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Place, Globalization, and Linguistic Variation

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Critical Reflections

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CARMEN FOUGHT

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For Ronald Macaulay

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BARBARA JOHNSTONE

Place, Globalization, and Linguistic Variation

Place, in one form or another—nation, region, county, city, or neighborhood—is one of the most frequently adduced correlates of linguistic variation.[1] In most work in dialectology and variationist sociolinguistics, place has been implicitly conceived of in objective, physical terms. Part of the standard account of the origins of regional dialects in Europe, for example, is that physical boundaries such as rivers and mountain ranges gave rise to communicative isolation of one group of speakers from another, upon which once common ways of talking diverged. Fieldworkers in American dialects tried to construct, at least informally, an atlas with representative samples by seeking out informants who lived in a variety of counties in the region they were interested in. The predominant visual images in the *Dictionary of American Regional English*, maps of the United States that are divided into states, have the effect of suggesting that state boundaries have something far more important to do with lexical variation in the United States than they actually do. (There are many cases in which the Northern word for something is different from the Southern word, but relatively few cases in which, for example, the Pennsylvania word for something is different from the New York word.) Contemporary sociolinguistic survey techniques often group people according to their physical location: people who live (or in some cases answer the phone) in one county, state, or neighborhood are compared and contrasted with people who are physically located in others. Even survey techniques that take into account more particular facts about the mechanisms of interaction that give rise to variation, such as network analyses (L. Milroy 1987), often begin by identifying residents of one neighborhood or another. In general, we tend to assume that identifying where someone is, where someone is from, and who else is from there is

unproblematic because the relevant criteria are objective and categorical. We have learned from colleagues such as Penelope Eckert (1988; 1989; 1990) and others that the social class categories that matter (e.g., "jock" vs. "burnout") may not correlate in simple ways with demographic facts, and that "being a woman" or "being black" may be (at least in part) culturally defined, too. But we do not tend to think about the ways in which "being in Pennsylvania," "being a Texan," or "being from a small town" might also be emic, culturally defined categories.

Work by geographers on the human aspects of place, as well as increased attention to the ways in which ideology and individual agency mediate between social facts and linguistic ones (Johnstone 1996; Schieffelin et al. 1998) and challenges to the "linguistics of community" from people who work in linguistic "contact zones" (Pratt 1987; Urciuoli 1995; Irvine 1996), all suggest the need to reexamine how we have been conceptualizing explanatory variables connected with place. This chapter sketches some of the new possibilities such a reexamination might yield. I begin by outlining some recent thinking about place from the view of geography and social theory. I then raise some questions that are being asked about the significance of place in the contemporary world and discuss how sociolinguistics has been and can continue to be useful in answering such questions. Finally, I sketch some of the methodological implications for sociolinguistics of supplementing a conception of place as a physical location with a phenomenological perspective. From this perspective, speakers are seen as constructing place as they experience physical and social space, and different speakers may orient to place, linguistically, in very different ways and for very different purposes.

1. Place as location, place as meaning

For most of the twentieth century, geographers envisioned place as "the relative location of objects in the world" (Entrikin 1991:10). Place in this sense, represented in the lefthand column of figure 4.1, is physical, identifiable by a set of coordinates on a map; one place is different from another place because it is in a different location and has different physical characteristics. Places, in this sense of the word, can be seen objectively, on a map or out of an airplane window, for example. Place relates to human activity by virtue of being the natural, physical setting for it; place might affect human life via its physical characteristics, for example, by enabling a certain kind of agriculture or providing other natural resources or transportation arteries.

This is the concept of place that most of us probably remember from school geography classes in which the world was presented as a set of clearly bounded places (each, often, with a capital city, which had to be memorized) with physical characteristics that were reflected in different economic systems and ways of living. For example, a physical concept of place might lead a geographer to describe the area around College Station, Texas, in terms of its climate, geology, and predominant flora, as "post-oak savanna"; East Texas might be defined as the area east of the Balcones Escarpment or the part of the state in which agriculture does not require irrigation. Geographers working in this framework might also delimit regions on the basis of historical or economic criteria. "The South" in the United States might, for example,

