly innovating on itself’. Another potential source of low-valued ties is disparity among informants with respect to what they remembered to say about the community or were willing to say.

Six quantitative metrics were used to identify structurally-important nodes. The set of nodes selected by these measures was narrowed to the subset selected by at least five of the six measures (to allow for the incompatibility of discrete coreness with the aggregate network). The resulting set contains seven nodes:

1. Live in Worthington proper (within the city’s political boundary)
2. Live in the outskirts (outside the city’s political boundary but inside the Worthington school district)
3. Live in Old Worthington (the space where the original village was established in 1803)
4. Little or no community involvement
5. Live in Colonial Hills (a neighborhood in Worthington proper)
6. Live in a ‘grand’ house
7. Live in an apartment

These attributes were taken to be the most salient and broadly-recognized among the informants. For that reason, it was hypothesized that they would interact in some systematic way with sociolinguistic variables in Worthington. To test this hypothesis, the first four attributes were used as the basis for constructing independent social variables for a GOLDVARB statistical analysis. (Two of the remaining three (live in Colonial...
Hills, live in an apartment) describe none of the informants. The remaining attribute (live in a ‘grand’ house) was too vague and subjective to permit confident categorization of speakers.) The first independent variable corresponded to location of residence and had three variants: 1) Old Worthington (6 speakers); 2) Worthington proper but outside Old Worthington (11 speakers); 3) the outskirts (7 speakers). The second independent variable encoded whether the speaker was generally involved in the Worthington community, according to the speaker’s own estimation (13 involved, 11 not involved). None of the speakers had significant involvement in the Columbus community. Finally, independent variables were established for sex (15 female, 9 male) and age. These factor groups were included in the GOLDVARB analysis of linguistic variables discussed below.

As noted, the linguistic variable under scrutiny here is /l/ vocalization, previously documented in Columbus by Ash (1982). The vocalization of /l/ is a feature common to many central and southern Ohio dialects. Ash reports the vocalization of both syllable-final and intervocalic /l/, resulting in a (possibly rounded) voiced glide, in Midwestern cities including Columbus, and Durian (2004), who observed /l/ vocalization among AAVE speakers in Columbus. A linguist from outside Ohio remarked that a Columbus radio station advertises the ‘gowden oldies’ (i.e. golden oldies). Ash claims that /l/ vocalization did not originate in Philadelphia until after the early 1940s, and that it is a new dialect feature along the Eastern Seabord generally. Allen (1976; reported in Ash 1982: 9) found infrequent pre-consonantal /l/ vocalization in Northern and Midland speech. Given these facts, it is assumed here that in central Ohio, the vocalized variant is the newer form, but /l/ vocalization is not necessarily a change in progress.
A quantitative analysis of coda /l/ vocalization in Worthington was carried out using 724 tokens extracted from the 21 interviews. In addition to the social variables identified above, the tokens were coded for the following linguistic factors:

1. morpheme-final vs. morpheme-internal; most instances of syllabic /l/ were morpheme-final.
2. preceding segment: labial, coronal, or dorsal consonant; front, back, or central vowel.
3. following environment: labial, coronal, or dorsal consonant; front, back, or central vowel; pause.

Preceding segment, following segment, and location of residence emerged as the significant factor groups. Results are given in Table 3.1.
## Table 3.1. Factors conditioning /l/ vocalization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor (N)</th>
<th>Factor weight (% vocalization)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>preceding segment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labial C (114)</td>
<td>.650 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coronal C (152)</td>
<td>.376 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dorsal C (26)</td>
<td>.339 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>front V (199)</td>
<td>.296 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>back V (219)</td>
<td>.696 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>central V (14)</td>
<td>.741 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>following segment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labial C (123)</td>
<td>.657 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coronal C (333)</td>
<td>.446 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dorsal C (35)</td>
<td>.781 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>front V (57)</td>
<td>.396 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>back V (28)</td>
<td>.583 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>central V (28)</td>
<td>.162 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pause (106)</td>
<td>.525 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>location of residence</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Worthington (110)</td>
<td>.293 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worthington proper (429)</td>
<td>.506 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outskirts (185)</td>
<td>.615 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>sex [not significant]</strong></td>
<td>% vocalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female (463)</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male (260)</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>age [not significant]</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 (33)</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20s (182)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30s (182)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>late 40s-early 50s (181)</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60s (75)</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>late 70s-early 80s (70)</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Input = .120, p < .005.
As shown, the closer a speaker lives to Old Worthington (or ‘downtown Worthington,’ as some speakers called it), the less likely he/she is to vocalize /l/. Cross-tabulating location of residence with the phonetic factors, shown in Figures 3.3 and 3.4, provides a more textured understanding of all three factor groups.

Figure 3.3. Interaction between preceding segment and location of residence.

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Speakers from Old Worthington and Worthington proper follow nearly identical patterns of vocalization with respect to the preceding segment, with the exception of central vowels. Columbus speakers, however, follow a strikingly different pattern, in particular with respect to their high rate of vocalization after dorsal consonants. It is interesting that Columbus speakers vocalize at close to the same rate as the other speakers when the preceding segment is a coronal consonant or a front vowel even though their overall pattern is quite different. Turning to Figure 3.4, while back and central vowels encourage vocalization among Columbus speakers, there is little difference among the other
segments. By contrast, dorsal consonants favor vocalization for Worthington speakers, while back and central vowels do not. With respect to both preceding and following segments, Old Worthington speakers and Worthington proper speakers pattern together, showing marked differences from the Columbus pattern.

These results can be interpreted in light of the connection, shown in the aggregate network, between location and community involvement in Worthington. There is a node labeled ‘no community involvement’ one of the seven structurally most important nodes as well as a node labeled ‘community involvement.’ Both of these nodes are adjacent to nodes representing locations: having no community involvement is adjacent to ‘outskirts,’ ‘west of the Olentangy River,’ and ‘Worthington Hills’ (a neighborhood in the outskirts); ‘community involvement’ is adjacent to ‘Worthington proper.’ Thus the relationship between community involvement and place of residence is well represented in the network, reflecting the fact that many speakers addressed the relationship between geography and community during their interviews.

Comparing particular individuals sheds some light on the observed linguistic patterns. Rita and Dana graduated from the same high school at roughly the same time, currently stay home with their young children, are married to professionals, and earned graduate degrees in the same field from the same school, and think highly of one another. Recall, however, that they live in different regions of Worthington: Rita lives at the heart of Old Worthington and Dana lives well into the outskirts. The following passages from their interviews indicate that Rita identifies strongly with the Worthington community and views it as threatened, while Dana considers herself an outsider and shows no evidence of viewing the community’s cohesion as endangered.
**Rita:** Um, I guess I see the boundaries of Worthington as, um, the communities that do get involved, the parts of the communities that do get involved. So I don’t see West Worthington which is up by Sancus and all the apartments up there, I don’t see um, uh, Worthington Hills, uh, because uh, those are either not folks who who want to be in a community or folks who want their own community.

... And now I think you know there are no boundaries between Worthington and Polaris. I mean it’s all, there’s no physical definition. And the way things uh, in Columbus, and therefore in Worthington, are growing and developing and expanding as, as far as they can go I don’t think there is gonna be anything that that defines one community to the next. Um, and I guess that’s just, that’s just city development, I don’t know. I don’t know, pretty soon we’re gonna look like Tokyo, where, one, one city just, just flows right into the next.

**Robin:** How do you feel about that?

**Rita:** I’m not keen on it. We’re too big. We’re too big, already. Because we don’t know each other. Because we’re not, involved, you know because, because you can now say “Oh well this is the Worthington school district,” but you pay Columbus taxes, but are you, are you affiliated with Worthington? Are you, you know, are you involved? And I think maybe it’s because they’re too far out and, and don’t feel a connection, I don’t know.

*******************************************************************************

**Dana:** I feel like I’m from Columbus, I live in Columbus…I mean I do activities in Worthington, but, um, I’m a little bit of an outsider I suppose. You know, cause I can’t, cause I’m not in Worthington proper, and I don’t have access to some Worthington activities…like I’m in Worthington schools but I can’t get a Worthington membership to the community center, I have to pay the extra surcharge…. [Dana’s neighborhood is] kind of more of a suburb, like, a sprawl of Columbus I suppose…I think that people that live in Worthington feel very tied to the city limits of Worthington, but I’m not really in the city limits, so I can’t really call myself somebody from Worthington I guess….I think there’s a sense of community that you find in a more established, defined area that I don’t know that I find in community sprawl out here.

The two speakers’ self-perceived positions with respect to the Worthington community are essentially opposites. Further, Rita has had the most community involvement of all the speakers, while Dana only attends church and shops in Worthington. The two speakers also exhibit markedly different rates of /l/ vocalization.
As shown in Table 3.2, Rita, who has the most community involvement and the strongest feelings about Worthington’s (threatened) identity, has the lowest rate of /l/ vocalization. Dana, who considers herself an outsider, has a much higher rate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>% /l/ vocalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rita</td>
<td>10.8% (4/37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dana</td>
<td>20% (7/35)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2. Two speakers’ rates of /l/ vocalization

Many speakers claimed that people living outside the city boundaries have little involvement in the Worthington community beyond school activities, shopping, or attending church; they are, therefore, not ‘real’ community members. Definitions of local space underlie status in the community (cf. Modan 2002). Another pervasive theme in the interviews is the connection between continuity, or resistance to change, and Worthington identity. Several speakers perceive that people living in the annexed areas are “transient” – quotation marks are used here because the word appears in nearly every discussion of the topic – in the sense that they have moved to Worthington for job-related reasons and will likely move away within a few years. Many of the same speakers complained that the construction of apartment and condominium complexes around Worthington “invites transience.”

These facts suggest that resistance to /l/ vocalization – which appears to be a change in progress in Columbus – is a component in the effort to maintain Worthington’s
identity as a community distinct from Columbus, an increasingly difficult task as Columbus develops the land surrounding Worthington. Many Worthington residents, such as Rita, value the city’s social and geographic distinctiveness, while many who live outside the city benefit from the physical and cultural integration of the surrounding areas with Worthington. By using the older linguistic variants, speakers like Rita display symbolic resistance to the disappearance of the Worthington community into Columbus sprawl. These speakers’ use of the linguistic variables is a component in the construction of their personae as true ‘Worthingtonites’ (a local term indexing loyalty to the city). Of course, this claim cannot be confirmed without a matched guise or other type of perceptual test not conducted here because it was deemed preferable to first identify other socially meaningful linguistic variables.

The 2003 Worthington bicentennial events illustrate the connection between Worthington identity and attachment to continuity, or resistance to change. These events were planned over three years by a committee made up of volunteers (including Rita) who live in the city, many of them known for their active engagement with city organizations and events. Most of the bicentennial events reenacted some aspect of Worthington’s early culture. For instance, at a formal ball held as a fund raiser, participants were encouraged to wear elegant 19th-century costumes. There was also a locally-written and produced play featuring Worthington’s founding settlers as characters. These events and others foregrounded and idealized an earlier era when Worthington, with its New England-style culture, was culturally and geographically distinct relative to Columbus. The events therefore implicitly condemn the loss of
Worthington’s independence and work to preserve it as the city becomes integrated with the surrounding, newly-developed areas of Columbus.

The attribute networking study concluded, therefore, that the pattern of /l/ vocalization is a component in the distinction between two broad groups: on one hand, people who want to preserve a certain amount of exclusivity and closeness in the Worthington community, and on the other hand, people who recognize this desire but either do not take part in it or actively dismiss it. Yet within each of the two broad groups, there exists both linguistic and ideological variation. Speakers living in Old Worthington vocalized /l/ less frequently but according to the same linguistic pattern as speakers living in the city but outside Old Worthington. While both sets of speakers generally appreciate the city’s New England small-town identity, the colonial atmosphere is more salient on a daily basis to those in Old Worthington, who live within sight of the landmarks that lend the town its colonial feel. Still, some Old Worthington residents resist any efforts to exclude residents of the outskirts from the Worthington community. Predictably, rate of /l/ vocalization varies across individuals as they construct individual and group styles simultaneously (cf. Eckert 2002).

Given the attribute networking study's conclusions, I hypothesized that another source of variation for /l/ vocalization had to do with differential ways of thinking about urban sprawl with respect to the various levels and dimensions of social structure, i.e., differences in sociological consciousness. For instance, the passage from Rita's interview above suggests that she views urban sprawl not only as a global phenomenon but also one that impacts the individual by dissolving feelings of connectedness. One of Rita's stated strategies for combating the effects of sprawl in Worthington is to contribute to events
and organizations that promote community cohesion. Yet Rita is somewhat unusual in perceiving urban sprawl's effects, and resisting them, at the individual and community levels simultaneously (and as we will see, her linguistic resistance pales by comparison with that of other residents). Other speakers, as we will see, focus almost exclusively on either the individual or social institutions, or have no critical awareness of urban sprawl. Because linguistic practice springs from the individual speaker while finding meaning at the community level, I expected that differences in sociological consciousness would yield different patterns of linguistic practice as speakers' various personal and community goals were manifested. For example, do speakers who focus on social institutions use linguistic practice – a highly personal endeavor – to symbolically resist urban sprawl, or do they ignore such individual-level strategies, trusting rather in entities such as the architectural review board? Another potential source of variation is that not all Worthington residents view the local sprawl process as destructive or threatening and therefore do not have incentive to symbolically resist it. In fact, the mix of attitudes toward sprawl is apparent in the local media and is central to understanding the various stances vis-a-vis community loyalty. Because this issue emerged as such an important dimension of the local social context, I discuss it briefly before describing in detail each of 17 speakers' conceptions of urban sprawl with respect to the individual, social structure, and history.
3.5 Attitudes toward urban sprawl and Worthington's community identity

Although the Worthington community prides itself on maintaining a New England-style, colonial-era downtown, this aspect of its identity is not a product of genuine inheritance of tradition. Helen, a Worthington resident in her 80s who has served as the historical society’s curator and has extensively studied local historical documents, is one of the few residents who remembers Worthington’s historical awakening:

Helen: It’s become very conscious that it was a transplanted New England village.

Robin: It’s become conscious?

Helen: Yes.

Robin: You mean it wasn’t conscious before?

Helen: Uh, it wasn’t conscious until 1926 when the country had its hundred and fiftieth anniversary, and all of a sudden Worthington said ‘Hm, we have a village green, and we have some nice old buildings’. And the, it was beginning then until the early 30s that the Kilbourne school and the Presbyterian church and the library were built, and they were built after early American structures…And at that point, I think it was in the early 1930s that they started a historical society that didn’t get anywhere but then in um, by the 50s they were really very much aware and with, then Worthington had its hundred and fiftieth anniversary, and they did a pageant, and people came, became very much aware of buildings that should be saved.

... The city itself is very conscious of what being a pioneer village, what the appeal is to people, and when they decided that it was good monetarily, then they all pitched in. (laughter) But Worthington has a draw because of that.

The city’s historic consciousness was originally constructed as a way of adopting a distinctive identity. Most of the current residents of Worthington, however, were born after the 1930s when the interest in colonial New England culture took hold. For them
(with some exceptions noted below), Worthington’s historic identity is an unquestioned component of the local culture. A TWW letter to the editor proudly claims “Rooted in tradition, many of the [bicentennial] festivities gave Worthington residents the opportunity to embrace the founding principles of our fine community” (TWW 11/6/03 A4). The colonial facade is part of Worthington’s small-town appeal, of which high property values are one widely-recognized byproduct. Even so, it is no secret that the material elements of the colonial atmosphere are purposefully and consciously maintained. A WN editorial column offers pointed evidence:

Take a drive down High Street or through the streets of Old Worthington, compare those streets to any nearby community, and you cannot help but be impressed. That taste and character reign is no accident. The Worthington ‘look’ has actually been carefully orchestrated by a board of dedicated public servants. ... With the economy and the lure of business destinations like Easton and Polaris wreaking havoc with Worthington’s tax base, with more and more offices and storefronts empty, the task of the review board, the Municipal Planning Commission, and the Board of Zoning Appeals has become more challenging. How do those public bodies protect the city’s character (and resulting property values) while respecting the needs of the business community?’(WN 4/01/04: A4)

The column suggests (unintentionally, I believe) that the city’s New England feel is artificial; it has been “orchestrated.” Moreover, the colonial flavor is so artificial, the column suggests, that its prodigious maintenance threatens to hamper the community’s economic vitality. In the absence of any real New England identity derived from its original settlers, Worthington must force its residents and business to mold themselves to a government-created template. In fact, in December 2003 the architectural review board announced completion of the final draft of a 300-page set of architectural guidelines intended for residents and businesses (TWW 12/11/03: 1). Architectural review board members are known to reject even posh, impressive designs that look too contemporary.
For instance, the glass-dominated, angular design proposal for a new arts center was rejected in favor of a conservative brick structure. One member called the latter design “a lot more sensitive to the community,” and another claimed “Overall, this is a much better building to fit in with the architectural review district” (WN 3/3/04: 1). Describing the upsurge in architectural improvements and community events in recent decades, one speaker said in an interview that “Worthington has more of an identity now.”

Many residents appreciate the architectural guidelines, believing them to safeguard the city’s heritage. Others, however, recognize and focus on the guidelines’ true effect: the maintenance of Worthington’s distinctiveness from Columbus and its (perceived) socioeconomic inferiority. One such resident is Rita, quoted above. In November 2003, a proposal to build a condominium complex onto a 19th-century house came before city council. The proposal called for restoring the house to resemble its original form, removing 20th-century features. Rita spoke against the proposal, saying "It is hard to disguise it is six houses in one house’s yard. It looks like we’re trying to squeeze urban mass into suburbia” (TWW 11/20/03: A1). Despite the developer’s intention to restore the building’s 19th-century style, Rita opposed what she viewed as a step in the urbanization of Worthington. She looks beyond the cosmetic benefits of the architectural guidelines to their more profound motivation: the creeping of Columbus into the island of Worthington. Some members of the review board had similar views. In fact, the ARB rejected the proposal before the developer appealed to city council, which overturned the rejection. One member of the ARB complained that “the size and massing of the building will be out of character with Old Worthington’s village atmosphere” (TWW 12/11/03: 1).
Fear or resentment of Columbus’ growing influence on the Worthington community can be found among city officials and residents alike. For example, when a city-wide ban on smoking in public buildings was to appear as a referendum on the November 2004 Columbus ballot, a parallel proposal came before Worthington’s city council. One of the two council members who voted against the ban did so in part because, as he said, “It just seems unconscionable for me to make a decision with what’s going on in Columbus. I have to resent a little bit the pressure that has been applied” (WN 9/15/04: 1-2). Still, the Worthington ban went into effect even before election day, when the Columbus referendum was decided. Another example deals with perceptions of the differences in public safety between Worthington and Columbus. A proposed bridge linking a Columbus bike path to a Worthington-area bike path inspired several letters to the editor both for and against the bridge. Some letters against the bridge complained that the Worthington path would become unsafe; one such letter explains:

> While additional access is desirable, it also presents challenges for safety, particularly on secluded parts of the path. Representatives of the Sharon Township Police Department expressed concern regarding criminal elements in Broadmeadows apartments and the potential for increased criminal activity on the bikepath as a result of increased access. In addition, the community surrounding Broadmeadows has six sexual offenders listed on the Franklin County Sheriff’s office Web site with several living on Broadmeadows. The crime statistics specific to Broadmeadows Boulevard need to be taken into consideration before a decision is made to directly connect this neighborhood to the bikepath.

Other letters against the bridge claim that greater access from Columbus will increase the traffic level on the path, creating safety hazards. These letters instantiate a broad public perception that Columbus threatens to corrupt or overwhelm Worthington.
Yet this negative attitude toward Columbus and its sprawl is far from unanimous. A city council member explained his approval of a proposed condominium complex saying “We are a suburban community, but we are becoming more of an urban community as Columbus grows around us” (TWW 11/20/03: A1). Some of the 17 speakers spoke in favor of the growing school district and residential development in lower-tax areas. Still others, as we see in the next section, offered more ambivalent views on the local effects of urbanization, resenting the perceived corruption of Worthington’s community while appreciating the expanded economic opportunities and demographic diversity it affords.

3.6 Sociological consciousness in Worthington

In order to frame the speakers’ thoughts about urbanization, I appeal to a set of four ideal types rooted in Mills’ (1959) three mutually-influential “coordinate points” of biography, social structure, and history. Biography refers here, as it did for Mills, to personal experiences and characteristics both internal and external; it indexes the lives of individuals as both constituting and being determined by social structures and historical processes. As this study focuses on urban sprawl, biography will refer more specifically to individuals' experiences and mental states, such as prejudice and fear, that speakers perceive as relevant in the discussion of the causes and effects of the local sprawl-related conflict. Social structure refers here to social facts both concrete (such as the architectural review board) and abstract (such as the state of the economy) that exist above the level of the individual. I focus on speakers' conceptions of social structures as
they relate to urban sprawl. Finally, history refers here to the events that, as speakers understand them, have created the present state of affairs in the Worthington area.

The four ideal types that structure this analysis of sociological consciousness are, briefly:

1) **individual-focused**, or revolving around considerations of biography as either
determining the local sprawl-related social tension or showing the greatest impact
from urban sprawl

2) **social structure-focused**, perceiving that social structures are either responsible for
the local conflict or are the path to resolving it

3) **integrated**, explicitly linking history, biography, and social structures in an
understanding of the causes and consequences of urban sprawl

4) **none**, having little or no critical awareness of urban sprawl as meaningful for either
social structures, personal experiences.

These ideal types both emerged from the data and were shaped by Mills' coordinate points. I began analyzing the ethnographic interviews by looking for references, either explicit or implicit, to the coordinate points, documenting them for each speaker. It became apparent (to me) that speakers' conceptions of urban sprawl and community identity revolved around different points; most striking was that some speakers concentrated nearly exclusively on biography while others neglected the individual in favor of deterministic social structures and processes. Thus the four ideal types were somewhat predetermined by Mills' coordinate points, but the number and definition of the types emerged from the ethnographic data. For instance, there is no “history-focused” type here because no speaker exclusively discussed historical processes.
This study is threatened by the shortcomings inherent to all ethnographic work, particularly that which assigns people to categories. The fact that the categories of sociological consciousness employed here have no emic recognition heightens the danger of analytic bias, and the relatively small number of speakers, while allowing for detailed attention to each individual, calls into question the community-wide robustness of each category. My performance as interviewer and analyst uniquely shaped the interviews and the data interpretation. All of the speakers were aware that I was a graduate student doing research, and I made no attempt to mute the academic nature of the project, short of phrasing questions and comments so as to be accessible. In taking this approach, my goal was to make speakers feel as though I took them seriously – I wanted them to consider themselves participants in an academic investigation, not merely research subjects, and therefore answer my questions seriously and thoughtfully. While the length and earnestness of the responses suggested to me that the approach was effective, it was nevertheless clear that speakers had differential responses to the quasi-academic context. Some speakers, for instance, seemed slightly intimidated and appeared to work hard to communicate their thoughts clearly, while others happily dominated the conversation, allowing themselves to shift topics and ask their own questions. Inevitably, potentially critical aspects of some speakers’ thoughts about Worthington were left unsaid. Further, the fact that I know certain speakers much better than others introduced bias into my categorization of them by consciousness type; for instance, I drew instances more readily from speakers I knew well.

The ideal types of consciousness used here are not intended as a fully adequate framework within which to analyze sociological consciousness but rather as a first step
which is rooted in a concept broadly familiar to sociologists. Mills' notion of the sociological imagination is not, however, put forth as the only or even the most useful basis for a framework in which to investigate sociological consciousness. In the following section, I first give a broad description of each type and then describe in detail the speakers classified under that type, using passages transcribed from their interviews to explain their conceptions of the local urban sprawl phenomenon.

3.6.1 First type: individual-centered

In discussing Worthington’s urbanization, three speakers touched only on individual-level factors such as narrow-mindedness and individual responsibility to overcome prejudice. These speakers display little awareness of the structural or historical underpinnings of the social bias they describe and do not situate their proposed solutions to the local conflict in structural realities or historical processes.

One speaker in this category is Kristin, a 22-year-old college student who grew up and still lives in the western part of the outskirts. Kristin’s family is conservative and upper-middle class but not as wealthy as many other families in the area. Her clothes and makeup are suggestive of someone several years older but are not unstylish; generally, Kristin is somewhat more grown up than many people her age, having moved into her own apartment straight out of high school and maintaining serious career ambitions. She attended the western high school, and as she describes how much she hated it, she locates the problem in the nature of personalities in Worthington:
The kids in Worthington, if you're not mean, they don't fear you, so they're not nice to you. ... Petty people, any way they could stab you in the back to get ahead, they would.

Kristin is acutely aware of the social divide between the city of Worthington and the outskirts. When she muses about what underlies this divide, she offers some evidence of historical consciousness:

I think it all has to do with status. If you're from Old Worthington, you're higher class ... just the atmosphere, I mean people have been established here longer, way back when the people who started to move here were more established, you know, were high class, or upper middle class families. And the people who were more poor had to settle more towards that river valley, you know, and it was, it was farmland ... so I would think that's what it is. We are, we're outside the city limits. Kind of, I don't know, it's kind of like, east side's good, west side's bad, kinda idea, but it's, we're really like, what, five miles away from everyone?

This historical analysis is inaccurate: as many older residents explain, when Worthington was smaller, the Old Worthington residents were recognizably less affluent than those moving into newer houses closer to the river. Only in the last few decades has Old Worthington become elite. The inaccuracy itself does not invalidate Kristin’s attempt to locate the social divide in historical processes. However, given that she offers no further mention of history apart from her own childhood experiences, I strongly suspect that her historical explanation was a spur-of-the-moment assumption rather than a previously established view. In fact, the rest of her discussion is decidedly ahistorical:

It's kind of always the thing. You're taught that what you are is best. So, it's, it's, I don't know. It's just the way that our social culture is, you know, we're, we're white people, white people are better than the other races, we're Christian, Christian is best. That's how some people are taught. It's not really, I mean you're not aware of it, but, I'm not sure. Like, I mean just culture, yeah, just cultural blindness, ethnocentricty. ... I think the difference between Worthington people and people in Columbus is all in attitude, the way you act, the way you carry yourself. ... Richer people are more self-centered than people who don't have as much money, I think, because they don't have to step outside into other people's shoes and take a look around them.
Again, she attributes the tension between Worthington residents and outskirts residents to personal attributes: attitude, self-centeredness, feelings of superiority. She does suggest that culture plays a role, but there is no mention of structural or historical causes of “ethnocentricity.” The problem is securely located in the individual: "I don't really know who teaches you that. I don't know if it's your parents, or if it's just something that you view, but it happens, so." Kristin believes that urban expansion is healthy for Worthington because it brings new, younger families and money.

Sally is an 18-year-old high school graduate and coffee house regular who is a first-generation Worthingtonite. She is an outgoing, friendly social hub and often puts forth a “drama queen” persona, sometimes reading aloud her emotion-laden poetry about intimate relationships. During her interview, she provided an unsolicited history of her prodigious experience with sex and illegal substances. She works full-time in a blue-collar service position and spends much of her off-time drinking and smoking with friends. Her family is quite wealthy but not culturally upper class; Sally’s boyfriend, in fact, puts forth a distinctly working class persona, though the rest of her close friends do not. To a greater extent than many local teenagers, she is extremely conscious of Old Worthington’s animosity toward urban sprawl:

I think it's because they're so used to their small town and their small town views that things coming in scare them a lot. Like there's a lot of outside influence coming into Worthington, like a lot of people are moving here, and everything like that, and they're building up things, just from like Columbus and all over, basically, like things are getting built up more, there's more business coming kind of towards Worthington. It's on the outskirts right now, but it's all like moving in and moving in. And the people that have lived in Worthington all their life want it to be this small town and everything like that. ... They're afraid of outside influence turning it into what it isn't. Except the fact is that everyone grows, everyone changes, everything changes. A lot of people in Worthington are scared of change cause a lot of people that live in Worthington have lived in
Worthington all their lives. And they just don't want it to change because they're so afraid of having anything change. It's like, you know, change is what makes a community grow, like, you have to be an ever-changing, ever-growing community to survive and to thrive, and everything like that, but everyone's so afraid that their moral and their values will be disturbed and it'll corrupt their kids and so on and so forth. It'll change our schools, and god forbid more than ten percent of the population of Worthington become not white, you know, like seriously. Like, there's a lot of small-town views in Worthington. A lot of people think we're upscale and everything but a lot of people are very racist. I hear a lot of people talking about colored folk around here rather than like African American people or people of a different descent. They say colored folk. I've heard a lot of the n-word spoken here, like, you know, it's just, people have very narrow-minded views. Like, interracial relationships are looked at really weird here, and everything, gay relationships are looked at really weird here. People just become outcasts because they don't fit the like WASP nation basically that we are supposed to be, and what Worthington was founded on. ... But I wasn't taught those. Like, I was taught, you know, love everyone.

Sally indicates repeatedly in this passage that the social conflict in the Worthington area is caused by the narrow-mindedness of Old Worthington residents. People are afraid of change, and they’ve been taught to be racist and homophobic. The implication here is that if people would simply accept the fact that “everyone grows, everyone changes, everything changes,” then they would accept the gradual enmeshing of Worthington and Columbus. Her analysis stops at the level of the individual, neglecting the historical processes and social structures that encourage the kind of narrow-mindedness Sally finds in Old Worthington.

Like Sally, Andrea is 18 years old and female. With respect to local social identity, the resemblance between them ends there. Whereas Sally is dramatic, flirtatious, and displays little interest in school, Andrea is serious but witty, more reserved, and focused on academics. She left Worthington to attend a prestigious university a few weeks after the interview. Andrea’s father traveled around the world for professional reasons throughout Andrea's life, and the family accompanied him. Her
family is upper middle class, average for Worthington. Although Andrea expressed some
disdain for what she assumed was Sally’s understanding of Worthington, many of her
comments echo Sally’s. For example:

I definitely have my, my like issues with Worthington. Um, the diversity, I think
is a huge problem or the lack thereof of diversity, um, it's pretty much similar to
most suburbs, but I think that like Worthington has especially a problem with
like, to be safe we can't have any black people.

However, when asked for the causes of this perceived racism and other problems,
Andrea’s comments diverge from Sally’s:

Mmmm, it could have to do with, I don't know because it is so close to
Columbus, which is kind of weird, and I have never really studied sociology, so I
can't really like explain why this is, but I just think it's kind of interesting that
most people when they go into Worthington feel like very unsafe, and maybe it's
because Worthington does have like a great, like, crime, like record, or because
they don't really have much of it that they feel like they’re very safe in their like
sheltered suburb, and they go into Columbus and they see like, you know, people
who don’t look like them, and they feel unsafe because of it, I don’t know. I
know that like a lot of people here do go into Columbus a lot, so I can't really
explain, explain why they feel unsafe there. But I know a lot of people do, so
they may not go to Columbus at all, or they'll stay in Worthington, or they'll go to
college somewhere similar to Worthington, similar to Thomas Worthington High
School, I don't know I just uh, my sister lives in the Short North and we were just
driving around in Worthington, and she was just kind of making a joke like, Oh
Worthington, where it's all safe and there's no black people. You know, cause I
think that's like some of the mindset here, even if people don't like to admit it. It's
kind of frightening. ... I could be around like the best people, and they're
definitely not racist, but they'll be like on the east side or around the Short North
or around campus, and they'll like feel very unsafe. And I'm like, why? You've
never been mugged in Columbus.

A first observation about this passage is the uncertainty expressed in it — Andrea clearly
believes she does not fully understand the situation’s social dynamics, confining most of
her comments to Worthington residents’ perceptions of Columbus. This self-perceived
ignorance separates her from Sally, who is confident that the problem is rooted in fear of
change, and from Kristin, who is comfortable placing the blame on personal prejudice.
Moreover, Andrea finds it confusing that Worthington residents fear Columbus despite their familiarity with it. Stated differently, Andrea’s assumption is that personal experience with Columbus should dispel racist ideologies, and, as she implies in the last line, Worthington residents’ fear of Columbus is irrational because it is not supported by personal experiences. This focus on biography continues:

But I don't know, maybe they're just like scared of poverty, scared of race differences, I've definitely noticed that like, again I'm really fortunate to travel and a lot of my peers have never traveled outside of this country, really not so much outside of Worthington besides Florida, like on vacation, just like stuff like that. So, I mean and they can't help it, I'm not blaming them at all you know, they just haven't gained those opportunities yet, and I hope they do in the future. But I mean I'm sure if I hadn't had those opportunities maybe I'd be a little bit more sheltered in Worthington as well. And I feel like I am too sheltered in Worthington ... because I'll catch myself like being around campus and being a little scared, and there's no reason for me to be scared, so I just kinda have to like pound it in my brain, you know?

In this passage, Andrea makes two points about the role of the individual and/or biography. First, she credits her open-mindedness to her experiences traveling and concludes that a lack of such opportunities contributes to others’ narrow-mindedness. Second, she points to the role of personal responsibility in eradicating bias (“I just kinda have to like pound it in my brain, you know?”). She offers no structural solutions, nor is it clear that she recognizes the problem as having structural or historical roots. Instead, she concentrates entirely on personal shortcomings, experiences, and responsibilities, just as Kristin and Sally do.

Given Worthington's demographic makeup, the references to racism in both Sally's and Andrea's discourses are unsurprising. However, racial prejudice does not appear in my ethnographic observations nearly as often or as explicitly as socioeconomic bias (though the two are undoubtedly related). In fact, several speakers proudly claimed
that Worthington's racial and ethnic diversity had improved in recent years. One of the speakers in the attribute networking study was particularly adamant: he was first contacted by Anne, another speaker in the study, and upon hearing the topic of my research, he reportedly asked if I realized “how diverse Worthington is”. Objectively speaking, urban sprawl has not yet threatened Worthington's whiteness; the majority of residents of the outskirts are white, though some of the apartments in the far northwest are widely known to house Hispanic families who hold a variety of low-income jobs in the area. In this study, racism is not a major theme. Yet racism is alive in the Columbus area, which on the whole is quite segregated.

While each of these speakers reveals a unique understanding of the local resistance to urbanization, the theme of personal narrow-mindedness and responsibility is common to all three. The speakers’ neglect of the structural and historical dimensions places them in contrast with the speakers described in the following two sections.

3.6.2 Second type: Social structure-centered

Five speakers conceptualize urban sprawl as having social structural roots and requiring structural responses, focusing on local governing institutions and characteristics of Worthington and Columbus as whole entities rather than as collections of agentive individuals. These speakers describe the tension between Worthington proper and the outskirts less in terms of residents' psychological states and personal practices than in terms of supra-individual entities such as economic policy and city planning.
One speaker in this category is David, a 26-year-old Old Worthington resident with particularly strong Worthington-based identity. David is very outgoing and socially well-connected, having previously been involved in local politics. However, at this point his strongest contacts are limited to regulars in the coffee house, where David spends as much time as anyone. Among people in their teens and twenties, David is a social hub and yet has few truly close friends, as he is widely regarded as eccentric and often not taken seriously. Although he comes from an upper-middle-class family and has had some college, he wanders among unskilled or semi-skilled jobs.

One of David's most striking qualities is the “adult” persona he puts forth. He dresses in the style of a conservative middle-aged male, favoring navy and khaki pants and collared shirts rather than the jeans and t-shirts common among his peers. Throughout the time I spent with him, which spanned several interactional contexts and involved interlocutors of all ages, he constantly used phrases such as “young kids,” “back when I was a kid,” “now that I'm grown up.” He often made a point of referring to conversations he had (allegedly) had with prominent community figures, and as his 27th birthday approached, he complained at length that he was “getting old.” David's aged, conservative persona extends to his perspective on the outskirts:

When uh, Worthington expanded, and, you know went into Columbus, they built all these condos. Now, what the win-win agreement does, not that I'm discriminating against anybody, but what it is, is that these people can move into our district, not our city, they don’t pay our city taxes, and because they don’t have a house they don’t pay property taxes, however, if they have children, they can send their children to Worthington schools and vote to raise my property taxes. That’s the win-win agreement. I don’t see where the win-win comes into it...
David's views are clearly more exclusionary than that of the three speakers with individual-centered sociological consciousness. His use of proximal deixis – 'our district,' 'our city,' 'our city taxes,' 'my property taxes' – emphasizes the social distance connoted by the categorical 'these people.' Ostensibly, however, his focus is not at all on people but rather on tax policy. This focus continues:

Well, I'm not trying to be resentful, I mean I think everybody has the right to have a good education, and I wouldn't begrudge them that. It's just the fact that the tax burden is not fair, I mean I'm 26 years old, trying to pay my mortgage is bad enough, uh, property taxes have gone up every year for the last 6 years, and they're gonna continue to go up.

Crucially, in this passage and throughout his interview, David is careful to explain that he does not resent the presence _per se_ of the outskirts; what he resents is the local government's systemic response to them. In the following passage, he reiterates the point, this time calling for systemic solutions:

Please keep in mind that I'm not discriminating against anybody. People outside of Worthington proper consider people from Worthington to be snobs. Because in part, and I've seen, I've seen the evolution of this in my lifetime, it's because people were upset about the win-win agreement and Worthington people started griping about having to pay for the education of people who don't live in the city and who don't pay property taxes. ... So people outside of Worthington, they believe in entitlement, which I never have. But they thought, we have the right to put our children in our schools and make you pay for it, and dammit, we're going to raise your property taxes. Now, I don't think that that's right. I think there ought to be some way to tax people who don't own property and uh, you know, kick some of that money into their kids' education. I also believe in vouchers.

It is significant that David attributes Worthington's perceived snobbery to the fact that “people were upset about the win-win agreement.” He insists, in other words, that the personal conflict is rooted in systemic facts; if the tax situation were different, people would not think Worthington was snobby. The mention of “entitlement” here is also revealing. According to David, the issue is not an emotional one but rather a legal or
philosophical one – the question is not whether Old Worthington residents fear change or have racial bias, as the previous group of speakers claim, but whether Columbus residents have the right to attend Worthington schools. Certainly more than a trace of personal bias against the outskirts comes forth in his treatment of people in the outskirts as a category characterized by an invalid belief. Even so, David never suggests that the issue should be dealt with at the individual level; he does not seem to believe, for instance, that individuals in the outskirts are responsible for contributing financially to the school system beyond adhering to whatever tax code is in place.

Further, David claims not to fear the corruption of Worthington's atmosphere by urban sprawl, and the reason has entirely to do with the structure of Worthington's government:

Worthington has a mayor who is not elected, he is appointed by city council, he is a figurehead and he runs mayor's court. We have a city manager. We have city hall, obviously, we have our council. We have organizations like the, uh, municipal planning commission, which tells you what you can do with the zoning and whatnot, we also have the architectural review board. They keep, the sole purpose of the architectural review board is to keep people from updating their properties too much. ... When you have organizations like this that are dedicated solely to keeping a town the way it is and the way it was, I think we have organizations like that in place, you don't have to worry about urban sprawl because they're not going to let it happen, and that's why they're there. And I think the founders of Worthington, when they came up with these organizations, they were forward-thinking people, and they were thinking about things like urban sprawl, and that's why these things were put into place.

The most important component of the resistance to urban sprawl, in David's mind, is institutional. If the right local social structure is in place, then urbanization cannot alter Worthington's identity. Despite David's stated appreciation for the founders, this passage reveals profound ignorance of Worthington's history. Some of the earliest residents hoped for Worthington to become the political center of Ohio. More importantly, the
architectural review board was not created by the founders; it was formed during the 1960s as Columbus began to creep into the Worthington area. David has given the current social reality a permanence that is not supported by history and will not continue as he imagines. He also expresses unrealistic faith in the local population's willingness to maintain local institutions such as the school system:

...if the property taxes are not paid and the schools go down, we're gonna lose Worthington. And the reason I say you know I'm not worried about urban sprawl is that I know people are gonna continue to pass the tax levies and make our schools better. So that's what I'm not worried about.

Here he fails to account for the tension between, on one hand, the processes leading to the school district's current state, and on the other hand, the current social state itself. The financial burden arising from the schools is due largely to the influx of Columbus students, which itself is a product of the city council's expansionist policy as well as the Columbus schools' poor reputation. If “the property taxes are not paid and the schools go down,” much of Worthington's desirability will vanish, obviating the need to resist sprawl.

Marshall is a year younger than David and, despite having an entirely different perspective on the effects of urban sprawl, has a similar, social-structure-focused type of sociological consciousness. David claimed in an interview that Marshall was a “good friend,” and like David, Marshall puts forth a “grown up” persona. Unlike David, however, Marshall does so in ways that are compatible with a youthful identity, wearing conservative collared shirts with fashionable jeans and pointing to the lack of representation for young people on Worthington's city council. Marshall also differs from David in that he holds a steady professional job and has won considerable respect
within the community for his political ambition and insight. His father was at one time a city official, and shortly after graduating from college, Marshall immersed himself in local politics, becoming particularly interested in Worthington's changing economic profile in the context of urban expansion. I conducted two interviews with Marshall, separated by nearly a year. During both interviews, he discussed at length Worthington's economic future and its evolving identity from a town in its own right to a Columbus suburb:

Under my theory that Worthington's going to become more of a, German Village Grandview Victorian Village type community as urban sprawl basically pushes us towards more of an urban environment, that we're gonna have to react in the same way that those communities reacted, and we're gonna have to go through an initial lull, a depression economically, because we're gonna be in a gap, in terms, we're gonna be shifting from an industrial economy to basically a service and consumer shop type economy, and so that's why you see right now Worthington Foods is leaving, Lydall's leaving, um, Metler's already left, a long time ago, uh, Team USA went under this year, partially for other reasons not really having to do with Worthington, um, ... We've lost you know maybe 500 jobs in the past two years. And probably gained somewhere in the 200 to 300 range. We're netting a loss of about 200 jobs right now. And I think a lot of projections that the city's operating on are based off of the assumption that we're netting jobs but we're not losing jobs. So I think compared to our original projections we're about 500 ??. Which in a community that's only 15,000 people ends up being like, a million dollars in revenue a year and accelerates the deficit that we've got.

Note that toward the beginning of the passage, Marshall states explicitly that “urban sprawl basically pushes us towards more of an urban environment.” In the subsequent discussion of Worthington's socio-geographic shift, the unambiguous focus is the city's economic status. His vision of Worthington's future is similarly driven by city-level economic concerns, and involves no mention of people:

Is Worthington eroding? Um, I think we're just going through a lull right now, and it's gonna be difficult to weather it. I personally feel that we've spent too much money. That's my agenda and my belief. Um, um, and if that's true, it's going to exacerbate the lull that we go through, because we're not going to have
any money to spend to bounce back. Um, when, at some point, it becomes clear what we have to do, cause I don't think we're there yet. It's not clear exactly what Worthington needs to drive its focus towards, but I think given 5 to 10 years, we'll know, it'll emerge, because we'll be forced to do that. I think the beginnings of it are Huntley Road and losing all those jobs. We're gonna begin to say, well how long can we tolerate this space being vacant, and not producing something for the community. And then they'll figure out something to do to replace that, but I don't know what it's gonna be, yet.

At one point I tried to encourage Marshall to link Worthington's New England identity to the effects of urban sprawl:

**Robin:** So do you think that, that, the, all of the focus on the bicentennial stuff has anything to do with the like current shift in identity that Worthington is experiencing? Like, because, you know, you mentioned urban sprawl is forcing Worthington into a situation where it has to define itself, you know, so do you think the two are connected in any way?

**Marshall:** Mmm, hard for me to know, because, um, I don't know that I ever saw, what the sense of in terms of these types of events, I don't know that I ever really noticed them, or understood the dynamics behind them when I was like, younger, when I would've seen it before Worthington's decline. And the, the transition's been so steady, in terms of the effect of what's going on up here at Crosswoods and everything else. And Polaris, it's been so gradual that you know one leaves, one leaves, that some people could say I guess that it wasn't just Polaris, you know they might say it would've happened in Worthington anyway, and stuff like that. Um, but, do I think the bicentennial overlaps with that? ... I mean I think that's accurate. I think you will notice, um, that there's a conscious effort on behalf of the community's leaders, to where possible reinforce the brand. Um, city council is spending a tremendous amount of money on the boulevard project. That's gonna take, essentially an urban, you know, state route, and turn it into more of a community feel. People have differing degrees to which they think the commitment should be made to that, and like how much money and what details and stuff like that. ... I'm not really totally sure where they're going architecturally sometimes with the vision, cause I don't know that it's totally coherent. I think sometimes city council just guts it, you know. Well that, my gut feeling is that that's close to the architecture but, nobody's actually do, you know, if it's Georgian, or this is Georgian something else, or if this isn't even Georgian, but it has characteristics that strike you as Georgian ... the architecture doesn't necessarily fit, it's similar to, but I don't think it necessarily fits New Englandish, Worthington's history. And I don't think there's a lot of like, looking into it. So I think there are a lot of attempts to do what you're talking about in terms of reinforcing the brand in terms of resolidifying Worthington's identity, and also if, our strengths aren't in our industrial base, and if our strengths aren't in our office
space or in having the most expensive houses or the newest buildings or the
greatest amenities ... one of the things we use to reinforce the quality of life to
keep the community strong is the brand of the community. So yeah, I think that's
ture, and I think it'll, to an increasing degree be true because with development
maxed out in Worthington, the only opportunity for people who are really
committed to the community, and the community itself in general since it can't
leave itself, um, the only, um, opportunity that they have for, you know,
innovation is going to be redeveloping itself. And I think it'll always be along
furthering that, that brand. And hopefully more buildings will be renovated like
the Griswold house or something like that.

Although Marshall acknowledges the economic and social advantages of constructing a
unique cultural identity for Worthington, his observations are confined to official actions
by city leaders, neglecting the role of local residents' personal views and agendas in
perpetuating the New England atmosphere. In fact, as the conversation continued, he
even cited “infrastructure” as a motivation for the kind of identity cultivated in

Worthington:

Robin: You know when you put it that way, it kinda makes Worthington's
historical identity sound fake. You know it's not real, it's kind of constructed as is
useful.

Marshall: I'm not totally convinced anymore that any community is real, you
know. I think sometimes they uh, synergistically hit together. A lot of times it's
when something hasn't been changed, and you started with a lot of infrastructure
that was all built around the same time, and that was well maintained, which is
Worthington. Or somebody goes back and they're meticulous, it's drawn by a
single person's vision, with the detail of only restoring it to what it was.

Throughout the interview, Marshall explains in great detail his views on Worthington's
economic policy, its architectural standards, its city council, and its relationship to
Columbus and the surrounding suburbs, linking each of those topics to the city's changing
social space in the face of urban sprawl. Unlike the speakers in the individual-centered
category, however, he makes no mention of local residents' attitudes or beliefs with
respect to racism, classism, or social exclusivity generally, nor does he make any foray
into individual-level ideology or even human interaction. In short, Marshall appears to conceive of the urban sprawl issue as a structural one dealt with by local institutions and impacting broad economic processes.

Mark is 36 years old and is a single father living just outside Old Worthington. He grew up in the same area, moved out of state for several years, and returned 9 years before I met him. He attended college for a while but did not graduate, and he now works in a white-collar retail-oriented job. Mark is less wealthy than many of his neighbors; in fact, he expressed concern about being able to afford to stay in the neighborhood. His clothes and hair are scruffy by comparison with other Worthingtonites in his age group. He is forthright and outgoing.