Place as Location	**Place as Meaning**
Place is seen as "the relative location of objects in the world" (Entrikin 1991:10).	Place is seen as "the meaningful context of human action" (Entrikin 1991:10).
Place is the natural context of human life, setting in the physical sense.	Place is the symbolic context of human life, "locale" (Giddens 1984): aspects of context that are relevant for the current interaction.
Place is associated with physical attributes.	Place is socially constructed, "imagined" in Anderson's (1983) sense. Places are associated with communities.
An example: the College Station, Texas, area as "post-oak savanna" or as a set of longitude and latitude coordinates.	An example: the College Station, Texas, area as "Aggieland."
Places can be viewed objectively (e.g., out of an airplane window), from the outside.	Places can only be "viewed" subjectively. Humans are centered in places, which can only be seen from the inside outward.
The epistemological underpinnings of this way of working are modernist, positivist.	The epistemological underpinnings of this way of working are postmodernist, relativist, and phenomenological.
Places are value-neutral. (Somebody is someplace if he or she is physically located there; from someplace if he or she was born there.)	Places, because they are meaningful, are normative. (Being someplace means acting a corresponding way, believing a set of ideas about the place; e.g., it is from this perspective that people talk about "good" or "real" Texans.)
Regions can be delimited by geographers on the basis of physical, historical, or economic criteria. The focus is on "generic" regions, as in the traditional geography on which aereal classifications are based.	The focus of analysis is on "voluntary" or "vernacular" regions.
Discourses about place are expository.	Discourses about place are jointly "formulated" (Schegloff 1972), narrative.
Doing geography is like science: the focus is on the large-scale and the general. Appropriate methods are larger scale, quantitative.	Doing geography is like reading (Rose 1980); the analytical emphasis is on what is specific, what is unique, "the small scale, the taken-for-granted and the nonverbal" (Mondale 1989:14), so appropriate methods are discourse analysis and ethnography.

FIGURE 4.1. Place as Location and Place as Meaning (Based Mainly on Entrikin 1991, Who Advocates a Stance between these two)

be defined historically, as the area of the former Confederacy, or economically, as an area that was once characterized by plantation agriculture and slave labor. Doing geography, in this framework of ideas, is like doing science. The focus is on the large-scale and the general, and appropriate research methods are of a larger scale, often quantitative. Discourses about place, when place is seen as location, are expository: because they exist independently of peoples' interpretations, places can be objectively described and explained. Places are, in other words, value-neutral; a person is in a place if he or she is physically located there, from a place if he or she was born there. The epistemological underpinnings of this way of thinking about place and the relationships of humans and places are positivistic and modernist.

Beginning in the 1970s, some geographers started to suggest another way of thinking about place that provides a better account of the roles place plays in human life. (This approach is represented on the righthand side of figure 4.1.) "Humanistic geography," as it is known, is the branch of human geography[2] that is concerned with respects in which space and place are socially constructed. In some ways, humanistic geography represents a return to the holistic conception of place that characterized nineteenth-century geography (Entrikin 1991:10–12), although current humanistic geography, like other branches of postmodern social theory, is deeply influenced by phenomenology. Humanistic geographers investigate place as "the meaningful context of human action." Seeing human experience as fundamentally "emplaced," these geographers are interested in such things as "sense of place," in the difference between being in a place and "dwelling" there, in the meaning of "home," and in the meanings and uses of ideas about region. According to Yi-Fu Tuan (1974:213), one of the founders of humanistic geography,[3] "place is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspectives of the people who have given it meaning." Humanistic geographers in the Marxist and neo-Marxist tradition ask about how discourses about spatiality are produced and circulated and whose interests such discourses serve (Soja 1989). The most radically relativistic, phenomenological version of the idea is that place can only be imagined as a social construction. Tuan and Entrikin, among others, argue for a concept of place that incorporates its material, as well as its experiential aspects.

A sense of place, for humanistic geographers, is the result of people's participation in the shaping of their world (Seamon 1979). That is, a space becomes a place through humans' interaction with it, both through physical manipulation, via such activities as agriculture, architecture, and landscaping, and symbolically, via such activities as remembering, "formulating" (Schegloff 1972), depicting, and narrating. Places are thus known both sensually and intellectually. People experience places both as repeated, immediate everyday experiences, as "distinctive odors, textural and visual qualities in the environment, seasonal changes . . . how they look as they are approached from the highway," and in more abstract, articulated ways, as "their location in the school atlas or road map . . . population or number and kind of industries" (Tuan 1975:152, 153). As Tuan points out (1975:161–164), art, education, and politics systematize and focus our sense of place by articulating inchoate experience for the eye and the mind, making the place "visible" in the same way to all members of the group. Stories told about places can have this function (Johnstone 1990; Finnegan 1998), as can such things as exhibitions in historical museums, tourist brochures, and advertisements (Guerin 1999) or public debate about community development (Modan 2002).[4]

Popular labels for places often reflect the ways in which places are constituted through shared experiences and shared orientations. The semiofficial designation of "Aggieland" for the College Station, Texas, area, for example, reflects the social aspect of place. Because places are meaningful, place is normative. Being "from" Aggieland requires people to orient in one way or another to Texas A&M University (e.g., to root for the Texas A&M teams or to make a point of not doing so)[5]; similarly, being a "real" or "good" Texan can mean acting in certain ways and believing certain things. Being born in Texas can be less diagnostic of Texanness, in this normative sense, than displaying a bumper sticker that says, "Texan by Choice." (Displaying a bumper sticker that says "Native Texan" is making a claim to authenticity in both the demographic and the social senses.) Studying the phenomenology of place is, as Rose (1980:124), points out, more like reading than like traditional scientific work: "doing human geography consists of interpreting *texts*." We return to Rose's observation about methodology later on.