Mark views Worthington as more of a town in its own right than surrounding suburbs because it is more self-sufficient, not needing to rely on Columbus for employment or retailers. When he first spoke about the outskirts, he seemed unconcerned about the sprawl issue:

I think it just shows that Worthington is desirable. There’s parts that were, when you say Columbus now surrounds it, what you mean is that it has been incorporated, there’s land that’s always been there that may have always had people living in it, but it simply became part of the city of Columbus, and the city of Columbus basically wanted to expand, there were people that wanted to live in Worthington I think, but didn’t really care whether it was in the city of Columbus or in an unincorporated area but I think the city has recognized that that is a valuable area that they needed to incorporate so I think that it’s kind of a political change if anything. I don’t know.

However, his subsequent comments suggest some territorialism:

I think that I over the years have met people who say that they live in west Worthington, or north Worthington, or Worthington Woods or something and I’m like what is that? That’s not really a place. You know? Just say you leave near Worthington, or right outside Worthington, but what do all these names mean. I don’t think they really exist. Because you can’t find them on a map. You uh,
there’s no government, there’s no city government of west Worthington, so, uh, if
you had to ask them who their mayor was, their mayor’s probably Mike Coleman.
What police department shows up at your house? Columbus does. You know,
you either live in the city or you don’t, you live in one city or the other, I guess.
Based on what you’re saying, all that stuff doesn’t ??? so uh, and I think if you’re
telling people you live in west Worthington when you know you live in
Columbus, then you’re trying to paint a picture that’s not really accurate. Why
are you doing that? … Because they think Worthington’s more desirable I guess?
It just doesn’t seem very honest to me, you know?

Aside from its vigorously exclusionary theme, the critical information in this passage is
that for Mark, the entitlement to claim Worthington residence rests on structural
considerations. If your mayor is the Columbus mayor, then you are not from
Worthington. If Columbus police cover your house, then you are not from Worthington,
regardless of your school district and regardless of your desire to live in Worthington. I
asked if he thought these “dishonest” people were part of the Worthington community,
and he held to his position:

Yeah, they’re part of the Worthington community. I guess that’s probably what
they’re thinking of. Because they think of their town, they think of Worthington.
But I think of it as well, who’s your mayor, who’s your police department, who’s
your fire department, you know. Who you pay taxes to, that’s where you live.
And also, [people shop in Worthington, but] do they show up at the Worthington
city council meetings? No, probably not. Are they interested in the Worthington
smoking ban? No, probably not. When they vote, do they vote for you know, I
guess they vote for Worthington school issues, but other than that I don’t really
know what political issues they have input in.

Again, Mark focuses on the structural elements of community membership: your mayor,
your police, your fire department, your taxes, your city council meetings, your voting
booth. When asked why Worthington originally became desirable, he offers an
explanation rooted in city law:

... I don’t think they force integration anymore [in Columbus], I think they
stopped that years ago, but maybe you know … I know they did in the 70s and
80s, and those people were affected by it. But anyways, it created, it made the
town desirable, you know, the house values went up, people invested more in it and the neighborhood, and it just created an effect throughout the town. People fixed up their property, and uh, there was wealth to be spent in there ...

The implication here is that when Columbus forced integration in the schools, wealthy white families fled to Worthington where the integration law did not apply. In other words, Worthington became desirable as a result of public policy combined with white flight. In general, Mark's discussion of Worthington's evolving relationship with Columbus is focused on social structures or policy which defines communities and determines individuals' claim to community membership.

Ben is 17 years old and has always lived in Old Worthington. Both his parents are from Worthington and have strong community involvement. Ben is somewhat reserved but friendly, and while he is well-liked by the group that hangs out at the coffee house, he is not one of the regulars there. His persona is that of an average, clean-cut kid who does not stand out in any particular way, positive or negative. I have heard others mention Ben in gleeful descriptions of high school parties dominated by heavy drinking and sex, but Ben himself tends to keep quiet about such exploits, leaving intact his public image of a “good kid.” He appreciates Worthington's distinctiveness:

One of the things I like about Old Worthington is that, for one, it’s different from, most places, we got these nice old-school houses…it’s just a nice community I guess, you know.

Ben resents the development that is altering Worthington's landscape. It is the development per se, not the people moving in, that he resents:

Also it’s the 161 expansion it’s just right through Old Worthington, that’s just not, they want to expand 161, cause you know it goes right into, once it hits Sawmill it spreads out to kind of a, not a highway but kind of a 4-lane road, you know. And plus if you go further east on 161 it does the same thing but in the middle it’s kept a 2-lane thing, and I happen to live on that road … They keep
wanting to expand everything and I hate it because I’ve lived in that house since I was born. And also around like you see all these trees are like being cut down and all these woods are being chopped down to put M/I homes in and it’s just not cool at all. ... And over by Hard Road and they cleared that out and put homes and everything there, and homes that look exactly alike, which is I mean I just hate it, it’s so ugly you know kinda like you look out in Delaware, and that’s just becoming the same thing. Well it is really, it just looks completely out of place you have these huge fields and it’s just these huge blocks of houses, no trees, no nothing…

While he gives several specific examples of city development, all of which play a role in linking Worthington with Columbus, Ben never locates the source of his resentment among people or any personal characteristics. All of his complaints are about the construction itself, and his only mention of people at all in the last passage is the generic 'they,' whose reference remains unspecified. Humans do eventually enter the discussion, but only insofar as their actions are constrained by socio-geographic structure:

The problem with Worthington and the suburbs around Columbus is with Columbus, obviously the city itself is a ghost town at night, like…it just closes down, you know, once it hits nine, it’s just boring, there’s nothing to do, but what they want to do is they want to expand outward instead of going upwards like a city like Chicago or New York, they’re housing people away from the city and the only in the city is jobs and stuff and so it closes down at night. It’d be great if they had apartment buildings and stuff in the city. If they did that I think it would relieve some stress of expanding these suburbs and everything, we’ve got more of these people working in the city and everything…People moving into the suburbs cause there’s nowhere to move into Columbus but there’s jobs, but.

Statements like “they're housing people away from the city” and “people moving into the suburbs cause there's nowhere to move into Columbus” suggest a denial of human agency, the view that social institutions determine human action. Thus Ben conceives of problems arising from urban sprawl as having structural causes and requiring structural solutions, with individual identity and experience having little relevance.
The fifth and final speaker in this category is Jim, who is 48 and lives with his wife and children in the northern part of Worthington proper. He is a lifelong Worthington resident and says he and his wife made a conscious decision to settle in Worthington. His mother and brother live nearby. Jim is a professional who comes from a wealthy family and is himself upper middle class. He is self-consciously pensive, earnest, and very friendly, and his style of dress is conservative, neat, and middle-aged.

Jim is very conscious of and not altogether pleased with the changes in Old Worthington over the last couple of decades:

As a kid, the uptown Worthington, the blocks from South St. to 161 or even goin as far as North St., very different than it is today in that it was really a small functional city that could've survived on its own, in contrast with what it's become today. Back then it had, within a block or two we had a hardware store, which of course is still there. A few grocery stores, 4 or 5 gas stations, a restaurant, um, two grocery stores ... a jewelry store as there is still now. ... It would've been a self-sufficient town as opposed to now, um, you know it's a lot of little boutiquey shops. It's really become kind of a cute place which is all very nice but it's not, it's not the Worthington I grew up with either.

When I asked what he thought caused the change, he brought up a shift he has noticed in Old Worthington's residential character:

Old Worthington, the kids who lived, at least my sense growing up, living near, going for example to Evening Street school, was that the kids who were living in Old Worthington really were less affluent. And you look at the juxtaposition today of, uh, I mean, [his wife] and I have looked at buying a home in Old Worthington at various times, but in terms of price per square foot or whatever, it's gone from being probably kind of a, I wouldn't say it was the poor kids but it was, certainly was not, you know now it's very much the high end, and there's a huge premium attached to that, to that charm of Old Worthington. ... So I haven't answered your question about what do I think happened, but something sure enough happened. Uh, and maybe it's just an affluence of society that we're now able to, to take what was purely functional, really almost utili, ahh, is utilitarian the right word? Kind of, you know highly functional kind of a city that existed because of, of need, and and really became more a matter of want.

Invoking both the changing economic status of Old Worthington's residents and the
increased affluence of society generally, Jim locates the rise of Worthington's new “boutiquey” flavor in the economy. He says nothing about why affluent people might have moved into Old Worthington in the first place, nor does he discuss any links between personal or community identity and the structural decisions that led to the current status of the business district. Instead, he analyzes the situation in very broad cultural/economic terms:

... It's that triumph of style over substance. And what was very much a community of substance, in a lot of ways, and I'm not saying there's not substance here now, but it's a different, very different kind of substance. ... I think it's a substance of want. It's not driven by need so much as it is status.

Even his choice of passive voice for the final sentence, “It's not driven by need so much as it is status,” denies agency to the people responsible for effecting the changes, placing the responsibility on the community or society as a whole. When I asked what gave Old Worthington its status, Jim first claimed not to know but then offered the following explanation, which focuses on community demographics and on supra-local social trends:

I think a lot of what's changed, just think about all the different neighborhoods and communities that have gone up around us, and, uh, and there certainly is, and there continues to be a divergence of um, of families, and family styles, and family makeup, and affluence within the area in that you've got, I mean within the Worthington school system now, you've got a broad range of folks who are, uh, maybe renting a condo out, um, northeast of the center of town here, 3 or 4 miles out, might be here for a couple years and moved on, and then you've got, by contrast, folks who are, um, more deeply rooted in this community and they're, I'm not alone I mean I'll go to church on a given Sunday and I'll see 10 people that I knew, that I rubbed shoulders with in high school. ... And yet we are obviously such a mobile society, and I, I think it's slowed down a little bit, but you think about, uh, in the last couple of decades, the average person, what, changes communities every three or four years, and although again, I think the job market has settled down there for a while, people are turning jobs over every few years, um, so it's just, it's a very, what my father's generation, what my generation watched I guess ... it wasn't uncommon ... to work for the same company for 35
years. And that's gone. And there's so many factors there, between so much more disposable income, um, and a whole lot more mobility, some kind of by design, and some kind of thrust upon us. I think those are at least, kind of circling back to your earlier question about what's caused it, it's just a very different world than it was three or four decades ago.

Although Jim never directly explains the connection, he links society's affluence and mobility to Old Worthington's gentrification. He clearly views the change as arising simultaneously from multiple factors, but all of them are societal forces that supersede individual agency and responsibility.

All five of the speakers in this section focus their discussions of urban sprawl on infrastructure, economic trends, or organization of some sort above the level of the individual. While most of them recognize that the creeping of urban space into Worthington is precipitating strong reactions locally, they do not address the conflict at the level of individual ideology or bias, looking instead to structural causes and solutions.

3.6.3 Third type: Integrated

The two previous groups of speakers exhibit, I claim, types of sociological consciousness with respect to urban sprawl that are limited by their neglect of social structure or human ideology generally. A third group of speakers show evidence of a more sophisticated type of consciousness that links the individual to social processes and situates both within a historical perspective. For these speakers, personal experiences and ideologies are a significant component in the sprawl-related tension, but they are shaped to a large extent by social structures. Conversely, social structures, city planning decisions in particular, do not arise or operate in isolation from human ideology and
agency. Finally, social structures and human agency are not understood from a synchronic, static perspective but rather as processes unfolding in time and conditioned by other historical processes, both universal and particular to Worthington.

One such speaker is Peter, an 18-year-old who grew up in Old Worthington and left for a prestigious arts college just a few hours after the interview. I met him at the coffee shop, where he was friends with the regular crowd but not one of the most frequent visitors. Peter gives the impression of a pensive and somewhat self-conscious, cynical intellectual who has only recently shifted his persona from nerd to alternative leftist. He attended the alternative high school. During the interview, he spoke very slowly and thoughtfully, pausing often to smoke. He looked forward to getting out of Worthington and was quite critical of it; when asked about the town's history, he offered the following summary of what he learned about it in elementary school:

Just seemed like a bunch of white people came here and built a church. And then Columbus became the capital so, you know, all the white people moved out of Columbus and came here. It's just the hiding place, you know. It's a great one, too.

Peter is one of the only speakers to mention race in the context of Worthington's history. He links Worthington's historical whiteness to the town's current identity and homogeneity ("all the white people moved out of Columbus and came here, It's just the hiding place, you know"), portraying it as a central factor in Worthington's relationship with Columbus, just as the speakers in the individual-centered category do. When asked about the western part of the school district, Peter's comments are interesting because of their directness regarding the social divide and socioeconomic class, which many speakers were reluctant to mention explicitly (cf. Bucholtz, forthcoming):
It just seems like a completely different district, you know, in a way, I mean. It's just like there's two, two Worthingtons now instead of one. ... I think the people that go to Kilbourne, might come from, you know, their families might make a little more money, but not necessarily. There are a few, I think there's a few, like ?? of you know, what am I gonna say here, like lower middle class neighborhoods that are, uh, in, going to, into Thomas, you know, district. And there aren't any of those by Kilbourne.

Peter also differs from most of the other speakers in that he immediately identifies the bicentennial events as the products of an unsuccessful public relations strategy:

Um, I think it was just a lame attempt to make it look like we're an actual town, and we're really not. There's no sense of community in this town, it's just a, you know, a bunch of people that ended up here, there's no, Worthington really isn't a community at all. ... Worthington's too big now to be a small town. I mean they don't, they can't, you know, call it a small town anymore when it's fuckin huge, like. It's, it's too big now to, to be a community now and it's too small to be an actual city, so we're just stuck in this, you know, mess of suburbia, that's just never-ending.

When asked why Worthington became that way, Peter first blames a broad cultural trend having implications for infrastructure:

Well, I think Americans are idiots and they have to drive cars and they have to, you know, work ten miles from their house and, you know, so, I mean, no one wants to use public transportation, no one wants to, I mean, when stuff gets boring we can just build new stuff, I mean, it's just the American way I guess. Instead of just rebuilding stuff better we just sort of leave it there, say fuck it. ... Ohio's just gonna be one huge city, sooner or later. Well it's already gonna spread to Delaware, I mean in a decade probably. ... It'll just make us look really lame and really American. I don't think there'll be any consequences other than we're just a bunch of dumbasses that build too much shit.

Robin: Why does that make us look dumb?

Because we use so many resources. I mean we have to, we have to fuckin start wars with people to, get more resources and, it's just ridiculous. There's just no like, efficiency here. Like why can't you just walk down the street to, to someone's you know, grocery store that you know, buy something from them, you know. I don't think anyone really, I don't think anyone really cares about who they're serving anymore, it's just like, no one knows anyone, it's just, they're just doing their job.
In summary, the wastefulness of American culture leads to the proliferation of large, impersonal social spaces. This critique is clearly aimed at a level of social structure above the individual and above the city. Later, however, Peter links urban sprawl to shortcomings of individuals in Worthington, essentially complaining that they have no sociological imagination:

It's the apathy that gets you, it's not so much the, the question of whether or not [people in Worthington] agree with me, I mean no one's taking a stance on anything like, well, I don't wanna drive my truck to McDonald's, maybe I should conserve some gas, it's like, they just don't care, because, it's not affecting them directly, there's no direct effect on anything that people have noticed, I mean.

He subsequently develops the theme of personal awareness and responsibility in his proposal for positive local change, in which he claims that people are in denial:

If they would just allow people to develop the actual central, central part of this city, then you know, it might attract, you know, new things and create a sense of community but they're just, you know, creating this fucking illusion of community rather than actually doing it. It's like yeah, this is what the town used to be like. It's just a real pathetic, like, attempt to make it look like we're a small town or something when, it's not what's goin on. It's just the denial ... the denial that we're an actual big city, and people won't just admit it, that Columbus is just fuckin large, you know, that our city's too big now to just act like we're a small town, so let's just keep everything looking nice and tidy, like, there's really no point in doing that anymore, like, it's time to just just say that we're you know an actual city, and I think then we'll change things, but, everyone wants to you know take up so much space and, use so many resources, I mean they don't care, I mean it's the apathy again, so.

For Peter, individual apathy and denial are as much a source of the community's lack of cohesion as is the physical sprawl. The shedding of denial and apathy, he believes, could allow Worthington to become more centered, thus combating sprawl.

Rita is a lifelong Worthington resident in her late 30s who lives with her husband and children in Old Worthington. She holds a master's degree and currently stays home with her children. For years Rita has been heavily involved in Worthington activities and
organizations, including those related to the bicentennial celebration, and some of her family members have taught in the school system. Rita is talkative, sociable, and friendly. Her style of dress and hair are motherly rather than fashionable, and she is quite focused on her kids' activities and development.

A persistent theme in Rita's interview is the definition of Worthington. The area surrounding Worthington has changed quite a bit over the course of her lifetime, and she clings to the memory of a smaller, more isolated town. However, she eventually defines Worthington in terms of community cohesion rather than size:

Um, I guess I see the boundaries of Worthington as, um, the communities that do get involved, the parts of the communities that do get involved. So I don’t see West Worthington which is up by Sancus and all the apartments up there, I don’t see um, uh, Worthington Hills, uh, because uh, those are either not folks who, who want to be in a community or folks who want their own community.

Her subsequent lament of the blurring of community boundaries is the most direct and unapologetic of all the interviews:

And now I think you know there are no boundaries between Worthington and Polaris. I mean it’s all, there’s no physical definition. And the way things uh, in Columbus, and therefore in Worthington, are growing and developing and expanding as, as far as they can go I don’t think there is gonna be anything that that defines one community to the next. Um, and I guess that’s just, that’s just city development, I don’t know. I don’t know, pretty soon we’re gonna look like Tokyo, where, one, one city just, just flows right into the next.

Although she has defined Worthington in terms of community involvement, Rita clearly blames the loss of community identity on urban development. However, she artfully links the two ideas in as the interview continues:

Robin: How do you feel about that [the dissolving of community boundaries]?

I’m not keen on it. We’re too big. We’re too big, already. Because we don’t know each other. Because we’re not, involved, you know because, because you can now say “Oh well this is the Worthington school district,” but you pay Columbus
taxes, but are you, are you affiliated with Worthington? Are you, you know, are you involved? And I think maybe it’s because they’re too far out and, and don’t feel a connection, I don’t know.

Here Rita proposes that the town's physical size precludes community cohesion because people in West Worthington do not feel a connection to the “real” Worthington. Urban sprawl, in other words, interferes with community identity not only through the proliferation of physical structures but also through feelings of disconnectedness that discourage community involvement. Evidence for the strength of Rita's conviction appears in a local newspaper article reporting a City Council hearing on a proposed condominium development on High Street in Old Worthington. Although the majority of council members were in favor of the development, Rita testified publicly against it, saying “It looks like you're trying to squeeze urban mass into suburbia.” Yet it is clear that her exclusionary attitude here is not rooted in personal bias but rather in the awareness that urban sprawl can weaken community identity.

Another critical point here is that Rita conceptualizes urban sprawl and its effects as a gradual, perhaps universal process. (“Um, and I guess that’s just, that’s just city development, I don’t know”.) Unlike David and Marshall, she does not place all of her faith in local social institutions, instead taking a broader view of urban sprawl as having global repercussions. Socioeconomic processes that precede Worthington both temporally and spatially are responsible for the local social conflict, and the effects of urban sprawl promise to continue and reach beyond Worthington. Even the way Rita indexes the present (e.g. “because you can now say...”) suggests that there exists a temporal past which contrasts with the present in such a way that demonstrates the processual nature of the local social conflict.
Like Rita, Chris is a lifelong Worthington resident in his late 30s. He works at the western high school and lives in Old Worthington with his wife and child. I have seen Chris and his family attend community events, though he told me he was too busy with work to have much community involvement. Chris has a confident air and is clearly popular with students at the high school. His style of dress seems to be a compromise between the students’ tastes and the requirements of professionalism and age.

When I asked Chris about the relationship between Worthington and the outskirts, his answer revolved around the themes of architecture and city planning. For instance, he explained that he appreciated being able to walk to the store and the bank in Old Worthington and disapproved of west Worthington being heavily segregated between commercial and residential spaces. He continued:

Um, and ar, architecturally that’s another, kind of, preference or peeve, whichever way you wanna look at it, is, is um, you know, houses that their prime feature is the garage. ... You know, and I think, that, that’s not healthy (laughs) you know, and you go out, and hop in your car, pop the button and go out to work and come back and you never get outside. And, you know, yard sizes and that kind of thing and condos and people say “Oh well you, why would you wanna have a lawn, you just have to cut it,” It’s like, well, nobody really likes cutting the lawn but it is, kinda for me a moment of peace. ... But, uh, it’s all, um, I think it, that’s all related I don’t think I’m really rambling on this ... Um, some of the the, you know, architectural and social and geographic lifestyle choices that divide people, and then the fact that we’ve got this river that goes right through. You know, there’s east Worthington and there’s west Worthington. And west, you know, this side of the river has no common space. The only thing that ties this part together is this school.

In this passage, Chris links infrastructure and social space to lifestyle and to divisions among people. His side comment “I think it, that’s all related I don’t think I’m really rambling on this” suggests that he is conscious of moving between levels of abstraction in linking the personal to the structural. He later complains that the apartment complexes
in the outskirts are “spiritually” bad for the people who live there because they are run
down and offer the residents nothing to call their own and take care of. His focus on the
community-building importance of infrastructure extends to the school district:

So it just, it just seems that there are these, these things that divide us and I know
that when, when this school, um, was being planned, you know there was a
massive debate about whether we wanna have ... one high school or two, and it
was the right decision to make two, but it was the wrong decision from a s, from a
city planner’s point of view to not have any other space that says this is a town
too.

His views seem exclusionary to the extent that he clearly favors making the west side its
own town rather than incorporating it into the east side's community. Nevertheless,
Chris' conception of the effects of urban sprawl situates the individual with respect to
geography, city planning, and community identity. Unlike the speakers in the social
structure-focused category, he talks about social structure in terms of its relevance for life
experiences.

Chris' conception of history's role in the local effects of sprawl is less clear from
his interview than is Rita's. However, Chris graciously allowed me to shadow him at
work and also spoke with me at length over the phone before his interview. During
conversations in those contexts, Chris revealed a well-developed awareness of the
historical roots of socioeconomic inequality and, to some extent, current U.S. social
policy. While I observed, he meticulously taught his students about unequal living
standards from a global historical perspective, though the class was ostensibly unrelated
to history or social studies. He had also established a program in which the same
students did service work in a notoriously poor, crime-ridden Columbus neighborhood.
Therefore, although Chris did not explicitly discuss Worthington's urban sprawl conflict
from a historical, process-oriented perspective, I consider it reasonable to infer that kind of insight. Another consideration is that Chris' formal ethnographic interview was cut short by his professional obligations, precluding a full discussion of his thoughts.

Another speaker in this category is Marjorie, a Worthington native in her mid-50s who has worked in the Worthington school system for many years and has had particularly strong involvement with the arts. She lives in Old Worthington with her family. Marjorie has a reserved, pleasant manner, but she is willing to assert her views in the face of opposition. Everyone who has ever mentioned Marjorie in my presence has spoken with affection and respect.

On one hand, Marjorie deeply appreciates the small-town atmosphere and the attachment to history that she feels in Worthington. Evidence for this surfaces in her discussion of the bicentennial play, a dramatization of the 1803 founding of Worthington:

I think [the playwright] did a beautiful job of focusing on the, the founding father couple, James and Lucy Kilbourne, and just a small section of their life, to kind of capture the spirit of the town, which I think he saw as family. And, uh, the community coming together and coming home, it was coming home for him, it was coming home for all of our students to do this play. Um, it was pretty amazing, it really was. ... To have it come from the community I thought it was a wonderful blend of professionals and the community, I mean the play really belonged to us in every way.