Not surprisingly, the debate over place in general has been felt in the study of geographical region. Regional geography has its roots in military planning and nationalism. It once consisted of the study of what Zelinsky (1973:110) calls "traditional region." Traditional regions are relatively self-contained, endogamous, stable, and long lasting:

> The individual is born into the region and remains with it, physically and mentally, since there is little in- or out-migration by isolated persons and families; and the accidents of birth would automatically assign a person to a specific caste, class, occupation, and social role. An intimate symbiotic relationship between man and land develops over many centuries, one that creates indigenous modes of thought and action, a distinctive visible landscape, and a form of human ecology specific to the locality.

This is the idealized region on which nineteenth- and much twentieth-century dialectology was focused, the sort of region around which isoglosses could be drawn and which could be identified with a single, labeled dialect such as "North Midland." In geography, this way of imagining the prototypical region lost favor in the 1950s and 1960s because it encouraged regional exceptionalism (the idea that different regions are fundamentally different) and environmental determinism (the idea that physical characteristics of the environment are responsible for human behaviors).

Regional geography has been reconstituted beginning in the 1980s by interest in the phenomenological approach to place that we have been exploring. Regions have come to be seen as meaningful places, which individuals construct, as well as select, as reference points. Identification with a region is identification with one kind of "imagined community" (Anderson 1983). Contemporary regional geography pays attention not just to description but also to "ways of seeing." It highlights the historical contingency of traditional regional theory, which is based on an ideology about place and its relationship to humans that arose from and served nineteenth-century nationalistic politics. It pays attention to the cultural effects of (post-)modernity and

to new modes of spatial experience such as hyperspace. Rather than assuming that there are regions in the world to be discovered, regional historians and geographers now ask, "Where do regions come from, and what makes them seem so real?" (Ayers and Onuf 1996:vii). In this framework, borders and boundaries are seen as cultural constructs; regions are subjectively real but objectively hard to define (Meining 1978). The "traditional region" is replaced by the idea that regions are "voluntary," the results of peoples' choices about how to divide up the world they experience. Because studying voluntary regions means listening to how nongeographers talk about the world, socially defined regions are also "vernacular" regions. The process by which individuals ground their identities in socially constructed regions is seen as analogous to, or the same as, the process by which people construct, claim, and use ethnic identities (Reed 1982). Language is seen (though not often studied) as part of the process: languages, dialects, and ways of speaking create and reflect "at-homeness" in a region (Mugerauer 1985).

2. Local places in the postmodern world

It has been argued that economic and cultural developments have diminished the relevance of place in human lives. As Entrikin (1991:66–78) points out, a sense of loss of local community has been felt at least since the Enlightenment and is partly responsible for the nineteenth-century Romantic nostalgia for the local that gave rise to social and political movements such as (in the United States) utopian communitarianism (as represented, e.g., by Alcott), provincialism (associated with Josiah Royce), Jeffersonian republicanism, and Southern agrarianism. We might also note the direct historical connection of nineteenth-century dialectology with the Romantics' search for lost "local color." According to Bellah et al. (1985), contemporary Americans inhabit "lifestyle enclaves" rather than communities centered around the common experience of place. The instability of meaning in general and the threat to meaningful places in the modern world are often said to be the result of rapid change and mobility (Ogilvy 1977).[6] Said (1979:18), for example, speaks of the "generalized sense of homelessness" experienced by the globally mobile.

According to Anthony Giddens (1991:14–21, 146, 147), the dynamism of modern life has the effect of separating place from space, removing social relations from local contexts via "abstract systems" such as currency, therapy, and technology. Once social life becomes "disembedded" in this way, "place becomes phantasmagoric" and "much less significant than it used to be as an external referent for the lifespan of the individual." An individual's phenomenal world (the world one experiences) is no longer the physical world in which he or she moves. What replaces the local as an explanatory concept for Giddens is the "locale." A locale could be defined as the meaningful elements of the temporal and spatial context of interaction: locale is setting, but as seen from the perspective of human actors. A locale could be a physical place, but it could be a "place" constituted in other ways instead: a "cyber place" such as an online chat "room," for example, or a "place" like the stock market. "Locales," says Giddens (1984:118), "provide for a good deal of the 'fixity' underlying institutions."[7]

The electronic media are often associated with a sort of liberation from place. Meyrowitz (1985) claims, for example, that the electronic media make place obsolete since people no longer have to be in the same (physical) place to interact.[8] Some of the ways in which experiential places can be decoupled from physical places are suggested in contemporary uses of such words as *space*, *mapping*, and the *-scape* of *landscape*: *cyberspace*, *mediaspace*, *machinescape*, or *dreamscape*. Critical anthropologists have pointed out that the discourse of place encouraged by nationalism—one's place is one's nation, clearly bounded and clearly distinct from every other nation—is responsible for the mistaken idea that humans can be categorized into separate, autonomous "cultures" in separate, bounded places (Gupta and Ferguson 1992). New attention to what happens on the borders and at the boundaries and to heterogeneity and adaptiveness calls into question the idea that "cultures" in this sense ever existed (Bhabha 1994; Urciuoli 1995).

But is also claimed that local, place-based community still has a role to play, albeit a changing one. Giddens (1991:147), points out the ways in which people attempt to "re-embed the lifespan within a local milieu," say, by attempts to cultivate community pride. He is skeptical, however, that this can succeed: "Only when it is possible to gear regular practices to specifics of place can re-embedding occur in a significant way; but in conditions of high modernity this is difficult to achieve." Cultural geographers who have continued to focus on traditional cultures and traditional aspects of culture have recognized the continued persistence and importance of traditional sources of meaning such as localness (Entrikin 1991:41). That localness can still be valued can be seen in activities aimed at perpetuating or even creating it. For example, localness can become a commodity, which gives rise to competitions over the control of its meanings and uses. What it means to be "here" or "from here" can be the focus of arguments about how local economic development should proceed (Cox and Mair 1988), and advertising can make strategic use of nostalgia for neighborhood, local community, or region (Sack 1988).

Local contexts of life may still be tied to human identity in more immediate ways, too. As Stuart Hall (1991:33–36) points out, globalization is not, after all, a new phenomenon, and "the return to the local is often a response to globalization. . . . It is a respect for local roots which is brought to bear against the anonymous, impersonal world of the globalized forces which we do not understand." Face-to-face community is knowable in a way more abstract communities are not: one "knows what the voices are. One knows what the faces are" (1991:35).[9] In the same vein, anthropologist Ulf Hannerz (1996:26–27) proposes that the local may still be an important source of continuity for four reasons:

1. "Everyday life" is local. Repetitive, redundant activities, occurring in a consistent physical setting, provide the basis for the development of habitual ways of dealing with practical exigencies.
2. Local encounters tend to be face to face and long term. In this context, groups of people are likely to be able to develop more shared understandings and ways of acting because there is more constant opportunity for surveillance, for checks on deviance, and for positive

reactions to "normal" behavior. Furthermore, long-term, face-to-face encounters are often emotional ones, so they tend to seem significant.
3. People's earliest experiences usually take place in a local context, and "whatever materials are put in place early will presumably have some influence on what can be assimilated later on."
4. The local is sensually real. It is experienced bodily; it is immediate, immersive.

Thus, says Hannerz, the principal vehicles for the production and transmission of culture may still be local ones, although interactive media could quickly become more efficient in at least some of these ways, and this set of features of experience could, of course, occur over several physical localities. Hannerz points out that some people may be more global, some more local, in orientation. In some settings, for example, women are more attuned to the local than are men, and local norms, relationships, and experiences may have more bearing on their sense of place than on men's. In other settings, the situation may be reversed. It is increasingly difficult to predict exactly how the local will articulate within an individual's life.

3. Sociolinguistics, place, and the local

There are many ways in which work in dialectology and variationist sociolinguistics, both recent and not so recent, interacts with these ideas about place, region, and the role of the local in the context of globalization. Figure 4.2 sketches some of them.

Work on "mixed" varieties (Heller 1995) and on code switching calls into question "the discreteness of linguistic systems" (Gardner-Chloros 1995) and provides sociolinguistic corroboration for the idea that human life does not take place (and never has) in separate, autonomous "cultures" in discrete, clearly bounded places. Like anthropologists (Urciuoli 1995), sociolinguists have been paying increasing note to what happens on the borderlines and focusing on heterogeneity and adaptiveness in addition to commonality and predictability. For example, James Milroy (1992:chap. 6) shows that people on the edges of social networks—people with relatively few and weak social ties—are responsible for key processes in language change, such as the introduction of new forms into the network. In general, if we focus, as we increasingly are, on what is creative about discourse rather than on what is predictable, we find that in some ways the most "normal" speakers (those whose behavior is statistically most like others') may not be the most prototypical speakers or theoretically the most interesting (Johnstone 1996).