From an ethnographic standpoint, Marjorie's discourse about the play was fascinating because it was, literally, discourse about the production of Worthington's historical consciousness. One of the themes running through her description was the need to compromise between historical accuracy and the constraints imposed by time, space, and audience:
Right down to writing the play, you know, how the characters would be named, what should be included, what shouldn't be included, I think all in the good spirit of, is this gonna be palatable for family audiences ... And so I think the play, uh, the serious tones of it came through, and I think the humor in the actual production, as [her husband] said, more palatable, but, that was, you know, I felt like in the middle of a storm, cause I represented all parties ... It's a beautiful play, and then they have to sit and listen to nitpicking, you know ... But I think everybody involved in it was so well-intentioned, you know we had historical, you know the people that represented the historical uh, branch of the community were very sensitive to, well that wasn't exactly the way it was, whereas in drama, you take artistic license for the purpose of getting it in two and a half hours but for people that history of course, this whole thing is about history, so it was a difficult line to, uh, go.

One of the play's controversial scenes portrayed Lucy Kilbourne, the primary founder's wife, dying during childbirth. Marjorie explained that some people voiced concerns that the scene would be “too dark,” coming from the perspective of “a family audience, cotton candy, fireworks affair,” her description of the rest of the bicentennial celebration. As this statement suggests, she recognizes that the bicentennial events were not intended purely as historical didactics; some people were reluctant to sacrifice child-appropriateness for historical accuracy, and Marjorie was unwilling to sacrifice dramatic integrity. Other statements suggest more generally that she does not view Worthington's present-day small-town cohesion as clearly linked to its founding history:

I think there's been a, uh, growth in community spirit in some respects. The whole um, renovation of the green, and the use of the green, I think has done a lot to establish identity. And I think the business association, I think they've done a lot, Market Day and Folk Festival, and even the flea market, just all of that, now maybe it's cause I'm living close to the center of Worthington, but I don't remember all that growing up at all. ...[Downtown Worthington] is definitely cleaner.

When asked what motivated downtown Worthington's renovation, Marjorie offers two different possibilities:
I think there's a big effort in the 60s, 70s ... renovation and a respect for history. I think that's part of it. I don't know, money?

She goes on to describe the recent changes in more detail and with a focus on “identity”:

I think there's more identity. There's more group Worthington activities than ever before. It's not like 20 years ago there was more things like that. Although I know that the bicentennial that ?? wrote about in the Worthington paper, uh, articles in the Worthington paper as being much more folksy and much more, you know, Hildegard has her gladiolas out on the porch kind of thing but, um, that's more kind of small town neighbors whereas I think as a city, I think Worthington has more of an identity now.

To paraphrase: regardless of Worthington's long-standing small-town feel, its community identity, rooted in shared activities, is relatively new. When asked what motivated this newly-cultivated identity, Marjorie gives the following broad-minded analysis:

I think there's been a valuing of it. I think as the world bec, I mean, I don't know, but, I would say that I think Worthington values it more. Because we've seen cities fall apart in the center and we've seen so much in our lifetime, of letting things go, and not valuing history and all of that, that I think there's a greater sensibility, just like we're concerned with the environment more, because we're losing these things, they've become more valuable, so I think what would've just been accepted, of course, that's the way a small town always is, da da da, and as we begin to lose that, and feel alienated and separate, alone, then people go back and value it again, I think.

In linking the fact that “we've seen cities fall apart in the center,” and the theme of widespread loss, with the observation that people “feel alienated and separate, alone,” Marjorie displays consciousness of the interactions among multiple levels of society. And it is critical to recognize that this passage is her answer to my question about the motivations for Worthington's recent identity shift; that is, Marjorie attributes the town's recent upsurge of shared cultural activities – and the proliferation of infrastructure to enable them – to the individual-level response to social and historical processes. Thus the individual, social structure, and history come together.
Cliff, who is 49, lives just outside Old Worthington, well within the city borders. He grew up in Worthington, attended Ohio State, and now teaches in a nearby suburban high school. Several times during the interview, Cliff reminded me explicitly that he was speaking from the perspective of an educator. Both his style of dress and his way of talking call to mind the stereotype of a socially-awkward engineer (though he is not an engineer). Yet he is very friendly and easygoing in a reserved way, and is married and has children.

When asked to describe Worthington, Cliff immediately observes that Worthington's community identity is similar to that of several surrounding suburbs experiencing the same growth conditions:

Part of it’s just the community and there are a lot of communities that have what’s like Old Worthington around here. ... And then Worthington has a lot of the… Memorial Day parade, the churches … and then, well now we have like Market Days, and a lot of the older or, I don’t know, sometimes you think of it more like the New England kind of traditions that go on, and the atmosphere is nice here. Although there’s a lot now, I think Gahanna has started, and is trying to build that, Westerville has a little bit of that.

What many Worthington residents view as a unique historic downtown, Cliff recognizes as an instance of a broad trend. This perspective emerges again when he discusses the division of the school district and the construction of the western high school. I reproduce a relatively long section of the interview here before commenting:

Well, it’s gotten surrounded by Columbus. It didn’t used to be that way, um. ... So that was a surprise, it’s growth like everybody else has experienced growth. That has changed. Within Worthington probably I think one of the hardest things that we’ve known since we’ve been here is the um, well, when Worthington Schools kept taking in or grow, its numbers were growing with the Columbus school, or Columbus city, over here. It uh, then got in a situation where it had to build a second high school. ... And that was hard I think for a lot of community people because splitting the schools up and dividing it up ... But that caused some change I think for a while until that finally stabilized.
Robin: Stabilized?

Well, after a while, the other issue was, if you looked at the two high schools, a huge amount of money had been put into Worthington Kilbourne, and it was referred to as a Taj Mahal among Old Worthington, and people were saying, you know, our tax dollars are funding this very expensive school up here, but you know the other one down here doesn’t look as nice, so it was community, uh, I don’t know, bickering I guess, going on. Which they didn’t used to have. A lot of people in Old Worthington felt like I think sometimes talk about all the folks live in Columbus that say they’re part of Worthington. ... Well, it’s like, they’re over across the river, and it’s like other, they don’t think that they’re really Worthington people.

Robin: Do you?

Doesn’t matter to us. It’s just another part of Worthington. And I think now that’s gone. People don’t much say that anymore and, that was still part of the ten years when there was all the disagreement, not just Worthington, but between Columbus and all the suburban schools, agreements to, how much money are you gonna give us so we don’t come in and annex your schools and take your kids. Worthington had a different arrangement with that. However, it’s still, [people were saying] well, if we have to keep building more schools all the way over on the other side of Worthington, people go it’s raising our taxes here, and it’s not benefitting any of the kids here, it’s over there. So there was, that’s done, cause the population’s been stable, and I don’t think that has been an issue lately. Ten, fifteen years ago it was. The schools, and the splitting things, and the who’s gonna live where, where are the boundaries, I think those are typical problems you have in communities that are growing a lot.

At the beginning of the passage, Cliff notes that “it’s growth like everybody else has experienced growth,” reiterating the view that Worthington is not unique in experiencing the effects of urbanization. Nevertheless, when he subsequently explains that Old Worthington people resented bearing the tax burden for a high school that served people who weren’t considered “real” Worthingtonites, he reveals sensitivity to individuals’ territorial sentiments. In fact, he casts local residents’ concerns as somewhat reasonable and certainly as a real and important component of the growth situation despite the fact that he claims to have been immune to such bias. Finally, Cliff reinforces yet again the
fact that “the schools, and the splitting things, and the who’s gonna live where, where are the boundaries, I think those are typical problems you have in communities that are growing a lot.” In other words, Worthington residents' concerns were deserving of mention, but they were largely determined by broad structural forces.

Focusing on what he considers a part of the issue with more present relevance, Cliff notes a contrast in lifestyle between Old Worthington residents and some in the outskirts:

And I think the other thing is now people are looking at big growth areas are out, way beyond 270, Powell, Dublin, way north of Worthington, so you get more people staying, particularly in Old Worthington, all around in this area, families move in and stay quite a while. I think in the less expensive homes, maybe in the apartment complexes in West Worthington, there was more people moving in, transient, for a year or so, and move. Which made it harder for, probably for the children but also for, nobody knew any of their neighbors or maybe didn’t stay in the churches or join the community things as much.

Here we see a link between individual-level behavior -- “nobody knew any of their neighbors or maybe didn't stay in the churches or join the community things as much” -- and the socio-geographic observation that the less expensive housing is located in West Worthington. Cliff’s recognition of this particular link is unremarkable, but in the context of his previous comments it can be understood as an observation about growth situations generally. Growth, or sprawl, leads to socio-geographic segregation, which underlies differences in lifestyle that can appear to confirm existing bias against an “outsider” group. In this way, individual behavior and ideology is linked to structural phenomenon of urban sprawl.

Lydia is 19 and grew up in a decidedly upper-middle-class family just outside Worthington's western border. She spent a year in college before returning to
Worthington and taking up various service jobs in the area. Lydia dresses in a hip urban grunge style and openly disdains the tight preppy clothes that were popular in the older Worthington high school when she attended it. She is active with national political and environmental issues but not local politics. Lydia is very outgoing and seems always to be surrounded by friends and sharing cigarettes, remaining loyal to old friends while constantly making new ones. She says that during high school, most of her friends were not from school but from the coffee house or Ohio State.

Lydia perceives the average young person in Worthington as blindly following the path of those in front of them: finish high school, go to college, get married, never truly engaging with the rest of the world and forming original opinions. Her solution is to diversify Worthington's cultural scene:

If they had, if there was more culture. Then they would be able to grow and form their own opinions and, they don't necessarily have to be my opinions but if I ask you a question about something, give me a reason behind your answer, you know. I don't think many people do that, so. ... Um, like places like Victorian's, where you can have like a poetry open mic, just get spoken word down there. Get different music, um, like just like ballet, theatre, just everything ... um, it's pretty tolerant, like the town's pretty tolerant, the kids are pretty tolerant like if people are gay or bisexual or anything like that they don't really care about that it's just, they don't need to be cultured in that aspect. They just need to be able to open their eyes and you know, form different beliefs.

When asked how she feels about the school district's size, she offers an inclusive if untenable view:

I mean, we have a good school district. We have a really good school district. So I don't really care that it's that big I mean you don't get to know everyone, but if you can get a good education and taxes aren't ridiculously high, I mean, I don't really care that much, like, yeah maybe it should be more condensed or something but, it's, if you can get a good education, then get a good education. I mean, it's, they're a lot better than Clintonville schools, or Columbus schools ... why shouldn't we have a big school district and try to get as many people that can get a good education.
However, Lydia does not invite urban sprawl to Old Worthington, which she views as central to the town's atmosphere:

I think that if they built like condominiums and new strip malls and everything that Old Worthington would lose more business. And that's, I kinda think Old Worthington is the staple of the community. That's what keeps the atmosphere since everyone's so close and everyone knows everybody and like, helps everybody out, and that's where you meet your friends, and you go to Graeter's after like, a middle school dance or you go to Scottie's to have coffee with a friend you haven't seen in like, like your daughter's friends mom from first grade you meet there to get coffee and scones or something. But that's just kinda how Old Worthington is, but if there, it becomes more corporate and like, more structured I guess, everything's like a carbon copy, mirror image of everything around it, then it's gonna lose the atmosphere.

This passage suggests that in her view, urbanization is directly linked to community atmosphere, which in turn influences individual behavior within the community.

Subsequent parts of the interview make a clear distinction between urbanization and growth; the former threatens community cohesion, but the latter is necessary and healthy:

Worthington's getting big so there's gonna be different aspects of Worthington, there's gonna be different little subcultures everywhere you go. And I know about my subculture, and like the old subcultures because it's, the original Worthington but, I mean, so what there are different places that people hang out, and it can't, as long as Old Worthington is preserved, then I think that Worthington will survive and keep that atmosphere. ... Everywhere has different little subcultures, and there's no need to keep everything tiny as long as you have, I mean you don't need to keep Worthington that big, when it can grow and you can get an education, and then that same tiny little subculture is still gonna exist, just not everyone's gonna know about it, you know. ... Cause the world's gonna grow, and things are gonna change, oh my lord. The world's not gonna end if there's a new building like 5 miles away. So just preserve the history we have because we don't have much since America's only, what, a few hundred years old, I mean, preserve the culture you have, but you have to gain more. Because the world's gonna grow, the population is growing, you need more buildings, you need more apartments, you need more houses. That's gonna happen, it's inevitable. But, so don't be stuck on the past, but try to keep it there so you're aware of it.

For Lydia, the preservation of Old Worthington is important for the maintenance of the local culture and for historical awareness, but its preservation need not stifle growth and
change. Her focus on preservation is motivated not by a resistance to change but by an 
appreciation for diversity; while growth is compatible with the co-existence of multiple 
“subcultures,” urbanization is not. In summary, Lydia emphasizes, on one hand, the link 
between culture and individual agency in forming opinions, and on the other hand, the 
link between the preservation of Old Worthington's structure and community cohesion as 
well as the continuation of diverse subcultures.

3.6.4 Fourth type: None

The final category of speakers is united by the apparent lack of sociological 
consciousness, displaying little or no critical analysis of any level of society and do not 
appear to possess well-developed recognition of urban sprawl's interaction with either 
social structures or personal and community identity.

Kate is 34 and lives in a tiny neighborhood bordering Old Worthington and within 
the Worthington city limits. She grew up in Worthington, as did her husband, attended 
Ohio State, and now holds a professional job and cares for her children. Her family is 
perhaps a bit less wealthy than most of the other speakers but easily middle or upper 
middle class. Kate is energetic and friendly. Her style would allow her to blend in with a 
crowd of young suburban parents: classic jeans that were stylish but not hip and an Ohio 
State sweater. Kate spoke enthusiastically about the Worthington community:

I love Worthington. I absolutely love Worthington. I think it’s a, it’s just a small 
town with a downtown Worthington and it has a, you know for ... anyone within 
walking distance of Old Worthington you’ve got the library you’ve got …a ton of 
restaurants.
When asked about the ongoing development in the areas surrounding Worthington, she said she was in favor of them because the larger school district offered more opportunities. She also noted that she and her husband used to live in the outskirts and appreciated being able to reap the benefits of the Worthington community while paying the Columbus tax rate. She also spoke from a realtor's perspective:

I think um, I’m not sure how it affects different people, and, but I know I just felt, I think Worthington loses people to, so when people say then start in Colonial Hills, they outgrow their house, and then Worthington Estates is getting, you know, pricier and pricier, and if you buy a house in Worthington Estates, chances are you’re gonna have to do some updating or some remodeling, so if you go a little bit more north and get a house that you can fit into and stay in the Worthington school district I think that’s a lot better than losing them to Lewis Center. ... So I think it’s nice that we have that option and I’m real excited to have actually the new development off of Hard Road won’t be cheap. That won’t be cheap. But it’s not like we’re gonna shrink again, so.

Kate's reaction to urban sprawl is dominated by the housing opportunities it affords rather than its potential effects – positive or negative – on community identity and the environment. She even lauds the Hard Road development, which many others have denounced for the green space it destroys. Despite her stated love of Worthington's small-town quality, she claims that the sprawling developments do not deter community cohesion:

I definitely think that everyone has a sense of community wherever their home is. They have the Hard Road library, and whether they walk there or drive there, they still get there. ... so I think that’s the sense of community more than just the walking distance, to have a central place to go to, that people like to go to … So I have learned, being a realtor, that there is no right or wrong, there isn’t, when you’re just a regular, when you’re just living, people love where they live, no matter where they live, 9 times out of 10. … I mean people love it. There’s just no right answer.

This is effectively a denial of any links between community identity and socio-geographic space. It is also an overly relativistic stance, establishing all living spaces as
equally facilitative of community. Further, it neglects social biases such as racism and classism that make some neighborhoods exclusionary.

When I asked Kate if she had noticed any effects of the school district's division on the community, her answer revealed a lack of critical awareness:

I don’t think it’s affected it that much. There are some die-hards who weren’t happy to see the new high school go in … I hear a lot of complaints about that now. The only complaint I’ve ever heard about the split of the high school has been football related.

The negative connotation of “die-hards” suggests that Kate disagrees with their position. She does not, however, acknowledge any potential reasons for their position except to note that the formerly top-ranked high school football team was broken up. Unless she completely avoids the local media, highly unlikely given her career, it is nearly impossible for Kate to have never heard critical comments about the expense or social turmoil caused by the western high school's construction. I interpret her failure to mention these issues as a sign that is not engaged in much analysis of the situation. She does have some conception of the links between personal experiences and social structures, as evidenced, for instance, by her recognition that the tax laws in the outskirts once allowed her family to effectively live in Worthington. However, the links that she identifies are relatively superficial, never progressing from concrete occurrences to generalizations or indirect causation. Moreover, Kate offers no thoughts as to how individuals' ideologies might be shaped by social structures, and she makes no apparent effort to pursue a historical perspective.

Lindsey is 37 and lives just outside Old Worthington. Like Kate, she grew up in Worthington, attended Ohio State, and now holds a professional position part time. She
is married and has young children. Lindsey's father was involved in the Worthington school system for years, and she expressed interest in running for a position on the school board after she becomes better acquainted with the issues. She is very close to her siblings, most of whom still live in the area. Lindsey gives the impression of being introspective but sociable and, like Kate, is stylish in a way that makes her blend in rather than stand out.

She displays some appreciation for the complexities associated with the school district's economic diversity:

Some schools are better off than others, even though it’s in Worthington, some schools are gonna be geographically, demographically, better off than others, and I don’t think you should lump all of them in the same expectations. It’s just gonna be too hard I think. Even though we all try and attain the best we can, that’s important, but when you get demographics that are vastly different together, your numbers are not gonna be as wonderful as you might want them to be. Evening Street is very, there’s not much diversity, which, something that bothers me, you know I wish it was a more diverse population, um. But then in my old school, in Worthington Estates they’re vastly different over there. ... So, cause they bus a lot of kids in, that are from [Hard Road-area condos and apartments]. Since I feel like I’m in this little nest, in my neighborhood and Evening Street, I don’t think about it probably as much as I should.

Although she produces the insight that living in a wealthy, homogeneous neighborhood inhibits her awareness of other demographics, Lindsey's discussion of school standards in this passage reveals a failure to recognize that socio-geographic divisions are not independent of ideology. She asserts that the school district should not impose its characteristic high academic standards on schools in the outskirts whose students are un-Worthington-like (i.e. working class, not white, etc.). Yet in her concern for such students, she ignores the fact that applying standards based on the assumed differential abilities across classes and races lends official confirmation to the existing social
exclusivity in Worthington, which can only perpetuate inequality among schools.

Lindsey's discussion of urban sprawl provides further evidence of a gap in her critical awareness:

Does the urban sprawl bother me at all? No, it doesn’t bother me, as long as we maintain what we try to maintain, just the excellence, and qualified teachers, and the work ethic … I have a very open mind when it comes to all that, you know, I have a lot of friends that feel threatened by it. I’m not very threatened by it. I don’t know why. Maybe that’s ignorance. I don’t know. I just feel like if Columbus schools are that bad and they wanna try and get into a decent school system, then hey, if you can ?? it, go for it. Some of my friends have issues, well they’re not paying the Worthington taxes, you know, they’re just coming in and I’m like, I don’t know, I don’t get upset or uptight about that kind of stuff. The only thing that bothers me most is traffic, there’s a lot of traffic anymore. Everywhere. You know, I guess that’s the worst part about it all for me. And the cheap, the cheaper housing that’s being put up where, you know, and it’s not attractive in some areas, you know, that are considered Worthington now, but it’s affordable housing I guess, so you know.

Here Lindsey expresses the view that urban sprawl is acceptable as long as it does not import some of its common effects: less money per student in the school system, more traffic, and quickly-constructed, inexpensive housing. Perhaps a more important flaw in her reasoning is that urban sprawl is justified by students' right to pursue suburban school systems; there is little doubt that urban sprawl is a major source of the decline of urban school systems, so encouraging sprawl perpetuates the problem despite allowing some students better opportunities. Generally, Lindsey does not discuss the causes or effects of urban sprawl either from a structural or individual standpoint. It is possible that her personal experiences have been restricted enough to preclude recognition of certain structural realities; as she said: “I don’t venture outside [Worthington] unless I have to, myself.”
Liz, a 21-year-old Ohio State student, grew up in the outskirts and attended the western high school, where she was very popular. However, she says that being in college outside of Worthington has raised her appreciation for ethnic diversity. Her family is upper middle class but less wealthy than most of her high school friends. Her style of dress is very relaxed but stylish, and Liz herself appears very laid back.

Liz claims to have paid no attention to public issues in Worthington while she was growing up, and she currently does not read or watch local news. When I asked if she had noticed the urban sprawl creeping up around Worthington, she confessed that she did not know what urban sprawl was, though she believed it was related to urbanization, another concept she claimed not to understand. She was unaware of the bicentennial celebration, and she does not remember the second high school being built even though she is easily old enough and grew up just a few minutes' drive from it. She said that in the 2004 presidential election, she would probably vote according to her father's views.

No part of Liz's interview revealed any clear sociological consciousness with respect to urban sprawl, nor even any awareness of it.

3.7 Summary and conclusion

Following an ethnographic description of the creeping of Columbus sprawl into the Worthington area and a summary of the correlation between /l/ vocalization and the town's socio-geographic space, four types of sociological consciousness with respect to urban sprawl were presented. The analysis of each of 17 speakers' sociological consciousness demonstrates complex differences among individuals that are not
accounted for by the four-point taxonomy, but it also reveals broad similarities.

The four ideal types of are not “real” in any sense other than as research tools. My hope, however, is that, when accompanied by empirical linguistic data, they are meaningful as stepping stones toward a more nuanced understanding of sociolinguistic practice. More specifically, in Chapter 4 sociological consciousness is used as an independent factor in a quantitative analysis of three regional phonetic variables. It has four variants, corresponding to the four ideal types. I hypothesize that sociological consciousness interacts with linguistic practice in Worthington insofar as the perceived relationship between the individual and social structures varies across speakers. Logistic regression is used to (theoretically) isolate the effect of sociological consciousness from that of other social variables including age, sex, and strong network ties in Columbus.

In studying Worthington residents’ reactions to urban sprawl, I am considering the effects of just one instance of the global spreading-out of cities. Yet I will claim ultimately that sociological consciousness is an aspect of personhood that could be usefully explored in any sociolinguistic study because it addresses the subjective, agentive element of social practice to an extent that existing frameworks have not.
4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents quantitative analyses of the following phonetic variables, all previously documented in central Ohio: the backing and (un)rounding of /o/, the backing and lowering of /æ/, and the vocalization of post-vocalic /l/. Hereafter these variables are denoted by (o), (æ), and (l), respectively. Based on apparent-time evidence, (o) and (æ) are assumed to be changes in progress, while (l) may be an older variable and does not appear to be a change in progress in Worthington. The goal of each analysis is to explore the interaction, or lack thereof, between the linguistic variable and sociological consciousness, which is an independent variable in each case. Because the different types of sociological consciousness entail different conceptions of the relationship between the individual and social structures, I hypothesize that individual linguistic practice is conditioned by consciousness type. Statistically significant correlations will be interpreted as evidence (not proof) that sociological consciousness conditions
linguistic variation, and that it can both offer insight into the nature of sociolinguistic practice and point to new ways in which social theory might inform variation.

The first section describes general methods of data collection and retrieval, and the following sections examine the statistical analysis of each variable in turn. Finally, the three sets of statistical results are compared and an overarching interpretation is proposed.