The general point about region that is made in humanistic geography is that regions are meaningful, constructed, as well as selected, as reference points by individuals. The process by which individuals ground their identities in socially constructed regions is analogous to, or the same as, the process by which people construct, claim, and use ethnicity and other aspects of their identities (Reed 1982). Dennis Preston's (1989, 1997) work on "folk dialectology" uses mapping and mimicking tasks to explore how different people construct different meaningful regions and relate to them differently. Work in Texas (Bean 1993; Johnstone 1995, 1998, 1999; Johnstone and

Claims and Suggestions Made in Contemporary Studies of Place, Region	Research in Dialectology and Sociolinguistics Bearing on Those Claims
Americans (and presumably others) now inhabit "lifestyle enclaves" rather than communities centered around common experience of place. Physical place is "much less significant than it used to be as an external referent for the lifespan of the individual" (Giddens 1991:147).	New uses of dialect atlas data (e.g., Johnson 1996) show that cultural and psychological factors, not just region of origin or habitation, affect how regional variants pattern Ethnolinguistic studies of variation show how other aspects of identity interact with place (Johnstone and Bean 1997).
The idea that humans can be categorized into separate, autonomous "cultures" in separate, bounded places is mistaken.	Work on "mixed" varieties (e.g., Heller 1995) and on code switching calls into question "the discreteness of linguistic systems" (Gardner-Chloros 1995).
New attention needs to be paid to what happens on the borders and the boundaries, to heterogeneity and adaptiveness.	Marginal people with weak social ties are responsible for key processes in language change (Milroy 1992:Chap. 6); the most central, most group-bounded people may not be the most prototypical speakers (Johnstone 1996).
But people attempt to "re-embed the lifespan within a local milieu" (Giddens 1991:147), e.g., through attempts to cultivate community pride. Languages, dialects, and "ways of speaking" create and reflect "at-homeness" in a region (Mugerauer 1985).	Bailey (Bailey et al. 1993), in Texas and Oklahoma, and Montgomery (1993), for Southern speech, have found that certain features can become symbols of local identity and then be preserved and even spread in the face of in-migration from elsewhere.
Localness can become a commodity, which gives rise to competitions over the control of what localness means or over its uses.	Bell (1999) describes the use of a Maori song in advertisements for the New Zealand airline. Bean (1993) shows how "professional Texan" Molly Ivins positions herself via linguistic choices as a Westerner but rejects Southern ways of acting and talking. See also Macaulay (1997) and Schilling-Estes (1998).
The local may still be an important source of continuity (Hannerz 1996:26–27) because "everyday life" is local; local encounters tend to be face to face and long term: earliest experiences usually take place in a local context; the local is sensually real.	Ash (1988), Macaulay (1991), Labov (1994:98-112), and others show that aspects of language that are acquired early, such as phonology, are relatively (though not entirely) resistant to change. Features that are local in this sense may actually be less available as symbolic markers of localness.
In a given situation or setting, some people may be more global in orientation, some more local.	Some of the well-known findings about variation and gender, such as Trudgill's (1972) work on "cover prestige," support this claim.
Regions are meaningful places that are constructed, as well as selected, as reference points by individuals. The process by which individuals ground their identities in socially constructed regions is analogous to, or the same as, the process by which people construct, claim and use ethnic identities (Reed 1982).	Preston's (1989, 1997) work on "folk dialectology" shows that different people construct different meaningful regions and relate to them differently. Johnstone and Bean's work in Texas (Johnstone 1995; Johnstone and Bean 1997; Johnstone 1999) shows how different women create and orient to different senses of what it means to be a Texan, a woman, an African American, a professional, and so on.
The best way to study region and place is through text analysis (Rose 1980).	Uses of discourse analysis and ethnography in dialectology are increasing.

FIGURE 4.2. Sociolinguistics, Globalization, and the Local

Bean 1997) shows how different women create and orient to different senses of what it means to be a Texan, as well as different senses of what it means to be a woman, an African American, a professional, and so on.

Giddens (1991:147) and others claim, however, that people increasingly inhabit "lifestyle enclaves" rather than communities centered around a common experience of place. Physical place is claimed to be less significant as a source of individuals' identities than it used to be. This theoretical claim is borne out, for example, in new uses of dialect atlas data like those of Ellen Johnson (1996), which shows that cultural and psychological factors are replacing the region of origin or habitation as the best ways of accounting for the patterning of certain lexical variants in the American South. In my ethnolinguistic work with Judith Bean about what "Texas speech" is and does for people, we explored the idea that being from Texas, or from the South, affects how people sound only indirectly, via particular choices (sometimes quite consciously strategic, sometimes not) about what local or regional-sounding speech forms can mean and accomplish.

Some well-known findings about patterns of variation bear directly on Stuart Hall's (1991) claim that in a given situation or setting, some people may be more global in orientation, some more local. For example, Trudgill's (1972) finding that Norwich men think of themselves as speaking in a less standard way than they do and that Norwich women think of themselves as speaking in a more standard way than they do could be interpreted as reflecting more local orientation on the men's part and more global orientation on the women's.[10] Penelope Eckert's work (this volume) shows that phonological features of Detroit high school students' speech reflect the ways in which some groups orient to local extracurricular life and others to the more standardized, less locally marked institutional life of school and other school-sanctioned activities. Eckert's study echoes in certain ways Labov's (1963) findings in Martha's Vineyard, where people with different orientations to the island centralized the onset of /aw/ at different rates.