4.2 Methods and hypotheses

The data used to investigate each variable comprise approximately 50 tokens per speaker. The total number of tokens, taking into account 17 speakers and three variables, is 2376. The ethnographic interviews – described in chapter 2 – that were used to investigate sociological consciousness also provided the linguistic data. The interviews were recorded using either a digital recorder with an external handheld or lapel microphone, or a Marantz analog recorder with an external microphone. Those recorded in analog form were subsequently digitized using the software Xwaves. All tokens were extracted from the digitized interviews and saved as .wav files using the software Praat. For each speaker, the first 50 tokens of a given variable to occur in the interview were extracted, with two types of exceptions: 1) seven instances of the word in which a token occurred had already been extracted; or 2) the sound quality or recording quality was deemed insufficient for acoustic (in the cases of (o) and (æ) ) or impressionistic (in the case of (l) ) analysis.
The social factor groups used in the analysis of all the variables appear in Table 4.1. In addition to sex and age – in which the 50s group includes speakers in their late 40s – these include a network variable indexing the regularity of interaction with Columbus residents. For that variable, speakers were coded as “yes” if they worked in Columbus or had regular interaction with particular Columbus residents; merely going to Columbus often, in order to shop, for instance, was coded as “no”. The next factor group encodes the four types of sociological consciousness discussed in Chapter 3, and the following group – labeled “threatened by urban sprawl?” – indexes whether the speaker is actively concerned that the Columbus sprawl will crowd out Worthington's distinctive community identity. The final factor combines the previous two: the “integrated/yes” factor, for example, refers to speakers with integrated sociological consciousness who are actively concerned that the sprawl poses a threat to Worthington. There were no speakers describable as “individual/yes” or “none/yes”. The primary statistical device used here is logistic regression, which treats each factor group as independent from the rest. Therefore, the combination factor group is never included in the same runs as its component variables, consciousness type and attitude toward sprawl; it is tested in separate runs which exclude the independent variables of consciousness type and attitude toward sprawl.
Table 4.1. Social factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor group</th>
<th>Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sex</td>
<td>female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age</td>
<td>17-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regular interaction with Columbus residents?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consciousness type</td>
<td>integrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>threatened by urban sprawl?</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of previous 2 factor groups:</td>
<td>integrated/no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consciousness and attitude toward sprawl</td>
<td>integrated/yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural/no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural/yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individual/yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>none/none</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 lists, from oldest to youngest, the speakers corresponding to each factor in the combination group. It will become important that two factors correspond to only one speaker and that the factors are largely segregated by sex. More generally, 17 speakers probably do not justify six categories. Further, it should be emphasized that the putative
types of sociological consciousness did not arise from the ethnographic data as clearly-defined categories; they are imperfect tools of analysis, and the notion of sociological consciousness, as it is used here, is itself rather vague. In fact, there exists no empirical evidence, to my knowledge, that Mills' (1959) “coordinate points” provide an adequate framework for conceiving sociological consciousness. Therefore, both the framework and the results in this study are appropriately viewed as preliminary, and the goal is to take a first step toward investigating speakers' variable conceptions of multi-layered social space and their correlations with linguistic practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Speaker(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>integrated/no</td>
<td>Marjorie, Cliff, Chris, Lydia, Peter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>integrated/yes</td>
<td>Rita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>structural/no</td>
<td>Jim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>structural/yes</td>
<td>Mark, David, Marshall, Ben</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual/no</td>
<td>Kristin, Sally, Andrea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none/no</td>
<td>Lindsey, Kate, Liz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2. Speakers in each consciousness category

The combination factor group was hypothesized to show a greater effect that either of its component variables. The reason is that consciousness type, though assumed to interact with linguistic practice, is independent of orientation toward or away from the local community, a concept shown since Labov's (1972[1963]) Martha's Vineyard study to have strong linguistic correlates. For example, two speakers with vastly different ways of conceptualizing social space may be alike in their lack of concern for the local
community's maintenance, and both may fail to participate in local resistance to linguistic change. By contrast, speakers with different types of sociological consciousness who are concerned with community maintenance are expected to have different (subconscious) attitudes toward linguistic practice as a component of resistance to change. Only the variable that combines attitude toward urban sprawl/community maintenance and consciousness type is expected to capture both scenarios.

I began with the hypothesis that speakers who feel Worthington's identity to be threatened by urban sprawl will exhibit relatively low frequencies of the advanced variants. Therefore, all else being equal, speakers in the integrated/no and structural/no categories were expected to display higher frequencies of the advanced variants than speakers in the integrated/yes and structural/yes categories, respectively. As we will see, this hypothesis is, in general, correct for the structural category but incorrect for the integrated category.

If sociological consciousness is a conditioning factor for the three linguistic variables in question, then we can expect differential frequencies of the advanced variants across the consciousness types. I hypothesized that the difference would appear most clearly in the steepness of the expected downward slope between, on one hand, integrated/no and integrated/yes, and on the other hand, structural/no and structural/yes. Specifically, I expected that the slope would be steeper between the integrated categories than in the structural categories. The reasoning here is as follows. Speakers with integrated sociological consciousness will recognize the strong links between individual practice and social processes (such as urban sprawl). Understanding that public issues – such as Worthington's changing character – do not unfold independently from the actions
of aggregates of individuals, speakers in the integrated/yes category will confront urban sprawl with the weapon of conservative linguistic practice. Speakers with structural sociological consciousness, on the other hand, will lack the insight that personal practices are ways of engaging with public issues, and will be relatively unconcerned with maintaining conservative linguistic variants.

At such an early stage in the exploration of sociological consciousness, there is little reason to dismiss any hypothesis. For instance, by contrast with the hypothesis advanced above, we might suspect that speakers in the integrated category – i.e. speakers with well-developed sociological imaginations – are likely to realize that their micro-linguistic practices, while linked to socio-geographic processes such as urban sprawl, are unlikely to effectively protect a community's identity (and perhaps that resisting change is not a viable means of protecting the community anyway). We might further suspect that speakers with structural sociological consciousness are less likely to recognize that personal practices are, to a great extent, the products of social processes. Those who fear the effects of sprawl on Worthington's character will treat conservative linguistic variants as social institutions – like the architectural review board or the historical society – that can “protect” Worthington, and the advanced variants will appear relatively infrequently.

In fact, I favor the first hypothesis – steeper slope between the integrated categories – only because a preliminary and somewhat incomplete study of /l/ vocalization (Dodsworth 2005b) supports it empirically. However, as noted, (l) appears not to be a change in progress in Worthington and may therefore not be comparable with respect to sociological consciousness. The very fact that two nearly opposite hypotheses are considered plausible here is evidence that very little is known about sociological
consciousness and its interaction with linguistic practice. Even if the data refute both hypotheses – which, as we will see, they do to some extent – this study offers a first step toward understanding the issue.

I put forth only a single hypothesis for the individual/no category: as the members of the individual/no category are all in favor of the breakdown of Worthington's conservatism and homogeneity, and as they focus on the role of individual ideology and practices, the advanced variants will be relatively frequent in this category. I make no hypothesis concerning the none/no category because its three members have different reasons for their lack of sociological consciousness regarding urban sprawl. Kate admits to having as little contact as possible with Columbus, so her experience with the effects of sprawl in the outskirts is limited. Lindsey appears to be in politically-correct denial about the consequences of urban sprawl, and Liz neither has a solid grasp of the concept nor has noticed its effects on Worthington at all. Given these differences, I find it unwise to make linguistic predictions.

4.3 Variable 1: (o)

4.3.1 Overview

The fronting of the vowel's nucleus in words such as *home* or *coat*, now a ubiquitous component of the Southern Shift (Labov 1991), was once found to be quite geographically restricted in the South, and, according to Kurath & McDavid (1961), had not reached beyond Pittsburgh to Ohio by the mid-20th century. However, by combining
data from the *Linguistic Atlas of North Atlantic States* with data from the *Dictionary of American Regional English*, Thomas & Boberg (ms) conclude that centralized and front variants of /o/ had become established in southern and central Ohio by the early 20th century. Specifically, they find /o/ fronting clustered at the Ohio River, which forms the state's southern boundary, and at National Road, which runs east-west through the middle of Ohio immediately to the south of Columbus. In fact, Thomas (2001) reports that “parts of central and southern Ohio” formed one of the three original centers of /o/-nucleus fronting in the early 20th century, though he estimates that /o/ fronting occurred earlier in Pennsylvania (28). Central and front variants of /o/ have been documented in several geographically- and ethnically-differentiated varieties of U.S. English. In particular, the fronting of tense back vowels is stereotypical of California English (Hinton et. al. 1987) and is popularly associated with the “valley girl” persona. The fronting of tense back vowels is also common in Oregon, Utah, and, as Hall-Lew (ms) reports, northern Arizona. Hall-Lew finds /o/ fronting among urban Flagstaff speakers except those who identify with the rancher culture; the spread of front variants is thus intertwined with either urban or non-rancher identity in that region. Moving eastward, Thomas (1989) reports extreme /o/ fronting among white speakers in Wilmington, NC, and Habick (1991) documents /o/ fronting in Illinois. Hartman (1984) suggests that a set of phonetic features including /o/ fronting has become common among Americans between 16 and 25 across the country, appearing particularly in southern California but also throughout the west and, in the eastern part of the U.S., in areas close to Interstate 70, which are likely to have contact with westerners. Thomas (2001: 28-29) provides a fuller geographical description of front variants in the U.S. and Canada, noting also that
“the main regions that have resisted it are New England, the Inland Upper North, the northern Great Plains, and perhaps New York City” (29). New England, of course, was the first home of the original Worthington settlers, and, as noted in Chapter 3, present-day Worthington is often described as having a “New England feel” because of its architecture and village green. Old Worthington even contains a street named New England. First-generation Worthington residents undoubtedly carried New England dialects to central Ohio; however, while many speakers told me they considered Worthington speech more conservative and sophisticated than Columbus speech, none believed that any trace of New England influence remained.

Variants of /o/ with a fronted nucleus have been documented in the Columbus, Ohio, area by Durian (2004) and Thomas (1989 [1993], 1996, 2001). Durian finds centralized and fronted variants more commonly among speakers under 35 than among speakers over 39, and he finds the most extreme variants among young women. In elicited speech from 34 students in an urban Columbus high school, Thomas (1989 [1993]) finds high rates of centralization and fronting of /o/ when the following segment is not a liquid: 68% among African American males, 75% among African American females, 89% among white males, and 91% among white females. White speakers almost categorically had back variants of /o/ before /l/, while African American speakers fronted /o/ before /l/ at the rate of 44%. Thomas (2001: 91-102) presents a great deal of data to the effect that speakers born in the early 1900s in central Ohio, particularly the once-agricultural community of Johnstown, had centralized or fronted /o/. He claims further that central Ohio /o/ is generally fronted, but not before /l/ or before nasals in don’t, won’t, only, and home (2001: 50-53). Like Thomas, I found a back-vowel merger
before /l/, particularly among young speakers, and therefore excluded pre-/l/ tokens from this study. However, my results diverge from Thomas' in that I do find /o/ fronting in pre-nasal contexts including don't.

Thomas posits the fronting of tense back vowels as evidence of influence from Southern and South Midland English on Columbus varieties, a claim supported by the prevalence of /o/ fronting throughout the South in Labov et al. (2002). As Columbus is historically a contact point between northern and southern cultures, Thomas' attribution of the pattern to the Southern Shift (Labov 1991) is reasonable. In fact, Thomas discusses several other elements of the Southern Shift that have gained currency in Columbus, though Labov, Ash, and Boberg (2002), who locate Columbus in the South Midland dialect area, contend that “the Midland region is sharply defined by its lack of participation in the Northern Cities Shift and the Southern Shift”. They claim further that “the criterion for South Midland membership is a simple one: the fronting of checked /ow/ as registered by an F2 of greater than 1350 Hz”.

If, as Labov et al. indicate, /o/ fronting is all that distinguishes the South Midland dialect from the North Midland dialect, then it is in a position to carry strong and complex social meaning. On one hand, if its appearance in central Ohio is a manifestation of the Southern Shift, it may carry an association with southern cultural identity. On the other hand, as noted above, /o/ and /u/ are displaying frontward movement in multiple U.S. regions, particularly among young speakers, and are components of a range of styles and personae. The following analysis, then, necessarily encompasses only a fraction of the social space in which Columbus (o) is embedded. If the spread of front variants in Columbus is motivated primarily by contact with speakers
from other urban centers (cf. Chambers 2000), then orientation to the urban center might
be hypothesized to drive their adoption. If, however, influence from the Southern Shift is
the primary factor, then the social meaning(s) of fronted variants may be inversely related
to urbanness.

In addition to the front/back dimension of /o/, this study examines the dimension
doing rounds. I am unaware of any precedent for the question of roundness in central
Ohio /o/, nor does unrounding appear to be part of the Southern Shift. Nevertheless, if /o/
is moving forward, roundness may become more important in distinguishing /o/ from
tense front vowels.

I have never heard a Worthington speaker issue a direct social evaluation of (o),
which may be taken to indicate that any social meanings locally associated with the
variable remain below the level of consciousness. However, a few of the youngest
female speakers use extreme front /o/ variants – more extreme than any tokens in the rest
of the data – when scornfully imitating what they call “valley girls” in Worthington.
After one such imitation, a 22-year-old Worthington speaker (not one of this study's 17
speakers) claimed to find the valley girl linguistic style annoying because, as she said,
addressing people not present, “You're not from the valley. You're from Ohio”. The
issue here seems to be one of either entitlement or of authenticity, or both; the
Worthington valley girls' production of linguistic variants associated with “the valley”
(probably an unspecified region in California) is unwarranted because they're not from
the valley, and/or their use of variants other than those deemed “Ohio” variants is
artificial. The fact that a front /o/ variant contributes to a style that some consider
inappropriate in Worthington, or perhaps in Ohio generally, is evidence that it has
acquired social meaning. My goal here is not to deconstruct the social meaning of (o) in central Ohio but rather to provide apparent-time evidence of its status as a change in progress and, in light of its status, to explore its interaction with sociological consciousness.

4.3.2 Acoustic analysis

All tokens of /o/ were analyzed both for frontness and for roundness. First and second formant measurements (in linear Hertz) were taken automatically at the midpoint of each token according to a Praat script written by Pauline Welby. They were subsequently plotted using JPlotFormants, which represents each speaker's vowel space in a Euclidian graph such that, following common practice, the x-axis represents F2 and the y-axis represents F1. Tokens whose formants lay outside the standard deviation on either axis were checked by hand, and formant measurements were altered if it was determined that Praat had either collapsed two formants or falsely identified a formant. The same method was used to measure and plot approximately 10 tokens of /e/ for each speaker. Third formant measurements were taken by hand at the midpoint of each /o/ token. All formant measurements were converted from Hz to Bark (Z) for more perceptually-accurate representation (Johnson 1997).

F2, the formant most directly associated with the front/back dimension of the vocal tract, varies in proportion to size of the vocal tract and therefore requires normalization if values are to be compared across speakers. The normalization method used here is nearly identical to that found in Hall-Lew's study of Flagstaff, cited above,

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and Major's (2004) study of the Northern Cities Shift in St. Louis. For each speaker, the F2 of the back-most token of /o/ (i.e. the lowest F2 value) was subtracted from the mean F2 for /e/, which is assumed to be a relatively stable vowel in Columbus. Every other token's F2 was then calculated as a percentage of the space between mean /e/ and the back-most token of /o/. In order to establish a boundary between front and back tokens, “canonical” non-fronting speakers were chosen for men and women separately. These speakers had relatively low standard deviations for /o/ F2 and also never produced (according to my judgment) tokens that sounded fronted. For women, the canonical non-fronter is Kate, whose partial vowel space is pictured in Figure 4.1.

![Figure 4.1. Kate's vowel space.](image)

Kate's /o/ reaches only 56% of the way between her back-most [o] and her mean /e/. In sharp contrast with Kate is Sally, pictured in Figure 4.2, whose /o/ tokens are divided
almost evenly into two sections: the area between her midpoint and her mean /e/, and the area just in front of her back-most [o]. For women, therefore, tokens lying past 56% were considered front, and those lying at or 56% midpoint were considered back.

![Sally's vowel space](image)

**Figure 4.2. Sally's vowel space**

For men, the canonical non-fronter is Cliff, whose front-most [o] lies 69% of the way to his mean /e/ from his back-most [o], as pictured in Figure 4.3. By contrast, Peter's [o] tokens, pictured in Figure 4, are clustered on either side of his mean and reach much further forward than Cliff's. The front/back boundary for men was thus established at Cliff's max F2, 69%.

This normalization method allows for more accurate comparison across speakers than some previously-used methods, e.g. subtracting F1 from F2. However, the
comparison is limited to the 17 speakers in this data set; frequencies of /o/ fronting calculated differently cannot be meaningfully compared to these. This limits the possibilities for cross-community comparison, but not entirely: the differentiation by age, sex, etc. can still be compared to that of other communities because only relative frequencies are relevant.

Figure 4.3. Cliff’s vowel space.
F3, the formant most directly associated with rounding – the less rounded, the higher the F3, roughly – was normalized differently. For each token, F3 was divided by F2, and the quotients were graphed. The boundary between round and unround tokens was determined by looking for natural breaks in the graph. The boundary was set at 1.9 (as the quotient of F3/F2) for women, and at 2.1 for men.

4.3.3 Statistical analysis

Table 4.3 shows the social factors and corresponding frequencies for /o/ fronting and unrounding.
Table 4.3. Frequencies of /o/ fronting and unrounding corresponding to social factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor group</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>% front (N)</th>
<th>% unround (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sex</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>22 (101)</td>
<td>7 (34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>8 (31)</td>
<td>7 (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age</td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>23 (54)</td>
<td>13 (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>12 (24)</td>
<td>7 (15)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>12 (33)</td>
<td>3 (9)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>14 (21)</td>
<td>4 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regular interaction with</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>9 (31)</td>
<td>8 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus residents?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>20 (101)</td>
<td>6 (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consciousness type</td>
<td>integrated</td>
<td>19 (59)</td>
<td>8 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural</td>
<td>7 (17)</td>
<td>6 (15)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>individual</td>
<td>29 (42)</td>
<td>10 (15)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>none</td>
<td>9 (14)</td>
<td>3 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>threatened by urban sprawl?</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>17 (102)</td>
<td>8 (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>13 (30)</td>
<td>5 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consciousness type plus</td>
<td>integrated/no</td>
<td>15 (40)</td>
<td>9 (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attitude toward sprawl</td>
<td>integrated/yes</td>
<td>37 (19)</td>
<td>&lt;1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural/no</td>
<td>11 (6)</td>
<td>7 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural/yes</td>
<td>6 (11)</td>
<td>6 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individual/no</td>
<td>29 (42)</td>
<td>10 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>none/no</td>
<td>9 (14)</td>
<td>3 (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 shows that both the front and unround variants are most frequent among the youngest speakers, and both level out among the other age groups. Based only on an apparent-time analysis, we cannot immediately conclude that front and unround variants are on the rise in Worthington; teenagers may cast them off as they progress into adulthood (cf. Schilling-Estes 2003; also Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 1996 for the use of
apparent-time data). However, various real-time studies – including Trudgill's (1988) comparison of present-day Norwich speech with his original (1974) data – have demonstrated that certain patterns of age grading can indicate change in progress. As Trudgill notes, the familiar 's-curve', where the youngest and oldest speakers exhibit higher rates of the “new” variant than middle-aged speakers, can be a sign of stable variation rather than change in progress. Neither the /o/ fronting data nor the /o/ rounding data form an s-curve.

The results for consciousness type support the prediction that the individual-focused speakers would exhibit relatively high frequencies of the application variants. In both /o/ variables, the integrated category is associated with higher frequencies than the structural category, a pattern that is reversed in the cases of two other linguistic variables discussed below.

Tables 4.4 and 4.5 show the linguistic factor groups for the fronting and (un-)rounding analyses, respectively. While all factors, even statistically insignificant ones, are shown, they appear in their final, recoded forms. Clearly some factors which show similar effects on fronting/unrounding could have been combined, particularly in the case of following segment. However, the results do not motivate any further groupings that align with traditional natural classes (Chomsky & Halle 1968). While recent arguments in favor of a more diachronic – as opposed to innateness-based – approach to natural classes are compelling and well-supported (e.g. Mielke 2004), they are beyond the scope of this analysis. Therefore, the factor groupings are left as shown in order to maximize informativeness.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor group</th>
<th>Factors (recoded)</th>
<th>% front (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preceding segment</strong></td>
<td>Coronal consonant</td>
<td>17 (87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dorsal consonant</td>
<td>19 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>labial consonant</td>
<td>11 (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[h]</td>
<td>9 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vowel</td>
<td>14 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>10 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Following segment</strong></td>
<td>coronal or dorsal consonant</td>
<td>20 (85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>labial consonant</td>
<td>12 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[h]</td>
<td>14 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vowel [-high, -round]</td>
<td>3 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>13 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[o] or [u]</td>
<td>50 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>13 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Position in word</strong></td>
<td>initial</td>
<td>14 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>medial</td>
<td>17 (67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>final</td>
<td>14 (50)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 Frequencies of /o/ fronting corresponding to linguistic factors
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor group</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>% unround (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preceding segment</strong></td>
<td>coronal consonants</td>
<td>5 (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dorsal</td>
<td>12 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>labial consonants</td>
<td>11 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vowels</td>
<td>17 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[h]</td>
<td>16 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>13 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Following segment</strong></td>
<td>Consonants other than [h]</td>
<td>7 (41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[h]</td>
<td>14 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vowels other than [i]</td>
<td>5 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>15 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>5 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Position in word</strong></td>
<td>initial</td>
<td>12 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>medial</td>
<td>8 (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>final</td>
<td>4 (15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5. Frequencies of /o/ unrounding corresponding to linguistic factors

As they stand, the linguistic factors do not account for much of the variation. In fact, the final results of binomial logistic regression indicate that the linguistic factors play an insignificant role relative to certain social factors. The logistic regression program GOLDVARB (Robinson et al 2001) was used to find correlations between the frontness/roundness of /o/ and social and linguistic factors. GOLDVARB requires discrete variants for both the dependent and independent variables. For that reason, even continuous variables must be represented as sets of discrete categories, and the analysis rests on unnatural and somewhat arbitrary boundaries. Still, the program is useful for
finding statistically-significant factors influencing patterns of variation as well as for representing the data in a way that takes into account interactions among factors. Tables 4.6 through 4.8 show the statistically significant factor groups from the regression results. Recall that the combination factor group of consciousness type plus attitude toward sprawl had to be tested separately from its component factors; thus Table 4.6 shows the statistically significant groups from an analysis that did not include the combination factor group, while Table 4.7 shows the statistically significant factor groups in an analysis that included the combination group but not consciousness type or attitude toward sprawl independently. None of those three social factors was statistically significant in the case of /o/ unrounding, so the two sets of final results are exactly the same, shown in Table 4.8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor group</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Factor weight (input and weight)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sex</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>.659 (.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>.317 (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consciousness type</td>
<td>integrated</td>
<td>.578 (.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural</td>
<td>.533 (.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individual</td>
<td>.578 (.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>none</td>
<td>.249 (.05)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6. Results of final GOLDVARB run for /o/ fronting, combination factor group excluded. Application value = front, input = .138, chi-square = .0022, chi-square/cell = .0004, log likelihood = -335.407
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor group</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Factor weight (input and weight)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sex</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>.638 (.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>.340 (.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consciousness plus fear of sprawl</td>
<td>integrated/no</td>
<td>.557 (.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>integrated/yes</td>
<td>.682 (.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural/no</td>
<td>.656 (.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural/yes</td>
<td>.449 (.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individual/no</td>
<td>.598 (.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>none/no</td>
<td>.269 (.05)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7. Results of final GOLDVARB run for /o/ fronting, consciousness type excluded and attitude toward sprawl excluded. Application value = front, input = .136, chi-square = .0036, chi-square/cell = .0005, log likelihood = -333.105

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor group</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Factor weight (input and weight)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>age</td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>.695 (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>.567 (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>.320 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>.414 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>position in word</td>
<td>initial</td>
<td>.682 (.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>medial</td>
<td>.540 (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>final</td>
<td>.392 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preceding segment</td>
<td>coronal consonant</td>
<td>.439 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dorsal consonant</td>
<td>.653 (.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>labial consonant</td>
<td>.568 (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[h]</td>
<td>.774 (.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vowel</td>
<td>.608 (.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>.519 (.06)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8. Results of final GoldVarb run for /o/ unrounding. Application value = unround, input = .056, chi-square = 43.1896, chi-square/cell = 1.1074, log likelihood = -200.280
In the case of /o/ fronting, social factors account for more of the variation than linguistic factors. The only significant linguistic variables in any of the results are word position and preceding segment, both conditioning /o/ unrounding\(^2\). The strong female lead in /o/ fronting is striking, and the total lack of sex differentiation in the case of /o/ unrounding may indicate that the dimension of frontness/backness specifically carries gendered meaning.