In certain ways, however, says Giddens (1991:147), people are attempting to "re-embed the lifespan within a local milieu." People's sense of "at-homeness" in an area, according to regional geographer Robert Mugerauer (1985), results in part from the existence of common languages, dialects, and ways of speaking, which create and reflect a common experience of place. Recent sociolinguistic work suggests several ways in which speech forms can come to index "here," "being from here," or "belonging here," and several ways in which such indexes of localness can function. Guy Bailey (1991; Bailey et al. 1993), in Texas and Oklahoma, and Michael Montgomery (1993), for Southern speech, have shown that certain features can become symbols of local identity and then can be preserved and even spread in the face of in-migration from elsewhere. Localness and local-sounding speech can become a commodity, and this, as we have seen, can create competition over the control of what localness means or over its uses. Among the many recent sociolinguistic studies of this process are studies of "performed" or otherwise highly strategic and stylized uses of local-sounding speech. For example, Natalie Schilling-Estes (1998) examines performances of the Okracoke island "brogue" in the context of the switch from a fishing to a tourist economy, and Ronald K. S. Macaulay (1997) looks at uses of Glasgow dialect in humor and in expressions of political resistance by poet Tom

Leonard. Alan Bell (1999) describes the use of a Maori song in TV advertisements for Air New Zealand. Judith Bean (1993) shows how "professional Texan" Molly Ivins positions herself in her writing through linguistic choices as a Westerner but rejects Southern ways of acting and talking; other Texas women, on the other hand, make various strategic uses of stylized Southern forms (Johnstone 1999). Shared images of and orientations to place are sometimes framed in terms of shared images of and orientations to local dialect (Beal 1999; Johnstone and Baumgardt 2003).

But there are more immediate ways in which the local can still be connected to people's identity. As we saw, the local may still be an important source of continuity (Hannerz 1996:26–27) because "everyday life" is local; because local encounters tend to be face to face and long term, because one's earliest experiences usually take place in a local context; and because the local is sensually real. Sociolinguistic work bearing on this claim includes that of Ash (1988), Macaulay (1991), Labov (1994:98–112), and others, who show that aspects of language that are acquired early, such as phonology, are relatively (though not entirely) resistant to change. Features that are local in this sense may actually be less available as symbolic markers of localness in the sense mentioned above. This is a particularly important point, and one that gets blurred in some studies of "crossing" (Rampton 1995; 1999) and "passing" (Livia and Hall 1997). People may be freer to choose how to sound than sociolinguistic theory once allowed us to see, but their freedom is by no means complete (Hill 1999).

4. Local meanings of local talk: Methodological implications

As mentioned above, humanistic geographers point to the need for new methods for studying place in a new paradigm. Those who are interested in what physical environment and political boundaries mean to people need ways of finding out about particular people and particular meanings, not just about physical space and large-scale regional politics. If sociolinguists wish to refine our explanatory apparatus by trying to understand how variables associated with place are relevant, and in what ways, to the speakers we study, we also have to supplement large-scale correlational studies of linguistic facts and externally defined "social facts,"[11] such as politically delimited region, city of birth, or neighborhood of residence, with studies of "local knowledge" (Geertz 1983). As Rose (1980) points out, doing humanistic geography is like reading. Two ways of working that can get at local meanings through reading (or, less metaphorically, interpretation) are ethnography and discourse analysis.

The suggestion that ethnography and discourse analysis could be useful tools in variationist sociolinguistics is hardly new. Variationist sociolinguists have drawn on techniques from ethnography and discourse analysis for some time, in various ways. Participant observation is the hallmark field method of ethnography, and good sociolinguistic fieldwork always requires good participant observers, people with an understanding of what is going on in the situations in which they conduct interviews, what matters to the people they are talking to.[12] Clarence Robins, who did fieldwork for Labov (1966) in Harlem, was apparently a participant observer of this sort. Data collected by good participant observers for the initial purposes of

variationist analyses can be the basis for micro-sociolinguistic studies that are explicitly interpretive. Deborah Schiffrin's (1987) conversations with "Henry," "Irene," and "Zelda," carried out in the context of a large-scale variationist project, could be used in her microanalysis of what utterances meant to the speakers involved because of her emic, insider's understanding of the speakers and their ways of speaking. Participant observation is often not explicitly part of the methodology in variationist work, but ethnography often enters in implicitly when variationists try to find ways of explaining their findings. For example, it was surely a hunch based on years of teaching and talking with Texans that led Guy Bailey (1991) to test the correlation of the [a] variant of /ay/ with poll respondents' answers to a question about whether they thought Texas was a good place to live.