It was expected that the category combining consciousness and fear of urban sprawl would show significant interaction with /o/ fronting while its components, consciousness type and fear of sprawl, would not. This prediction turns out to be only partly correct, and in an interesting way: the combination factor group is significant, as is consciousness type, but attitude toward sprawl is not. As noted in Chapter 2, myriad community studies have shown loyalty to the local community to be an important predictor of linguistic variation; the 'attitude toward sprawl' factor in this study is essentially the same concept, and can therefore be reasonably predicted to show a strong effect on the linguistic data. Yet it is statistically significant only as a component of the combination factor group, whereas consciousness type is significant on its own, and as shown in Table 4.3, the rates of fronting and unrounding for speakers not threatened by urban sprawl are only marginally higher than for those not threatened by urban sprawl. I interpret these facts as preliminary evidence that sociological consciousness is a useful concept here, one which succeeds where more familiar dimensions of social identity fail.

\(^2\) Moreover, the results for preceding segment do not inspire a quick phonetic explanation, particularly the fact that coronal consonants are the only factor disfavoring unrounding (i.e. having a factor weight under .5).
(However, consciousness type in Table 4.6 may be statistically significant only by virtue of the low factor weight corresponding to 'none'.)

As the results are, predictably, not very “clean”, explaining them is a complex matter. The combination factor group's factor weights do not support the hypothesis advanced at the beginning of the chapter: speakers with integrated consciousness who are not threatened by urban sprawl exhibit more /o/ fronting than those who are threatened by sprawl, while the situation is reversed for the structural consciousness category. The extremely low factor weight associated with the none/no category is noteworthy and will be revisited toward the end of the chapter. As shown in Table 4.3, the expected pattern is found for the unrounding variable, though the effect is not significant. Given the results in Table 4.8, I tentatively conclude that /o/ unrounding is a variable in progress but is not particularly socially meaningful variable in Worthington. (Yet see below for a combined view of /o/ fronting and unrounding.)

Although the presence of regular interaction with Columbus residents was not significant in either analysis, it is assumed to be a critical parameter because it may determine whether speakers have access to urban linguistic practices. It may be difficult to imagine Worthington residents not having regular contact with Columbus residents; however, during the course of my fieldwork I met several people who claim not to venture outside Worthington unless absolutely necessary, and others who claim not to have close friends in Columbus despite having lived in Worthington all their lives. Cross-tabulating this variable with the consciousness plus attitude toward sprawl variable uncovers a potentially severe but probably unavoidable flaw in the set of speakers.
Figure 4.5 shows three gaps, or categories with no speakers, which obscures the full picture of variation.

![Bar chart showing % /o/ fronting by consciousness and fear of urban sprawl](image)

**Figure 4.5. Interaction between consciousness type/fear of sprawl and ties to Columbus**

All of the speakers with individual-centered consciousness have regular interaction with Columbus residents, as does the one speaker in the integrated/yes category, but the one speaker in the structural/no category does not. Given that speakers with regular ties to Columbus exhibit more /o/ fronting than speakers without such ties, these gaps may skew the results with respect to the other variables. Figure 4.5 also highlights the more general issue as to whether 17 speakers are enough to justify four categories of sociological consciousness, especially given that the composite variable has six categories. While more speakers would certainly allow a more statistically-sound analysis, limiting the number of speakers made it possible for me to get to know many of them quite well and
also to think and write about each interview in detail. It also makes possible a comparison of /o/ fronting across individual speakers, as in Table 4.9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Age category</th>
<th>% /o/ fronting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marjorie</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristin</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lydia</td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsey</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshall</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cliff</td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.9. Frequency of /o/ fronting across individual speakers

A striking and significant fact shown in Table 4.9 is Sally's tremendous lead in /o/ fronting, nearly 14% greater than the next highest speaker. After Rita, the frequencies fall gradually, admitting no large dropoffs. Sally has cultivated the status within the coffee shop crowd – and probably within her age group in Worthington generally – not
only as extremely emotional, expressive, and dramatic, but also as a rejector of the 
conservative, homogeneous, middle-class Worthington culture. Given her social status, 
Sally's extreme use of /o/ fronting appears to be a stylistic resource for achieving 
uniqueness as well as symbolic separation from what she views as an elitist local 
community.

Marjorie, a speaker in her 50s, is also a leader in /o/ fronting, unlike the other 
members of her age group. Moreover, she is the only speaker in the integrated/no 
category with an /o/ fronting frequency above 30%, the next-highest being Lydia with 
21.6%. Without Marjorie, the integrated/no category would yield an even lower factor 
weight, placing it further below integrated/yes. Her high incidence of /o/ fronting may be 
interpreted in light of Sally's extreme use. While Sally is known for her dramatic persona 
and was heavily involved in high school theater, Marjorie has taught high school theater 
for many years. She is very popular among the students, largely because she manages to 
identify with them and talk to them as a friend and mother figure. Marjorie has as much 
exposure to teenage linguistic practices as any middle-aged Worthington resident, and 
good reason to co-opt them herself.

Rita's high rate of /o/ fronting is more difficult to account for. Although she is not 
an outlier, she occupies the highest position after Sally. As noted, Rita has had years of 
involvement in community activities both in Worthington and Columbus, and thus heavy 
exposure to Columbus linguistic variants. Although she spoke at length during her 
terview, and in subsequent conversations, about the threatened erasure of community 
identity, her strategy for maintaining the traditional Worthington community is 
unmistakably non-elitist and grounded in material rather than symbol practices. For
example, she has testified to the architectural review board against constructing urban-
style, multi-family dwellings at the center of Worthington, pointing to the consequences
of pushing “urban mass into suburbia”. Rita also contributed considerable time and
energy to some of the bicentennial events and has participated actively in other
community-building institutions such as the Old(e) Worthington Business Association.
Far from wanting to exclude residents of the outskirts, Rita has voiced the wish that they
would show more interest in community activities. In other words, she seeks to maintain
community identity not by guarding the city borders but rather by promoting community
involvement. It is reasonable, then, to expect that entirely symbolic (and perhaps elitist)
linguistic variants do not factor into Rita's strategy for confronting urban sprawl, and so
her /o/ fronting is unconstrained by her perception of any threat. Still, her high rate of /o/
fronting sets her apart from the integrated/no speakers and all of the structural speakers.
This proposal is revisited later in the chapter.

David, Mark, and Marshall, all belonging to the 'structural/yes' category, are
grouped together near the bottom of the /o/-fronting scale, by contrast with Ben, the
youngest member of that category. Later in the chapter I will propose the quite
speculative explanation that the structural/yes speakers view linguistic variants as
instances of infrastructures that define and protect the community, much like the
architectural review board or the high property taxes. Ben, who is 17, not only socializes
with friends like Sally who have very high rates of vocalization, but also has a parent
who I found to use the front variant at a rate just below Rita's, uncommonly high for her
age group.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor group</th>
<th>factors</th>
<th>% back/round (N)</th>
<th>% front/round (N)</th>
<th>% back/unround (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sex</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>69 (311)</td>
<td>22 (102)</td>
<td>7 (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>84 (323)</td>
<td>8 (31)</td>
<td>7 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age</td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>62 (147)</td>
<td>23 (56)</td>
<td>13 (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>81 (155)</td>
<td>11 (22)</td>
<td>7 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>83 (215)</td>
<td>12 (33)</td>
<td>3 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>80 (119)</td>
<td>14 (22)</td>
<td>4 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regular interaction with Columbus residents?</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>82 (275)</td>
<td>9 (31)</td>
<td>8 (29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>72 (359)</td>
<td>20 (102)</td>
<td>6 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consciousness type</td>
<td>integrated</td>
<td>72 (219)</td>
<td>19 (59)</td>
<td>8 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural</td>
<td>86 (197)</td>
<td>7 (17)</td>
<td>6 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individual</td>
<td>60 (87)</td>
<td>29 (43)</td>
<td>9 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>none</td>
<td>86 (131)</td>
<td>9 (14)</td>
<td>3 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>threatened by urban sprawl?</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>74 (447)</td>
<td>17 (104)</td>
<td>8 (49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>82 (187)</td>
<td>12 (29)</td>
<td>5 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>combination of previous 2 factor groups</td>
<td>integrated/no</td>
<td>74 (188)</td>
<td>15 (40)</td>
<td>9 (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>integrated/yes</td>
<td>60 (31)</td>
<td>37 (19)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural/no</td>
<td>78 (41)</td>
<td>13 (7)</td>
<td>7 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural/yes</td>
<td>88 (156)</td>
<td>5 (10)</td>
<td>6 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individual/no</td>
<td>60 (87)</td>
<td>29 (43)</td>
<td>9 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>none/no</td>
<td>86 (131)</td>
<td>9 (14)</td>
<td>3 (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.10. Frequencies for the combined /o/ fronting and unrounding variables.

Another way of looking at the data is to merge the fronting and unrounding variables. As rounding and fronting are interacting though separate dimensions of (o), they can be fused into a single variable. The present data set contains three variants of the new variable: back/rounded, front/rounded, and back/unrounded. There were no front/unrounded tokens, arguably an unsurprising finding given that rounding involves a constriction at the front of the vocal tract. Unfortunately, GOLDVARB cannot yet
perform multinomial regression analysis, but it can provide raw frequencies for a multinomial data set, as shown in Table 4.10.

Figure 4.6 shows the frequencies for each of the three variants within the combined social variable of consciousness type plus attitude toward sprawl.

![Figure 4.6. Frequencies of (o) variants across consciousness and attitude toward sprawl](image)

Some of the data interpretation is left for the end of this chapter where the results of the three variables are compared. For now, two features of Figure 4.6 are noted. First, the integrated/yes category shows a low rate of the conservative variant (back/rounded) relative to the integrated/no category, while the structural/no category shows a relatively high rate of the conservative variant, reaching nearly 90%. Further, the one speaker in the structural/no category is Jim, who occupies the oldest age group and is therefore
expected to use the conservative variant frequently. By contrast, the relatively high occurrence of the back/round variant in the structural/yes category is interesting given that the category's three speakers are young, aged 17, 25, and 26. I return to the issue at the end of the chapter.

4.4 Variable 2: (æ)

4.4.1 Overview

Parts of northern Ohio, particularly the Cleveland area, participate in the Northern Cities Chain Shift, which includes the variable raising and tensing of /æ/ (cf. Labov et al. 2002). The NCCS has been associated with the construction and maintenance of urban identity among adolescents (Eckert 2000). Recently, Eckert (2005) has identified the opposite movement of /æ/ -- backing and lowering toward /a/ -- as a component of the Northern California Vowel Shift. Through ethnographic fieldwork with fifth-graders, Eckert (ms) found the most severely backed and lowered occurrences of /æ/ in girls' dramatic discourse – such as about boys – and produced by girls who were social icons in the emerging heterosexual market. Moonwomon (1992) found the same movement toward /a/ among adult women in San Francisco. The back, low variant of /æ/ is strongly associated with the “valley girl” persona in U.S. popular culture, and in fact, an extreme variant appears in Worthington girls' imitations of local “valley girls”. However, the social significance of /æ/ backing and lowering, like that of /o/ fronting, does not appear to have achieved conscious recognition in Worthington.
Like /o/ fronting, the backing and lowering of /æ/ has spread (presumably from California) to other U.S. regions, though few empirical studies exist, to my knowledge. Thomas (2001: 20) reports that lowered /æ/ became more common in North America, including central Ohio, during the second half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century and is strongly correlated with the merger of the low, back vowels in cot and caught. Young Worthington speakers in particular offer support for this claim; they tend to have a near-merger of cot and caught in production, though I have no evidence of a perceptual merger. In a previous study, I found the F2 of /æ/ to rise in a nearly linear pattern with age among Worthington females between 15 and 80 (Dodsworth, ms). While there is, therefore, little doubt that a lowered variant has reached Columbus, the social meaning(s) associated with it in central Ohio remain largely unexplored. Based on the finding that occurrences of the lowered variant were concentrated among young Worthington females, as well as the variant's status among Eckert's preadolescents, I assume for the purposes of this study that it has gained prominence in Columbus within the past 20 years and that it remains associated with youth and with some type of sophistication or importance in the youth marketplace, particularly among girls. Teenage speakers, however, are not the focus of this study; instead, I am interested in the patterning of (æ) among 17 speakers who have made it (at least most of the way) through the social tumult of high school and are now negotiating personae within an adult or near-adult marketplace. In the context of Worthington's conservatism and its threatened community identity, a linguistic variant associated with innovation or youth might encounter resistance.
However, it may be relevant that the tensed, raised /æ/ variant that drives the Northern Cities Chain Shift has acquired some stigma in Columbus, at least among college-age speakers. For the most part, the NCCS has not diffused southward from northern to central Ohio; a Cleveland speaker visiting Columbus can give herself away with a few words. However, a great many Ohio State students are from northern Ohio and exhibit robust participation in the NCCS. Liz, one of the Worthington speakers, explained that after she began hanging out with college friends from Cleveland, her sister made fun of her new [æ], and Liz only reluctantly admitted that she sometimes sounded like she was from Cleveland. It is also relevant to this analysis that some middle-aged and older speakers in central and southern Ohio have a slightly raised and tensed variant that younger speakers tend not to share. The lowering of /æ/ may, therefore, carry particularly strong age-related meaning.

4.4.2 Acoustic analysis

The acoustic analysis of (æ) closely resembles that of (o). Lowering and backing were analyzed separately and then together using a total of 818 tokens from the same 17 speakers. All tokens were normalized using the same strategy as for (o), except that the constant for the backing and lowering dimensions was mean F2 and mean F1, respectively, of /a/ rather than /e/. To normalize F2, then, the space between the front-most [æ] and mean /a/ was found for each speaker, and all tokens of /æ/ were coded as front or back depending on their position relative to a boundary determined on the basis of a canonically non-backing speaker, one for each sex. Recall that the boundary marks a
percentage of the space between the front-most [æ] and mean /a/, thereby controlling for
differences in vocal tract size. The boundaries are shown in Table 4.11.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>F1, % (lowering)</th>
<th>F2, % (backing)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.11. Boundaries for coding (æ)

The boundaries for F1 are obviously quite high, especially for women. The reason is that
nearly every speaker's cluster of /æ/ tokens extended much lower in the vocal tract (i.e. to
a higher F1) than his/her /a/ cluster did. This was unexpected and may have resulted
from the use of only 10 tokens per speaker of /a/. A more likely explanation, however, is
that Worthington speakers are beginning to merge the vowels in cot and caught – /a/ and
the higher “open /o/” -- resulting in lower-than-expected mean F1 values. If (as we will
see) some speakers have more advanced mergers than others, this is a source of error in
the normalization process.

Because /æ/ in this dialect is tensed and raised nearly categorically when
preceding nasals, pre-nasal tokens were excluded from the analysis. The occurrences of
/æ/ included in the analysis were not analyzed directly for tensing or raising as is
common in the Northern Cities even though several of the older speakers variably used
the raised form. The raised tokens nevertheless affect the analysis in that they lengthen
the space between the highest [æ] and mean /a/, thereby lifting those speakers' boundaries
between high and low tokens.
4.4.3 Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis of (æ) was carried out in much the same way as for (o). GOLDVARB was used for a logistic regression analysis of variance involving both linguistic and social factors. The social factors included in the first run were identical to those used for (o). The frequencies of backing and lowering corresponding to the social factors appear in Table 4.12. Tables 4.13 and 4.14 show the linguistic factor groups included in the first runs for backing and lowering, respectively, though the groups are shown in their final, recoded forms. The final regression results with /æ/ backing as the dependent variable are shown in Table 4.15 and 4.16, which represent, respectively, the analysis without the combination social factor and the analysis with the combination factor but not its components.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor group</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>% back (N)</th>
<th>% low (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sex</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>31 (142)</td>
<td>21 (95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>21 (80)</td>
<td>46 (171)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age</td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>33 (72)</td>
<td>35 (76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>39 (79)</td>
<td>56 (111)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>26 (67)</td>
<td>26 (73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>2 (4)</td>
<td>8 (91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regular interaction with Columbus residents?</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>25 (82)</td>
<td>38 (123)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>27 (140)</td>
<td>28 (143)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consciousness type</td>
<td>integrated</td>
<td>28 (86)</td>
<td>27 (81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural</td>
<td>18 (41)</td>
<td>50 (109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individual</td>
<td>24 (37)</td>
<td>32 (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>none</td>
<td>38 (58)</td>
<td>17 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>threatened by urban sprawl?</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>26 (156)</td>
<td>25 (153)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>30 (66)</td>
<td>51 (112)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>combination of previous 2 factor groups</td>
<td>integrated/no</td>
<td>22 (57)</td>
<td>31 (78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>integrated/yes</td>
<td>58 (29)</td>
<td>6 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural/no</td>
<td>7 (4)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural/yes</td>
<td>22 (37)</td>
<td>64 (109)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individual/no</td>
<td>24 (37)</td>
<td>32 (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>none/no</td>
<td>38 (58)</td>
<td>17 (27)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.12. Frequencies of (æ) variants across social factors
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor group</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>% back (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preceding segment</td>
<td>consonant</td>
<td>27 (213)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vowel</td>
<td>18 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>20 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vowel</td>
<td>25 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>40 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>20 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vowel</td>
<td>28 (191)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>final</td>
<td>33 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following segment</td>
<td>consonant</td>
<td>26 (217)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vowel</td>
<td>25 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>40 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vowel</td>
<td>28 (191)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>final</td>
<td>33 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vowel</td>
<td>31 (54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>39 (82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vowels</td>
<td>66 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>27 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position in word</td>
<td>initial</td>
<td>20 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>medial</td>
<td>28 (191)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>final</td>
<td>33 (5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.13. Linguistic factors for /æ/ backing (recoded)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor group</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>% low (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preceding segment</td>
<td>consonant</td>
<td>33 (257)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>front vowels</td>
<td>22 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>back vowels</td>
<td>14 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>20 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vowel</td>
<td>29 (125)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>31 (54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vowels</td>
<td>39 (82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vowels</td>
<td>66 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>27 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>initial</td>
<td>29 (38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>medial</td>
<td>33 (223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>final</td>
<td>33 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following segment</td>
<td>coronal consonants and [h]</td>
<td>29 (125)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dorsal consonants</td>
<td>31 (54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>labial consonants</td>
<td>39 (82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vowels</td>
<td>66 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>27 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>initial</td>
<td>29 (38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>medial</td>
<td>33 (223)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>final</td>
<td>33 (5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.14. Linguistic factors for /æ/ lowering (recoded)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor group</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Factor weight (input and weight)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sex</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>.370 (.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>.657 (.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consciousness type</td>
<td>integrated</td>
<td>.693 (.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural</td>
<td>.169 (.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individual</td>
<td>.693 (.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>none</td>
<td>.740 (.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age</td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>.700 (.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>.783 (.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>.412 (.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>.092 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>threatened by sprawl?</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>.414 (.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>.721 (.39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>position in word</td>
<td>initial</td>
<td>.375 (.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>medial</td>
<td>.522 (.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>final</td>
<td>.589 (.26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.15. Regression results for /æ/ backing, significant groups only, combination factor group excluded. Input = .196, chi-square = 444.2160, chi-square/cell = 13.8818, log likelihood = -403.817
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor group</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Factor weight (input and weight)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sex</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>.371 (.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>.656 (.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consciousness type plus attitude toward sprawl</td>
<td>integrated/no</td>
<td>.434 (.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>integrated/yes</td>
<td>.912 (.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural/no</td>
<td>.964 (.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural/yes</td>
<td>.180 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individual/no</td>
<td>.278 (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>none/no</td>
<td>.765 (.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age</td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>.844 (.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>.863 (.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>.468 (.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>.010 (.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regular interaction with Columbus residents?</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>.412 (.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>.556 (.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>position in word</td>
<td>initial</td>
<td>.365 (.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>medial</td>
<td>.524 (.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>final</td>
<td>.597 (.23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.16. Regression results for /æ/ backing, significant groups only, consciousness type excluded and attitude toward sprawl excluded. Input = .170, chi-square = 42.4042, chi-square/cell = 1.1779, log likelihood = -385.350

Inexplicably, the model in Table 4.16 generates a probability of .85 for the structural/no category, despite the category's 7% backing rate. In fact, given the input of .170 and the frequency of .07 in the structural/no category, its factor weight should be approximately .4, as opposed to .964, to achieve a good fit. Another unexpected result is that attitude toward sprawl is a significant factor in Table 4.15 but is replaced by regular interaction.
with Columbus residents in Table 4.16. Further, speakers who consider urban sprawl a threat to Worthington's community identity exhibit a higher rate of backing than those who do not, while regular interaction with Columbus residents promotes /æ/ backing. I offer an explanation for these seemingly contradictory facts later in the chapter; however, it is relevant that neither model is a particularly good fit for the data.

The final regression results for /æ/ lowering are shown in Tables 4.17 and 4.18.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor group</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Factor weight (input and weight)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>sex</strong></td>
<td>female</td>
<td>.299 (.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>.740 (.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>age</strong></td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>.638 (.39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>.781 (.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>.451 (.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>.104 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>following segment</strong></td>
<td>coronal consonants and [h]</td>
<td>.451 (.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dorsal consonants</td>
<td>.476 (.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>labial consonants</td>
<td>.620 (.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vowels</td>
<td>.905 (.78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>.278 (.12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.17. Regression results for /æ/ lowering, significant groups only, combination factor group excluded. Input = .265, chi-square = 64.2513, chi-square/cell = 1.6475, log likelihood = -408.255
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor group</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Factor weight (input and weight)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sex</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>.369 (.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>.659 (.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age</td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>.544 (.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>.751 (.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>.492 (.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>.163 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consciousness plus fear of sprawl</td>
<td>integrated/no</td>
<td>.610 (.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>integrated/yes</td>
<td>.236 (.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural/no</td>
<td>.124 (.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural/yes</td>
<td>.600 (.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individual/no</td>
<td>.565 (.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>none/no</td>
<td>.402 (.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>following segment</td>
<td>coronal consonants and [h]</td>
<td>.447 (.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dorsal consonants</td>
<td>.484 (.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>labial consonants</td>
<td>.616 (.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vowels</td>
<td>.839 (.65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>.437 (.22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.18. Regression results for /æ/ lowering, significant groups only, consciousness type excluded and attitude toward sprawl excluded. Input = .262, chi-square = 88.1008, chi-square/cell = 1.727, log likelihood = -404.688

Both backing and lowering of /æ/ are more common among the two youngest age groups.

Backling in particular shows a sharp dropoff between the second and third age groups, suggesting (though not confirming) that the backed variant is the newer one in this community. By contrast with (o), males lead significantly in both dimensions (when measured by factor weight; but males show a lower percentage of /æ/ backing). The
combination factor group of consciousness type plus attitude toward sprawl is significant for both backing and lowering, shown together in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7. Factor weights for /æ/ backing and lowering across consciousness type plus attitude toward sprawl

The factor weights for the structural categories are nearly a mirror image – i.e. a reversed copy – of those in the integrated categories. This situation is reminiscent of (o) fronting and unrounding, where the relationship between the two integrated categories approximates the reverse of the relationship between the two structural categories. If the backing and lowering dimensions rose and fell together, this similarity between (o) and (æ) could be explained with the relatively simple notion that fear of urban sprawl has one type of instantiation among speakers with integrated sociological consciousness and
another type of instantiation in speakers with structural sociological consciousness. Yet
Figure 4.7 shows an inverse relationship between backing and lowering: when one rises,
the other falls. A partial explanation here is that the factor weight for /æ/ backing in the
structural/no category is inaccurately high and should probably be the lowest of all
categories, as in the case of /æ/ lowering. It is worth noting that tokens which are
[+back] need not be [-low], so one dimension does not directly “steal” tokens from the
other, which, if true, could explain the inverse relationship. In fact, when the backing
and lowering dimensions are fused to form a single (æ) variable, the pattern with respect
to sociological consciousness becomes more complex, as shown in Figure 4.8.