But ethnography can enter into variationist work in a more fundamental way. We sometimes use the term *ethnography* as if it meant roughly the same as "participant observation." But ethnography is not simply a field technique (nor is participant observation the only field technique ethnographers employ). Rather, ethnography is a perspective on the entire process of studying human behavior. It presupposes the theory that the best explanations of human behavior are particular and culturally relative. In looking systematically for the local knowledge that motivates and explains the behavior of a particular group, ethnographers are thus doing a different kind of work than are social scientists who look for general or even universal explanations of human behavior. Variationists who are interested in the local meanings of variation have to be willing to *start* with ethnography, using ethnographic research methods to decide what the possible explanatory variables might be in the first place, rather than starting with predefined (and presumably universally relevant) variables and bringing in ethnography only to explain surprising findings or statistical outliers. This requires not just adding participant observation to our repertoire of field techniques but also rethinking—in some ways, fundamentally—how we do our work.

For example, a study of regional dialect that is open to the possibility that vernacular conceptions of place and localness may help explain patterns of variation has to be attuned from the start to how the region in question is locally understood and talked about. Thus, one of the first things we have had to consider in planning a study of the English of southwestern Pennsylvania (Johnstone and Kiesling 2001) was how the area and its linguistic characteristics are locally imagined. It turns out that, for various topographic, historical, and economic reasons, many people in the (externally defined) southwestern Pennsylvania region identify much more strongly with the city of Pittsburgh than with any larger U.S. region or with the state of Pennsylvania. The local dialect is, accordingly, also identified with the city rather than with the region: it is invariably called "Pittsburghese." Pittsburghese is, in fact, very visible as a symbol of localness, commodified in folk dictionaries and on souvenir T-shirts and refrigerator magnets and alluded to and performed in talk about what authentic localness means (Johnstone 2000; Johnstone and Baumgardt 2003).

This vernacular understanding of local dialect has potential implications for how particular linguistic forms are sociolinguistically deployed. For example, preliminary work about who uses a monophthongal variant of /aw/ and why in Pittsburgh suggests that the form is not disappearing, at least among working-class men (Johnstone et al. 2002). One possible reason is that the form has become a marker of local identity; this is suggested by the fact that it is alluded to and played on far more frequently than any other local feature in various kinds of humorous discourse about localness. To explore this possibility, we are going to need to find out how the people who may be using local-sounding forms like this as a way of orienting to Pittsburgh themselves delimit "Pittsburgh" and who counts, in what ways, as a "Pittsburgher." We will need, in other words, to ask questions that would not arise if we were to define Pittsburgh in terms of political or geographical boundaries or to operationalize "Pittsburgher" as someone born in Pittsburgh. If we do not ask these ethnographic questions, we will have delimited our research territory and our research population in such a way that our results may not be valid.

Discourse analysis has also entered into variationist sociolinguistics in several ways.[13] Dines (1980), Ferrara (1997), and others have carried out variationist studies of discourse-level phenomena such as discourse markers. Others have studied extended transcripts of talk (rather than data sets of lexical or phonological tokens extracted from notes, tapes, or transcripts) to find patterns of variation, which are then correlated with predefined social "facts." A great deal of the early work on language and gender, in which gender was treated as more or less equivalent to biological sex, and biological sex was defined dichotomously, falls, for example, in this category. Furthermore, discourse analysis, at least of an informal sort, is sometimes used to gather evidence about possible explanations for patterns of variation.

It is much less common, however, for variationists to see discourse analysis as a way to find out how variation comes to happen in any particular case and to see analyses of particular cases as crucial. We are used to thinking of discourse as evidence about the entities we are really interested in—linguistic varieties or patterns of variation. We also, I suggest, need to be able to think of discourse as a process, and this process as an object of sociolinguistic inquiry. From this perspective, for example, newspaper articles that express people's attitudes about language are not just evidence of linguistic ideologies but also part of the process by which ideology is created and disseminated (Johnstone and Danielson 2001). It is in part this process that results in individuals' sounding particular ways in particular situations and which makes "proper English," "the way people talk around here," or "being from Texas" mean what it does to people. Likewise, discourse is not just evidence of patterns of variation that exist in "a language" or "a dialect." Rather, discourse is the process by which languages and dialects become (sometimes) the focused (LePage and Tabouret-Keller 1985), apparently "shared" systems that sociolinguists talk about.