Figure 4.8. Percentage of each of four (æ) variants across the combination factor group
of consciousness type and attitude toward sprawl.
While the integrated/yes category showed one of the highest rates of /æ/ backing in Figure 4.7, in Figure 4.8 we see that the back/low variant – new in both dimensions – does not even appear in this category. Still, the integrated/yes category has a much higher rate of the back/high variant than of the conservative front/high variant. (Recall that front/high does not refer to the tensed and raised variant found in the Northern Cities, but rather to variants that are not backed or lowered.) Here I appeal once again to the fact that Rita is the sole speaker in the integrated/yes category and generally does not seem interested in practices that promote exclusivity or stifle change. The issue is taken up again at the end of the chapter.

By contrast with (o), however, here the structural/no category is more conservative than the structural/yes category. The front/low and back/low variants do not appear in the structural/no category, and the frequency of the conservative, front/high variant is the highest on the chart. The only speaker in that category is Jim, who falls in the oldest age group and was therefore expected to use the new variants infrequently. Jim's pattern for (o) was less conservative than the integrated/yes pattern, so clearly this age-based explanation is not universally valid. Still, (æ) shows much sharper age grading than (o), perhaps because it is a newer variable, so the explanation is reasonable in this case.
Figure 4.9. /æ/ backing and lowering across individuals.

Figure 4.9 shows individual rates of /æ/ backing and /æ/ lowering together. For speakers under 50, there is a near-perfect division between males and females, with males favoring /æ/ lowering and females favoring /æ/ backing. The one exception is Kristin, whose /æ/ lowering frequency is higher than Ben's. As noted, Liz, whose college friends are from Cleveland, has a variably raised, tensed /æ/, but she exhibits the highest rate of /æ/ backing of all the speakers. The three speakers in the 50s age group are clustered near the origin. By virtue of their high rates of both backing and lowering, David and Peter lie well apart from the others. Their distributions of /æ/, however, are quite different: David's 50 tokens are clustered within approximately 700 Hz of one another in the back/front dimension, while Peter's form a bimodal distribution spanning 1300 Hz, with a
space of 300 Hz without any tokens between the two groups. Therefore, while more than
50% of Peter's /æ/ tokens qualify as [+back], the rest of his tokens are extremely far
forward, many reaching further frontward than his front-most [e]. Unlike David or Liz,
the others with high backing rates, Peter has two very distinct variants of /æ/. I return to
this fact later in the chapter.

Sally's /æ/ backing frequency of 6% was unexpectedly low, given her dramatic
persona, her distaste for traditional Worthington culture, and particularly her high rate
of /o/ fronting. It turns out that the normalization method yields an inaccurate picture of
Sally's /æ/ relative to the other speakers. While the other 16 speakers have near-mergers
of the vowels in cot and caught, Sally appears to have a complete merger. In her case,
the result is that mean /a/ is backed and raised: the other female speakers' mean F2 for /a/
falls between 1300 and 1500 Hz, while Sally's lies at 982 Hz. When Sally's mean F2 is
repositioned at 1400 Hz, her frequency of /o/ fronting is recalculated at 33%, shown in
Figure 4.9 as 'Sally2'. The new frequency separates Sally from Lydia, the other social
hub in the coffee shop crowd, by only 2%, situating them both near the top of the /æ/-
backing scale. Moreover, the higher frequency would boost the youngest age group's
factor weight, reinforcing the apparent-time picture of /a/ backing as a change in
progress.
4.5 Variable 3: (l)

4.5.1 Overview

In many varieties of English, post-vocalic /l/ and pre-vocalic /l/ are perceptibly different sounds. While pre-vocalic or light /l/ involves contact between the tongue tip and the alveolar ridge and some dorsal retraction, post-vocalic or dark /l/ entails greater dorsal retraction and delayed raising of the tongue tip (Sproat and Fujimura 1993). Often the tongue tip is raised only minimally, resulting in little or no alveolar contact and producing a ‘vocalized’ variant (Hardcastle and Barry 1985). Horvath and Horvath (2002: 324) note that in Australian English this vocalized /l/ is a back vowel or semivowel which may be rounded and/or labialized; similar realizations have been observed in British dialects (e.g. Wells 1982). In their study of speakers of various dialects of British English and one speaker of Australian English, Hardcastle and Barry (1985) found that the vocalized variant occurred more often when followed by a velar consonant than by a palato-alveolar consonant, and least as often when followed by an alveolar consonant. Preceding front vowels favored vocalization to a greater extent than back vowels. Similarly, Horvath and Horvath (2002) found the vocalized variant most often in varieties of Australian English when the preceding vowel was high, front, or long. Carver (1993) reports the absence of [l] and weak [l] before final consonants in several Wisconsin counties, and Labov et. al. (1968) observe /l/ vocalization in New York City.
The vocalization of /l/ is a feature common to many central and southern Ohio dialects. Ash (1982a,b) reports the vocalization of both syllable-final and intervocalic /l/, resulting in a (possibly rounded) voiced glide, in Midwestern cities including Columbus. Ash notes that /l/ vocalization did not originate in Philadelphia until after the early 1940s, and that it was a new dialect feature along the Eastern Seabord as of the early 1980s (10-11). Allen (1976; reported in Ash 1982b: 9) found infrequent pre-consonantal /l/ vocalization in Northern and Midland speech. More recently, Thomas (1993 [1989]) found vocalized variants nearly categorically among 34 white and black high school students on the east side of Columbus, and Durian (2004) found lower rates – relative to Thomas’ – of /l/ vocalization across 24 Columbus-area speakers ranging in age from 18 to 65. The rates of /l/ vocalization in Durian's data are closely matched in this study (below). In Durian's data, speakers aged 18 to 34 show a very slight, statistically-insignificant lead, and women show a somewhat larger but still insignificant lead over men. Fix (2004) observed /l/ vocalization among AAVE speakers in Columbus, reporting a significantly lower rate among white Columbus speakers.

In the data interpretation section concluding this chapter, it is assumed that /l/ vocalization is not a change in progress in central Ohio, by contrast with /o/ fronting or /æ/ backing and lowering. While I have no direct evidence to support the assumption, the apparent-time data offer no indication of change in progress, and, perhaps more significantly, Labov (1994: 332; cited in Thomas 2001: 56) has suggested a causal relationship between /l/ vocalization and back-vowel fronting: the effect of coda /l/ on preceding back, round vowels has created not only a back-vowel merger before /l/ in some dialects but also a new set of back, round vowels appearing in words such as
school, pull, and whole. The presence of this new back-vowel series, Labov suggests, motivated the fronting of /o/ and /u/ in other phonetic environments. If so, then /l/ vocalization is probably an older variable in central Ohio than /o/ fronting, decreasing the likelihood that it is a change in progress.

A preliminary study of /l/ vocalization in Worthington is reported in Chapter 3, where it is shown to correlate negatively with attachment to the Worthington community. That study finds a very slight increase in the frequency of /l/ vocalization as age decreases, offering faint evidence that the vocalized variant is on the rise. However, the present study fails to replicate those findings, and in any case, studies cited above found /l/ vocalization in the Midlands more than 20 years ago. I do not assume, therefore, that /l/ vocalization is a change in progress.

/l/ vocalization is similar to /o/ fronting and /æ/ backing and lowering in that it does not appear to be subject to conscious social evaluation. However, when I produced some words with the vocalized variant for a middle-aged Worthington speaker, she said I sounded like the assembly-line workers at her previous job who were from an east-Columbus working-class neighborhood.

4.5.2 Impressionistic analysis

Because it is difficult to see on a spectrogram, dark /l/ resists acoustic evaluation. Therefore, most studies of /l/ vocalization including this one rely on impressionistic analysis. A phonologist who is a native speaker of an American English dialect lacking vocalized /l/ classified 731 tokens as either “closer to dark /l/” or “closer to vocalized /l/”,

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with the understanding that the data would form a near-continuum between the poles.

440 (60.2%) tokens were coded as vocalized, and 291 (39.8%) as unvocalized.

Impressionistic analysis clearly interferes with the study's repeatability because the boundary between variants, particularly in the case of liquids, will differ widely across coders. However, the linguist who coded these data appeared to apply consistent criteria: she was given a random selection of 20 tokens to recode, and 19 of her judgments matched her original judgments, yielding a 95% consistency rate.

4.5.3 Statistical analysis

Logistic regression was used to find statistically significant factor groups and to model interactions among factors, as for (o) and (æ). The initial factor groups are shown in Table 4.19 along with frequency of vocalization for each factor.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor group</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>% vocalized (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sex</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>59 (247/412)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>male</td>
<td>60 (193/319)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>age</td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>54 (110/202)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>72 (123/170)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>58 (123/209)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>56 (84/150)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regular interaction with Columbus residents?</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>69 (172/246)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>55 (268/485)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consciousness type</td>
<td>integrated</td>
<td>50 (129/253)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural</td>
<td>63 (129/203)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individual</td>
<td>66 (97/146)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>none</td>
<td>65 (85/129)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>threatened by urban sprawl?</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>58 (316/539)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>64 (124/192)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consciousness plus attitude toward sprawl</td>
<td>integrated/no</td>
<td>51 (112/217)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>integrated/yes</td>
<td>47 (17/36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural/no</td>
<td>46 (22/47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural/yes</td>
<td>68 (107/156)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individual/no</td>
<td>66 (97/146)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>none/no</td>
<td>65 (85/129)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preceding segment</td>
<td>labial consonants</td>
<td>72 (99/37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>coronal, dorsal consonants</td>
<td>47 (73/153)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>high and mid front vowels</td>
<td>52 (107/202)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mid central vowels</td>
<td>41 (5/12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[a]</td>
<td>60 (104/171)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>high and mid back vowels</td>
<td>92 (52/56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>following segment</td>
<td>labial consonants</td>
<td>63 (93/147)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>coronal consonants</td>
<td>56 (186/332)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dorsal consonants</td>
<td>65 (15/23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[h]</td>
<td>52 (9/17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>high and mid front vowels</td>
<td>60 (21/35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mid central vowels</td>
<td>37 (9/24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[a]</td>
<td>38 (7/18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>high and mid back vowels</td>
<td>42 (3/7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>76 (97/127)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.19 shows that the distribution of the vocalized variant differs from that of the advanced vowel variants discussed above. Most notable is the age distribution: the groups show relatively similar frequencies with the exception of the 20s group. It is also striking that the integrated consciousness type is associated with a considerably lower frequency than the other types. Finally, note that speakers with regular Columbus ties unexpectedly vocalize /l/ less frequently than those without. Tables 4.20 and 4.21 show the statistically significant factor groups from the final runs of regression analyses.

It is immediately clear that (l) is not stratified by age in the same way as (o) and (æ); that is, the results do not provide apparent-time evidence that (l) is a new variable. In fact, as noted, (l) is probably much older in central Ohio than (æ) and somewhat older than (o). It is also not differentiated significantly by sex, unlike the other variables.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor group</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Factor weight (input and weight)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>age</strong></td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>.392 (.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>.620 (.73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>.427 (.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>.610 (.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>consciousness type</strong></td>
<td>integrated</td>
<td>.482 (.60)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural</td>
<td>.282 (.39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individual</td>
<td>.792 (.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>none</td>
<td>.524 (.64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>fear of sprawl?</strong></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>.413 (.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>.728 (.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>regular interaction</strong></td>
<td>no</td>
<td>.711 (.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with Columbus residents?</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>.388 (.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>preceding segment</strong></td>
<td>labial consonants</td>
<td>.662 (.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>coronal, dorsal consonants</td>
<td>.344 (.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>back and central vowels</td>
<td>.585 (.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>front vowels</td>
<td>.407 (.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>following segment</strong></td>
<td>labial consonants</td>
<td>.583 (.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>coronal, dorsal consonants</td>
<td>.436 (.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>front vowels</td>
<td>.410 (.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>central and back vowels</td>
<td>.238 (.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>.690 (.79)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.20. Final logistic regression results for (l), combination factor excluded. Input = .621, chi-square = 224.4467, chi-square/cell = 1.1222, log likelihood = -430.921
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor group</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Factor weight (input and weight)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>age</td>
<td>17-19</td>
<td>.342 (.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>.584 (.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30s</td>
<td>.444 (.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50s</td>
<td>.691 (.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consciousness plus attitude toward urban sprawl</td>
<td>integrated/no</td>
<td>.417 (.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>integrated/yes</td>
<td>.515 (.64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural/no</td>
<td>.068 (.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>structural/yes</td>
<td>.597 (.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>individual/no</td>
<td>.786 (.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>none/no</td>
<td>.391 (.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regular interaction with Columbus residents?</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>.760 (.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>.358 (.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preceding segment</td>
<td>labial consonants</td>
<td>.667 (.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>coronal, dorsal consonants</td>
<td>.336 (.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>back and central vowels</td>
<td>.592 (.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>front vowels</td>
<td>.402 (.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>following segment</td>
<td>labial consonants</td>
<td>.585 (.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>coronal, dorsal consonants</td>
<td>.433 (.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>front vowels</td>
<td>.403 (.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>central and back vowels</td>
<td>.247 (.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pause</td>
<td>.697 (.79)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.21. Final logistic regression results for (l), consciousness type and attitude toward sprawl excluded. input = .627, chi-square = 208.9611, chi-square/cell = 1.0448, log likelihood = -421.164
Figure 4.10. Factor weights for sociological consciousness plus attitude toward sprawl

The interaction between (l) and the combination group of sociological consciousness plus attitude toward sprawl also sets this variable apart from the other two. Figure 4.10 highlights several aspects of this interaction. First, the structural/no category has an extremely low factor weight, even considering that the category's only speaker is Jim, who is in the oldest age group. Second, both the integrated and structural categories show a rise in factor weight from the 'yes' to the 'no' subcategories, whereas in (o) and (æ) the integrated and structural categories had opposite patterns. Finally, the individual/no category has the highest factor weight. These facts are further discussed in the following section.

One of the reasons for investigating both /l/ vocalization and /o/ fronting in Worthington is that they may be related variables. As noted above, Labov has suggested
that /l/ vocalization motivates back-vowel fronting, and Thomas (1993 [1989]) reports a merger of certain back vowels preceding /l/ in central Ohio. It is reasonable, then, to predict a positive correlation between /o/ fronting and /l/ vocalization; that is, speakers with high rates of /o/ fronting should also have high rates of /l/ vocalization. Figure 4.11 shows a subtle pattern in the opposite direction: as /o/ fronting rises, /l/ vocalization tends to fall. While these data offer no support for the prediction, they do not refute it either. One reason is that Worthington is by no means a typical central Ohio town – as a conservative upper-middle class suburb, it probably acquires certain changes from below later than Columbus, meaning that causative relationships may not transfer. In this case, /o/ fronting may have arrived in Worthington much later than in Columbus, after /l/ vocalization had already become established. It is also possible that any causative relationship between /l/ and /o/ no longer leaves a trace in any part of central Ohio, as the two variables have become well established and have taken on independent social meanings.

Still, it may be significant that the two variables’ age effects, though mild, run in opposite directions, such that /o/ fronting is more common among younger speakers and /l/ vocalization is most common among the oldest speakers.
Figure 4.11. Individual rates of /l/ vocalization and /o/ fronting. Correlation coefficient between the two variables = -.13.

4.6 Interpretation: Comparing the variables

4.6.1 Broad comparison

We have now seen the final results for five logistic regression analyses: /o/ fronting, /o/ unrounding, /æ/ backing, /æ/ lowering, and /l/ vocalization. In every case other than /o/ unrounding, the factor group combining consciousness type and attitude toward sprawl was statistically significant, indicating that it captures a distinction relevant to linguistic variation. Only sex and age were significant as consistently.
However, the pattern of variation within the combination factor group differed considerably across variables, as illustrated in Figure 4.12.

Before comparing the variables in detail, it will be useful to restate the hypothesis set out at the beginning of the chapter. The combination factor group was hypothesized to show a greater effect that either of its component variables. Speakers who feel Worthington's identity to be threatened by urban sprawl were predicted to exhibit relatively low frequencies of the newer variants. Additionally, it was expected that the slope would be steeper between the integrated categories than in the structural categories. Finally, the new variants were expected to be relatively frequent in the individual/no category. However, it was noted at the outset that the exploratory nature of this research precludes confident hypothesizing, and in fact, no specific predictions were made for the none/no category because its members appear to have different reasons for their lack of critical awareness of urban sprawl.

Figure 4.12 shows the factor weights for the four variables in which the consciousness type/attitude toward sprawl factor group was significant.
Figure 4.12. Factor weights for across social consciousness and attitude toward sprawl for four variables

/æ/ backing, presumably one of the newest variables of the set, exhibits the greatest amplitude of variation, ranging from under .2 at its lowest factor weight to .95 at its highest, but as discussed above, its structural/no factor weight should most likely be closer to .4. If that were the case, then /æ/ backing and /o/ fronting would follow very similar patterns, despite a difference in degree of slope between integrated/no and integrated/yes, as shown in Figure 4.13.
/l/ vocalization, also has relatively great amplitude. At first glance, /l/ vocalization appears to approximate the pattern of /æ/ lowering rather than backing. Recall, however, that the individual/no factor weight for /æ/ backing is kept artificially low by Sally's extremely backed /a/; when her mean /a/ is repositioned to resemble that of the other female speakers, her rate of /æ/ backing is higher than that of most other speakers.

Further, if we concentrate on the relationship between integrated/no and integrated/yes, on one hand, and between structural/no and structural/yes on the other, then we see that /l/ vocalization patterns differently from both /æ/ variables. Table 4.22 lists the direction of slope between the integrated categories and the structural categories for each variable.
4.6.2 Changes in progress

/æ/ backing and /o/ fronting share an up/down pattern in Table 4.22, and the upward slope from integrated/no to integrated/yes runs contrary to both hypotheses. Above, the high rate of /o/ fronting in the integrated/yes category was attributed to Rita's specific strategy for approaching the perceived threat to Worthington's character. However, Rita's factor weight for /æ/ backing is also extremely high – higher, in fact, than it would be if she were merely choosing not to resist linguistic changes in progress. And while the GOLDVARB model for /æ/ backing is not a very good fit for the data, Rita's factor weight yields a relatively accurate result. The integrated/no factor weight is also reasonable given the raw frequency. Therefore, the upward slope for that variable cannot be blamed on an insufficient statistical model and there is clearly something wrong with the hypothesis.

The most critical problem with the hypothesis, I believe, is that it is rooted in crude categories of sociological consciousness, as noted toward the beginning of this chapter. Aside from the difficulty of constructing categories for such a complex and
evasive phenomenon on the basis of 17 speakers, deciding the membership of each category was hardly a straightforward task. Easily the most stubborn speaker in this regard was Chris, who was eventually grouped with the integrated/no speakers. Chris lamented at great length the rise of housing developments in the outskirts which did not mix residential space with public or commercial space in the way that many areas of Worthington proper do. He even proposed that west Worthington be considered a separate town from Worthington proper because the city was becoming physically too large to be able to walk across. It is clear, in other words, that Chris recognized socio-geographic problems caused by sprawl and was protective of Worthington's boundaries. Based on these observations alone, he would have fit well into the integrated/yes category along with Rita. However, Chris also complained that Worthington proper's economic homogeneity resulted largely from the paucity of affordable housing options – including apartments and condominiums – in the city. More generally, the concerns he voiced had to do with lifestyle opportunities, such as the ability to walk to the store and have sufficient living space, rather than Worthington's community cohesion or character, the foci of Rita's interviews. The question, then, is whether the integrated/yes category should be defined generally by protectiveness of Worthington's boundaries in the face of urban sprawl, or more narrowly by concern for Worthington's traditional character. I obviously chose the latter. (Had I chosen the former, Lydia could also have been in the integrated/yes category.) Chris exhibits a backing rate of approximately 24%, much lower than Rita's, and moving Chris from the integrated/no to the integrated/yes category would alter those categories' backing rates from the current 22% and 58%, respectively, to 29% and 41%. In a new logistic regression analysis which changes nothing else, the
new frequencies yield the more similar factor weights of .562 for integrated/no and .743 for integrated/yes (input = .170, chi-square = 47.8097, chi-square/cell = 1.4488, log likelihood = -389.564). The basic pattern does not change, but the slope evens out considerably.

Assuming, however, that the original pattern for /æ/ backing and /o/ fronting belies real distinctions along the x-axis, the central question is why the integrated/yes category would show higher factor weights than the integrated/no category, while the reverse pattern holds for the structural categories. Further, why does Peter, second only to Liz in /æ/ backing and the only high-ranking integrated/no speaker in /æ/ backing (see Figure 4.9 and the discussion following it), maintain two distinct variants of /æ/, in contrast with the other high-ranking /æ/ backers? My answer relies heavily on the notion of persona, a “third-wave” concept (Eckert 2002) that is proving increasingly useful in the field of sociolinguistic variation. The speakers in the integrated/no category share the ability to talk about Worthington and its relationship to Columbus in a very broad, multifaceted context that leaves few stones unturned: economic processes, social constructs such as race, the relevance of community cohesion for the individual, the interplay of geography and social structure. Crucially, these speakers also have in common a clearly self-conscious persona describable as “well-informed,” “education-oriented,” or even “smarter than the rest.” They are very conscious of knowing what they're talking about, and they make a point of showing me (and others, in non-interview contexts) that their views should be taken seriously. To differing degrees, they even scorn people who are either uninterested in education or fail to think for themselves. To
clarify this shared persona, I will briefly explain how each speaker in the integrated/no category realizes it.

Lydia, who is 19 and attended college for a year before stopping to earn money in service jobs for a few years, insisted early in the interview that high school had largely been a waste of time because she already knew most of what her classes covered. She explained that she had always learned on her own time by reading books that were considered too advanced for her age group, and she always did well on tests. Lydia expressed disdain for kids, girls in particular, who merely did what was expected of them rather than thinking for themselves. Months after her interview when I told her I had been impressed by what she said about Worthington, she was clearly pleased but did not seem at all surprised.

Peter, who is 18 and at the time of the interview was hours away from leaving for a prestigious college, spent a large part of his interview explaining that he valued independent learning and thought little of his high school peers who never became interested in any field of study outside of their regular classwork. He had had a series of internships related to his main academic interest, and he painstakingly listed what he had learned from each of them. He also lamented the apathy and lack of consciousness he perceived among people generally, clearly not including himself among them.

Chris, a high school teacher, was somewhat sanctimonious throughout the interview as he noted ways in which city planners and regular residents were making the wrong choices architecturally and geographically. He insisted that all of his complaints about his neighbors related to his larger point about community cohesion, implying that I might have failed to grasp the connection. The one time that I responded with doubt to
part of his economic analysis of Worthington, he took mild offense and vigorously
defended his position.

Cliff, also a high school teacher, proudly announced (without being asked) that he
had two undergraduate degrees and that during his master's program he “was asked to be
a teaching assistant”. Throughout his interview he explicitly made education a theme,
claiming that he and his wife were able to see the error in the prejudicial views of some
of their neighbors because they had the perspective of educators.