To give a speculative example, if it should turn out that monophthongal /aw/ is not decreasing in use in Pittsburgh, as might be expected on some grounds, part of the explanation for this may be similar to the explanations Bailey (1991) and Montgomery (1993) propose for the persistence of Southern features that might be expected to recede, namely, that its use orients people to the local in the face of increased contact with outsiders and pressure to adapt to more abstract national norms. If this is the case, what is the mechanism by which this occurs? What makes "dahntahn" sound local? The answer is more complex than that it is local in the sense that you hear it in Pittsburgh. Not every regional feature that can be heard in Pittsburgh comes to have local meaning in the same way. Similarly, some features that are in fact quite

widespread in the United States *do* sound local in Pittsburgh: some Pittsburghers insist that Pittsburghers are the only people who use [yɪnz] as a second-person plural pronoun,[14] for example, and a "yinzer" is a person with a strong local identity and accent. It is probably unlikely that vocalized /l/ would function to index the local the way monophthongal /aw/ might, even though it is also characteristic of Pittsburgh (McElhinny 1999), because it is much less often associated with "Pittsburghese": Pittsburgh speech as it is represented and imagined locally. "Pittsburghese" is a set of linguistic features that overlaps with but is not the same as the set a sociolinguist might choose on the basis of observation. It is also a set of ideas about what those features mean, a local folk discourse about variation, and to understand our hypothetical findings we would have to analyze this discourse, listening to and looking at local representations of local speech as they are created and drawn upon in various genres of metalinguistic talk.

To summarize, sociolinguists may have not always been sufficiently attuned to the social theory implicit in our uses of terms such as *region*, *rurality*, *local*, and *place*, but this is changing. We are beginning to call into question how we have been imagining the meanings of these and others of the concepts we use in generating hypotheses and explaining our findings. As we do this, it is useful to look at how neighboring fields have been talking about these concepts. It is also important to give some fresh thought to research methodology. I have tried to sketch how these new ways of working might suggest more nuanced, ecologically valid answers to the questions we ask about variation and change.

Notes

This chapter would not have been possible without Carmen Fought and her colleagues, who organized the workshop at which it was first presented, and Ronald Macaulay, whose (partial) retirement provided the occasion for the workshop. I am especially grateful to Carmen for seeing the book through to publication. I have learned a lot from all of the other workshop participants, both at the workshop and elsewhere. I would like to thank Walt Wolfram and Susan Berk-Seligson for useful comments on a draft of this chapter.

1. In casual formulations, place is sometimes talked about as if it were in fact the *cause* of linguistic variation, as when the claim is made that one reason for which different people talk differently is because they are from different regions, cities, or neighborhoods.

2. Human geography has to do with the connections between space and human activity in general and has involved work in various theoretical and methodological frameworks (see Johnston et al. 1986).

3. See also Tuan (1975). Other influential humanistic geographers include Entrikin (1976, 1991), Relph (1976, 1981, 1985), and Buttimer (1979, 1993).

4. A particularly clear example has to do with the commercial uses of the shape of Texas (Francaviglia 1995). The outline of the state is a recurrent feature of advertisements directed at Texans, helping to shape (quite literally) their sense of the state as a place separate and different from others.

5. Travelers arriving in College Station by air were for a time greeted by a set of instructions about the proper way to feel about the place, in the form of a sign on the airport door: "Welcome to Aggieland, the Greatest Place on Earth."

6. Entrikin (1991:58) points out that the rhetoric of nostalgia for place is also associated with conservationists and preservationists. For them, places will become meaningless if things are not kept as they are or were. Another side of the argument would, of course, be that the meanings of places change.

7. Among the geographers particularly associated with articulating Giddens's structuration theory with geography are Pred (1984; 1989; 1990) and Thrift (1991).

8. On new senses of space and place encouraged by hypertext, see Bolter (1991) and Johnson-Eilola (1997).

9. See also Mondale (1989:13-14) on the parallel development of regional studies in the American Studies context: "As part of the post-modern complex of thought now emerging, there is taking place a reassertion of the centrality of habitat to the definition of self and culture, on terms quite distinct from the conventional emphasis upon the traditions of rural life. This drift of thought shares with Michel Foucault the conviction that [social] thought has been unduly abstract, that it has failed to acknowledge the crucial role of 'low-ranking, particular, regional knowledge.'" This article updates the bibliography on American regional studies in Steiner and Mondale (1989).

10. Trudgill does not interpret "covert prestige" in this way in his article, of course.

11. For a critique of the idea of "social facts," see Johnstone (1997).

12. Labov (1984: 46, 50) describes the role of participant observation in some of the earliest large-scale studies of sociolinguistic variation and change.

13. Part of the reason for this is that discourse analysis is defined and delimited differently by different people who write about it. For the authors of some overviews, such as Brown and Yule (1983) and van Dijk (1997), discourse analysis is a set of research topics. For others, such as Schiffrin (1994), it is a research method. I take the latter view (Johnstone 2002).

14. A variant of "you'uns," this form is found throughout the Scotch-Irish settlement area of the United States. But its morphological representation appears to have changed in Pittsburgh so that it is understood as monomorphemic. This in turn seems to have encouraged a shift in pronunciation from [yʌnz] toward [yɪnz] and a shift in spelling from forms like "youns" toward forms like "yinz."

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