Finally, Marjorie, who is a high school teacher and is also heavily involved in the
community's arts programs, was not arrogant but spoke with an air of authority about
community events. According to her descriptions, she looked on with tolerance as others
made understandable mistakes. While she attributed artistic successes to everyone
involved, she expressed concern that many audience members were not able to appreciate
them to the extent she was. Further, Marjorie insisted that better arts programs could
enlighten Worthington and clearly placed herself in the category of those were were
already enlightened.

By contrast with these speakers, Rita, the only member of the integrated/yes
category, put forth her views with confidence but did not make a point of showing me
how much she knew. She answered some of my questions about social processes in
Worthington with “I don't know. Let me know if you find out.” She was more casual in
most of her discussion than the speakers in the integrated/no category and was more
interested in me as a person and researcher than the others were. She was more likely to
tell stories about her personal experiences than to propose a thesis and support it with
facts or perceptions. Rita has a master's degree but barely mentioned it, preferring to talk
about her kids' education. She does not seem to mind having primarily secretarial involvement in many community activities, sometimes leading kids' events.

While some of the other speakers, particularly David, Marshall, and Kristin, put forth intellectual-ish personae, they were all more like Rita in that they tended to tell stories, express uncertainty, and ask me about myself rather than focus on their own ability to make and defend claims and think for themselves. Thus the persona described here is limited to the integrated/no category. The reason, I believe, is that the integrated/no type of consciousness/attitude is the most sophisticated and farsighted of those that emerged from the 17 speakers, and the speakers in that category are truly what they make themselves out to be: they are intellectuals in a sense, and they value the ability to think things through. It is for that reason that they have the clearest, most nuanced view of Worthington. Aside from having well-developed sociological consciousness, they recognize either that Worthington's so-called colonial atmosphere is now fabricated or that the cultural centrality of Old Worthington is not, from a realist perspective, a very important element in the broad picture of urban development even though it currently fosters a certain amount of community cohesion. As Lydia says,

> Everywhere has different little subcultures, and there's no need to keep everything tiny as long as you have, I mean you don't need to keep Worthington that big, when it can grow and you can get an education, and then that same tiny little subculture is still gonna exist, just not everyone's gonna know about it, you know.

I maintain that the persona in question here is not artificial; it is real insofar as its successful construction is rooted in a well-developed sociological imagination, including the ability to see past the preservation of Worthington's community identity.
One aspect of this persona is a kind of loyalty to permanence: thinking for oneself and perceiving the truth entail resistance to fads and to things perceived as inauthentic, and attachment to things considered sustainable. Lydia, for example, proudly wore pants that her mother and aunt had worn and resisted the tight shirts that came into style while she was in high school. Chris spoke fervently about the need for sustainable environmental practices. Peter scorned what he called the American cultural practice of casting off old buildings and constantly building new ones. I propose that, by the same token, these speakers resist linguistic variants associated with inauthentic identity (such as the “valley girl” persona discussed above), or with the sprawl-induced dissolution of community identity and unsustainable development. It follows that Peter's starkly bimodal /æ/ distribution results from two conflicting pressures: 1) his in-progress transition from nerd to counter-culture intellectual, necessitating the urban, anti-conservative style of many of the coffee shop group; 2) his frustration with the fast-paced urban development that is destroying the kinds of local economies that he considers tenable. Lydia, an integrated/no speaker like Peter who is also young and counter-culture, is caught in a similar conflict. However, unlike Peter she is not in transition from uncool to cool; according to her and those around her, she has always been cool and counter-culture like Sally has, and displays no insecurity in that regard. Yet she is not the leader in linguistic change that Sally is with respect to /o/ fronting (cf. Table 4.9, Figure 4.11); rather than latching onto extreme variants, she appears to practice a compromise between linguistic conservatism and progressivism.

I claim, therefore, that the low factor weights associated with /æ/ backing and /o/ fronting in the integrated/no category result from the maintenance of this “intellectual”
persona, a persona not shared by Rita, and one that requires and most likely springs from
the integrated/no type of consciousness. Although the persona rather than the
consciousness type may be a more immediate determinant of these speakers' linguistic
choices, I maintain that the consciousness type lies at its root.

The downward slope between structural/no and structural/yes exhibited by /o/
fronting and /æ/ backing supports the hypotheses put forth early in the chapter:
structural/yes speakers engage in symbolic resistance to the perceived corruption of
Worthington's identity by urban sprawl. By contrast with the integrated/yes speakers, the
structural/no speakers, I argue, use conservative linguistic variants to index loyalty to the
local community, an entirely familiar scenario in variation studies. Because they appear
to lack the kind of farsighted consciousness that the integrated/no speakers so vigorously
display, the structural/no speakers' linguistic practices are given a more locally-based
interpretation. They may even view linguistic variables as social structures parallel to,
say, the architectural review board. Therefore, although they exhibit similar factor
weights with respect to /o/ fronting and /æ/ backing, the structural/yes and integrated/no
speakers are assigned different motivations.

/æ/ lowering differs from /o/ fronting and /æ/ backing in having an upward slope
from structural/no to structural/yes. The most plausible explanation, I believe, lies in an
interaction with age that is not completely equalized in the regression analysis: some of
the oldest speakers have variable raising and tensing of /æ/ and therefore low rates of /æ/
lowering, and the only structural/no speaker is Jim, one of the oldest. /æ/ lowering could
also be a strategy for avoiding the raised and tensed variant so often heard from northern
Ohioans, including Ohio State students from Cleveland. Liz, an Ohio State junior at the
time of the interview, even mentioned hearing the raised variant among her college
friends from Cleveland, and she related with some consternation that her older sister
claimed she was beginning to sound like she was from Cleveland herself. In fact, six of
her 50 tokens of [æ] culled from the interview overlap with her /e/ space. It is probably
no coincidence that the integrated/yes and structural/no categories, which have by far the
lowest factor weights for /æ/ lowering, are the only two categories lacking college-aged
speakers.

Finally, the factor weights for /æ/ lowering and /o/ fronting are, as expected,
relatively high in the individual/no category. The /æ/ backing model, as stated above, is
not a very good fit for the data; the raw frequency for the individual/no category is 32%,
while the factor weight shown in Figure 4.13 produces a frequency of only 8%. A more
accurate factor weight would lie somewhere above structural/no but below integrated/yes.

4.6.3 /l/ vocalization

The hypothesis was not meant to extend to /l/ vocalization because it is not
assumed to be a change in progress in central Ohio, as the apparent-time data suggest.
However, its pattern in Figure 4.13 can still be informative. The earlier study of /l/
vocalization in Worthington (see Chapter 3) concluded that the vocalized variant was
more common among people living outside the cultural center of Worthington, the
primary reason being resistance to outside influence on the city's so-called historical
character. This study's results suggest a more complicated situation. In particular, the
high factor weight associated with individual/no and the low factor weight associated with structural/no call for explanation.

Given that the structural/no category has only one speaker, it is reasonable to focus on the high rate of vocalization among the individual/no speakers. My proposed explanation takes into account evidence from Durian (2004) and Fix (2004) that /l/ vocalization is robust in urban Columbus and may generally be more frequent among speakers of African American dialects. I propose that /l/ vocalization has acquired and maintained urban meaning in Worthington, and that this meaning is probably stronger among younger speakers. The three speakers in the individual/no category are energetically in favor of Worthington acquiring a more diverse population both socioeconomically and ethnically. They all claim to identify in some way with Columbus residents from poor neighborhoods: Kristin felt poor compared to the wealthy outskirts residents with whom she attended high school, Sally's family has money but purposely avoids a “wealthy Worthingtonite” image, and Andrea has traveled to third-world countries and has also volunteered in a poor Columbus neighborhood, and she claims to be more knowledgeable about economic inequality than her peers. Consonant with their views is frequent use of a linguistic variant that indexes urban identity. Curiously, Sally's rate of /l/ vocalization is quite a bit lower than Andrea's or Kristin's, as shown in Figure 4.11, though she is a leader in /o/ fronting and /æ/ backing. I suspect the reason is that she is a constant performer, both inside and outside of her high school drama involvement; she tends to talk and act as though she were entertaining a large audience, adding self-conscious flourishes to her everyday behavior. She may (consciously or unconsciously) articulate post-vocalic /l/ as though on stage, i.e. with maximum clarity. I
suspect that Chris and Lydia, those with the lowest rates of /l/ vocalization, engage in similar self-monitoring, but for the purpose of sounding intellectual or educated rather than dramatic. Conversely, none of the speakers at the top of the /l/ vocalization scale belongs to the integrated/no category.

A further question remains. Although Kristin, Sally, and Andrea may champion Worthington's changing identity with particular vehemence, they are obviously not the only speakers who feel empathy for Columbus residents and encourage Worthington's diversification. All speakers in the [consciousness type]/no categories accept the sprawl situation to some extent. What causes the individual/no speakers' rate of /l/ vocalization to be so high is, I believe, the fact that their sociological consciousness is individual-focused. Personal attitudes and practices lie at the forefront of these speakers' discourses about the local sprawl-related tension. More than other speakers, they are likely to view linguistic and other stylistic practices as aligning them with the new populations moving into the outskirts. Particularly when they are talking about the sprawl-related tension, as during the ethnographic interviews, they employ /l/ vocalization to situate themselves on the urban side of the conflict.

4.6.4 The value of speculation

Sections 4.6.2 and 4.6.3 are home to a great deal of speculation, and for good reasons. The categories used to operationalize sociological consciousness were, as noted, crude and uncertain by necessity, and there do not exist previous studies of the interaction between sociological consciousness and linguistic variation from which to
draw insight. Yet this study's goal has not been to account for the social meanings of particular instances of linguistic variation so much as to draw attention to an aspect of lived experience that, by virtue of its rootedness in both the individual and in society, has the potential to impact linguistic practices. In venturing guesses as to the relationship(s) between the types of sociological consciousness and the linguistic data, I have attempted primarily to motivate further investigation of a social-theoretic concept within the field of sociolinguistic variation. Speculation is thus used here as a tool for envisioning future work: I have set out hypotheses for scrutiny, intending to suggest untrodden paths of investigation rather than to provide answers.
5.1 Summary and concluding issues

I have argued that variation theory's progression, understood with respect to Eckert's three “waves”, motivates greater attention to the ways that speakers conceptualize the relationships between, on one hand, themselves as individuals and members of local communities, and on the other hand, social processes and structures that transcend the local social milieu. Although the study of variation has advanced a great deal in the use of ethnographic methods and concepts, particularly in considering the links between local linguistic practices and broad social structures, up to this point it has generally neglected speakers' own conceptions of the micro-macro relationship. Accordingly, I have proposed the sociologist C. Wright Mills' (1959) notion of the “sociological imagination” as a preliminary framework within which to systematically

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3 C. Wright Mills, author of *The Sociological Imagination*, reportedly urged his students to “take it big,” or apply themselves to problems of broad public relevance (Wakefield 2000). ‘Taking It Big’ is the title of a book (Dandaneau 2001) that was critical to this dissertation's conception.
explore speakers' sociological consciousness, or their awareness of the links among personal experiences and practices, social structures, and historical processes.

The community of Worthington, Ohio, a Columbus suburb confronting the dissolution of its boundaries by urban sprawl, was used as a test site for the investigation of sociological consciousness and its interaction with linguistic variation. Two years of ethnographic fieldwork in Worthington yielded a picture of tension between “Worthington proper” – the space within the city boundaries – and the “outskirts”, the areas of the Worthington school district annexed by Columbus. A preliminary study of /l/ vocalization showed the vocalized variant to occur less frequently among speakers living in Worthington proper than among speakers living in the outskirts. The present study finds, on the basis of ethnographic interviews with 17 speakers, four rough types of sociological consciousness with respect to the local urban sprawl situation: individual-focused, social structure-focused, integrated (i.e. a relatively balanced view of the individual with respect to social structures and history), and little or no critical awareness. These four types constituted a factor group in logistic regression analyses of four regional phonetic variables: /o/ fronting, /æ/ backing and lowering, and /l/ vocalization. The results show sociological consciousness, when united in a factor group with attitude toward urban sprawl in the Worthington area, to be statistically significant for all four variables.

The proposed explanations for the patterns of linguistic variation are rooted to some extent in familiar notions such as 'persona', but they are claimed to ultimately descend from differences in sociological consciousness, particularly for /æ/ backing and /o/ fronting. Given that sociological consciousness is a new concept within
sociolinguistics, and that its use here represents something of a divergence from current variation theory, this study's implications for the field of variation, and for the relationship between variation and social theory, are worth considering. To that end, this chapter examines the study in light of current variation theory and touches briefly on its implications for social theory. Finally, I suggest potential improvements to the study as well as thoughts for future work.

5.2 Implications for sociolinguistic theory

One aspect of this study that goes against the grain of contemporary sociolinguistic thinking is the use of a social variable that lacks emic validity. The critical distinction between Eckert's (2002) “first wave” and “second wave” is the use of locally-recognized categories; the “third wave” takes the further step of considering personae whose nuances are attuned to local social scenes. This study's focus on an externally-imposed social variable might therefore be interpreted as resistance to recent theoretical progress, a denial of social constructionist achievements. It also raises the related question as to how the results can be interpreted relative to the results of recent identity-driven studies located firmly within the second or third waves.

As noted, my intention has been to strike a balance between a structuralist, or deterministic, view of social action and a purely interactional one. In doing so, I do not dismiss the theoretical shift in sociolinguistics but rather attempt to build on it by investigating a supremely subjective dimension of personal experience. That the sociological consciousness categories are externally imposed is partly an artifact of this
dimension's complexity and differentiation across individuals; it does not even fit neatly into the set of categories I used. In addition, sociological consciousness is not a superficially salient characteristic and therefore does not lend itself to evaluation in day-to-day contexts: it is easy to interact with someone regularly without learning much about his/her sociological imagination.

As an individualistic, subjective phenomenon, the usefulness of sociological consciousness in this study has (at least) two serious implications for current variation theory. First, it speaks to the way that styles and personae are often invoked as explanations for linguistic practice, defined locally but instantiating macro-social realities. Second, sociological consciousness offers a methodological and theoretical bridge between the study of variation and the study of social movements, a subfield of sociology with striking relevance for variationists. These two points are addressed in turn.

5.2.1 Style and personae

Part of the explanation given for the patterns of variation in Chapter 4 is rooted in the third-wave notion of persona, thereby linking this study to that theoretical tradition. Nevertheless, I contend that there exists a causative relationship between strength of sociological imagination – a “real” parameter – and linguistic practice. “Strength of sociological imagination” refers to the closeness of fit between one's sociological consciousness and the actual links among personal experience, social structure, and history. (A true social constructionist would no doubt protest that those “actual” links are
determined by the analyst rather than being objectively real. I have confronted this issue by restricting my investigation of sociological consciousness to a single primary phenomenon – urban sprawl's effect on community identity – which is discussed at great length in public media, as noted.) I maintain that it is possible to be right or wrong, or, nearly always, somewhere in between, in one's conceptions of micro-macro links. More important for this study is the claim that consciousness type interacts with identity choices, as in the case of “integrated” speakers constructing well-informed, fad-resistant personae. This amounts to the claim that something “real” plays a determining role in persona choices within local contexts, and that sociological consciousness is that thing (probably among others). Such a claim should not appear radical to sociolinguists, as it echoes similar claims about social networks, socioeconomic class, etc. Although Chapter 4 proposes a strong link between consciousness type and linguistic choices for speakers not in the integrated category, I expect that in all cases, persona maintenance lies between them.

However, the mitigating role of personae does not, I claim, diminish the importance of sociological consciousness as a determinant of social practice. And while this study's methods and assumptions harmonize with third-wave theory, they step beyond the third wave by seeking a more fundamental and perhaps more lasting aspect of social personhood than persona construction. I have focused, in other words, not on locally-defined personal identities in Worthington, but rather on the ideologies and patterns of thought within which personal identities are constructed. It might be argued that the types of sociological consciousness I distinguished in this study are determined by the social milieu, of which personal identities are a component, and indeed, I will be
the last to claim that sociological consciousness exists independent from social context. Yet the complex diversity of the consciousness types refutes a purely deterministic view, just as intra-group linguistic variation is evidence against entirely top-down models of social structure. This study suggests that variationists could benefit from looking beyond the question of links between local social identities and macro-social structures, exploring the ideological roots of local identities.

In more specific terms, a particularly important way in which this study could build on and improve third-wave theory is through the notion of style. The study of isolated variables has definitively given way to the study of bricolage, the combined use of stylistic resources. Linguistic variables and other social tools acquire meaning relative to particular styles, and styles themselves have meaning within local social contexts (cf. Eckert and Rickford 2001). The present study of sociological consciousness suggests that a given style need not have the same significance for every person who associates him/herself with it. For example, Worthington speakers in the integrated/no category exhibit relatively low rates (based on factor weight) of both /o/ fronting and /ae/ lowering, as do speakers in the structural/yes category. I have claimed, however, that these groups' linguistic conservatism springs from separate ideologies. The integrated/no speakers construct a fad-resistant style that is consistent with their ability to view the local social conflict as an instantiation of broader social processes; urban sprawl, in their view, has negative repercussions for society generally but need not be feared for its potential disruption of Worthington's character. By contrast, the structural/yes speakers engage in symbolic resistance to the perceived threat to Worthington's identity, possibly even viewing language as yet another social structure with which to combat change.
Whether this symbolic resistance is conscious – an important question – lies beyond this study's scope. The point here is that based on ethnographic evidence, two very similar linguistic styles – they are not identical because /ae/ backing is significantly lower for the structural/yes speakers – are used toward quite ideologically-disparate goals.

What this means for variation theory is that “styles” and “personae”, though useful concepts, cannot necessarily inform our understanding of linguistic practice if they are analyzed only as manifestations of broader social structures and not also as products of sociological consciousness. To the extent that humans are agents in social practice, they /we choose personae (perhaps unconsciously, just as we “choose” linguistic variants), and I argue that consciousness of the relationship between one's personal practices and the social scene influences those choices. Therefore, as sociolinguistic theory focuses more and more on the links between micro and macro social scenes, this study offers preliminary evidence that an extremely subjective and individualistic phenomenon is worth exploring.

5.2.2 Framing and cognitive liberation

The idea of sociological consciousness bears potentially important resemblance to the notion of cognitive liberation, a central concept in social movement theory. Social movement theorists examine the genesis, maintenance, and transformation of organized collective action toward a common goal such as the unionization of labor; the transmission and progression of a social movement is in some ways analogous to the diffusion of a linguistic variable, and certain theoretical tools such as social networks are
employed in both fields. While some early social movement theories focused on the availability of resources, more recent approaches tend to be broader in scope, scrutinizing the role of individual consciousness. Cognitive liberation is the shifting of consciousness in some way that facilitates involvement in a social movement. Although the term cognitive liberation appeared first in McAdam’s (1982) formulation of political process theory, the concept of the transformation of consciousness as critical to mobilization surfaced earlier (Edelman 1971; Piven and Cloward 1979). McAdam introduced cognitive liberation in terms of “the subjective meanings [people] attach to their situations” (1982:48). These meanings link opportunity and action, and they are largely determined by shifting political opportunities, or potential insurgents’ perceptions of political opportunities. When individuals or groups perceive some grievance, believe that systemic change can and should occur to rectify it, and judge the political setting to be ripe for modification, they have undergone cognitive liberation and, according to political process theory, are likely to mobilize.

Political process theorists have equated cognitive liberation with processes rooted in Goffman's (1974) notion of “frames”, a concept well known to sociolinguists. Goffman defined frames as schemata that organize experience and guide action; in short, frames provide a way of understanding and reacting to experiences. In the words of Snow and Benford (1992), a frame is “an interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses 'the world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one’s present or past environment” (137). Snow et al. (1986) expanded Goffman’s concept of frames to account for participation in social movements, positing that “frame alignment” motivates
individuals to join social movements (467). In short, certain theorists view a kind of consciousness as central to social movement propagation, and they structure their study of consciousness with a concept that has been useful to sociolinguists, primarily discourse analysts.

The use of sociological consciousness as a variable in studies of linguistic variation can only increase the potential for productive cooperation between sociolinguists and social movement theorists. Given that there is already a great deal of conceptual similarity between social movement transmission and the transmission of linguistic variables, such cooperation could provide a new angle on variation studies and simultaneously uncover concrete ways in which sociolinguistics can contribute to sociology. More generally, Marxist thinking posits the transformation of consciousness as a requirement for social liberation, so the adoption of sociological consciousness into the mainstream variationist repertoire paves the way for a broad link between sociological theory and variation theory.

5.2.3 Further implications

This study has further implications for sociolinguistic theory. For instance, sociological consciousness was found to vary in numerous ways across the 17 speakers. What does it mean for the way we think about emic categories that people have such different ways of thinking about the social milieu? We know from studies such as Eckert's (2000) jock versus burnout analysis that groups of speakers vary in the ways they think about things such as the transition into adulthood, but differences at a more abstract
level, as I tried to demonstrate in Chapter 3, are relatively uncharted territory for sociolinguists. If such differences are widespread, and if they are present in people's conceptions of phenomena other than urban sprawl's effect on community identity (e.g. class structure, gender, etc.) then the notions of identity construction and persona construction become more complicated, as we can no longer be confident that speakers are working within the same models of society.

A lasting and particularly stubborn problem in sociolinguistics is understanding the degree to which speakers are conscious of the linguistic practices that are shown to be so intricately intertwined with social identity. While this study certainly does not offer a solution, the continued investigation of sociological consciousness may shed light on the problem. If it is shown, for example, that speakers with strong sociological imaginations exhibit greater stylistic variation than others, this could be taken as evidence that consciousness of the links between personal experience and social structures promotes consciousness of linguistic variation. In the absence of such evidence, however, the suggestion is entirely speculative.

5.3 Implications for social theory

A great deal of work in sociolinguistic variation could surely facilitate the refinement of social theories and the development of practice-based research questions. This study's primary relevance for social theory (aside from its implications for sociolinguistic theory above) is, as I see it, twofold.
First, it offers empirical evidence for the interplay between sociological consciousness and social behavior, indicating that the sociological imagination is more than a theoretical construct. Used as a social variable in quantitative analysis of linguistic variation, it can be argued to directly condition one type of social action and, by extension, others. Variationists have long recognized the field's potential for areas of study such as stratification, social networks, gender, and sexuality, and this study holds similar potential for social-theoretic topics involving the notion of consciousness, such as social movement theory, as noted.

Second, and more generally, the results of this study promote a theory of action which, while taking subjectivity quite seriously, does not wholly embrace a social constructionist perspective (e.g. Potter 1998). The categories of sociological consciousness were in part imposed on the speakers rather than fully emerging from their discourse, and these categories reflect Mills' (and my own) belief that personal experiences, social structures, and historical processes are real and will therefore appear in people's perceptions of the social space. Moreover, the results suggest that it is possible to access a socially-meaningful part of the subject's perspective even if a full account of his/her experiences remains impossible and perhaps undesirable.

5.4 Future work

This study would benefit from the usual expansion of resources, including more linguistic and social data, more time with which to analyze them, and particularly more speakers. Another undoubtedly helpful but elusive addition would be different methods
for evaluating sociological consciousness. I opted not to use a questionnaire in this study because even within the Millsian theoretical framework, I initially had little idea what to expect in the way of parameters. Categorizing speakers on the basis of questionnaire answers would obviously maximize consistency but would potentially miss important parameters.

Ultimately, the value of sociological consciousness for sociolinguistics can be determined only through independent studies in a variety of milieux. In principle, its use is compatible with and even follows from other variationist frameworks such as the linguistic marketplace, social networks, and the community of practice framework, which assumes fundamentally that local practices are linked to broader social structures. In fact, the notion of sociological consciousness may eventually help fill the gap between practice and structure that persists despite significant theoretical advances. Still, my claim that sociological consciousness interacts with linguistic variation has entailed a theoretical stance that is, in some ways, both a reversal of current thinking in the field and a call for greater consideration of social theory. It is my hope that future work will prove this study to be simplistic and incomplete yet a catalyst for cross-disciplinary insight.


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