

While the study began with a focus on networks, it became clear during this fieldwork that the usefulness of social networks as conduits for sound change decreases with social distance. While social networks clearly structure exposure to change between cities, this effect is minimized in a small and intensely co-present population like a high school. How much contact is needed to move a sound change or even a chain shift forward? Once the movement is already in the speakers' dialect, they do not need to interact intensively with more advanced speakers in order to move it further. The speaker is already implementing the internal constraints on the change, so what is new is a bit of ramping up or down. What is needed is enough exposure to the larger community to know the social patterning of the implementation. The friendship network I constructed for Belten High represented not so much the path of spread of change as the social divisions and contacts that motivated individuals to intensify or mitigate a process that they were already engaged in.

A sound change is not usually new when its use arrives in a new place. It comes with history and it's not so much exposure to the change that spreads as the motivation to adopt it. One might say that this motivation is the social meaning of the variable. This perspective showed up in the first major paper I wrote on this project. The paper focused on the backing of (uh), and if I avoided mention of social meaning in the NSF proposal, it leaked into this paper in the guise of "symbolic value." The paper maintained the view of the social network as a conduit for change, as the In-betweens (those who were neither Jocks nor Burnouts) mediated meaning between Jocks and Burnouts. But in fact, while some In-betweens fell between the Jocks and Burnouts in the social network, others fell at the opposite extreme from the Burnouts. Their In-between-ness was not geographic but ideological. (Damn – another paper beginning with a conjunction.)

SOUND CHANGE AND ADOLESCENT SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Introduction

Although there is ample reason to believe that major advances in regular sound change take place during preadolescence and adolescence, much of the speculation about the social motivations of sound change has focused largely on adult social structure. The following discussion is based on the assumption that the acquisition of local phonological variables in adolescence is intimately involved with the development of social identity and is structured by the development of a social structure within the age cohort. The discussion, based on several years of participant observation and sociolinguistic analysis among Detroit suburban adolescents, will put forth arguments about the social dynamics of two major patterns of society-wide sociolinguistic variation: the regular spread of phonological change (1) outward from cities and (2) upward through the socioeconomic hierarchy. Focusing on adolescent social categories and networks, I will demonstrate that class-related differences in orientation to society and geography among adolescents lead to differences in influence which in turn determine the flow of phonological change between and within communities.

Background

The study of phonological variation in Western industrial societies over the past twenty years has uncovered a set of regular correlations that indicate some constant patterns of the spread of phonological change through and between communities. The interpretation of these patterns has led sociolinguists to move from general demographic correlations based on survey techniques to participant observation in smaller groups and networks in an effort to uncover the social motivations for the kinds of linguistic emulation that lead to the spread of change through populations.

Regularly observed demographic patterns of phonological variation indicate that, at the bottom line, phonological change spreads between and through communities through networks of communication. Although phonological changes can begin anywhere, those changes that catch on and spread widely tend to originate in urban areas. The distribution of isoglosses in areas with long-term stable populations shows that change fans out from economic and political centers, creating linguistic regions around major urban centers. Recent work in linguistic geography shows that sound change, like other kinds

of innovation, follows networks of communication and influence, spreading gradually to the outlying areas of urban centers and also spreading directly from larger to smaller urban centers (Callary 1975; Chambers & Trudgill 1980; Trudgill 1974a). Community studies have found, furthermore, a regular socioeconomic stratification of phonological variables within communities, in which the frequency of innovative forms decreases as one moves upward from the working class through the socioeconomic hierarchy, suggesting that it is the working class that brings changes into communities and that these changes then spread from the working class through local class-related networks (see Labov 1966 and Trudgill 1974b for classic studies of the social stratification of urban English). The progress of phonological change is further reflected in age differences within communities, with a general increase of innovative forms as one moves downward through the age continuum.

There are, however, discontinuities in both the socioeconomic and the age continua. Lower-middle-class speakers show a far greater stylistic range than those above or below them on the socioeconomic hierarchy, and in doing so they regularly show more conservative speech in formal style than upper-middle-class speakers and sometimes show more innovative speech in casual style than working-class speakers (Labov 1972a). This behavior reflects the precarious position of the lower middle class in the economy: a position that constrains them to maintain acceptability in the working class at the same time that they try to gain acceptance in the middle class. Of particular interest to the current discussion is a possible age discontinuity that is still difficult to document, that is, a discontinuity between preadolescents and adolescents. Since most age-graded data appear in community studies whose focus is on broad demographic categories, speakers under the age of twenty are generally grouped together, making it difficult to examine differences among finer groups of pre-adults. The grouped data show a gradual continuum through all age groups, with pre-adults showing the same social stratification as the adult population. Since pre-adults are classified according to their parents' socioeconomic status, these data suggest that patterns of variation are ultimately determined by childhood environment. Since it is well established that older children acquire the dialect of their peers rather than their parents, one might assume that it is the socioeconomic character of neighborhood-based childhood peer groups that accounts for pre-adults' linguistic patterns. However, if sound change spreads as a function of active social processes, one would assume that individual pre-adults would develop patterns of variation based on their choice of peer groups rather than on neighborhood groups. As they develop socially, adolescents may move out of their neighborhood networks into networks that may have a quite different socioeconomic character. Thus, one would expect that where individuals' emerging social identities conflict with those of their parents' or neighborhood peers' socioeconomic identities, their patterns of variation will adjust

Table 4.1 *Social stratification of variables from Wolfram (1969)*

	10–12 years	14–17 years	Adults
Word-final t,d			
Bimorphemic clusters	+	–	–
Monomorphemic clusters	+	–	+
Morphemic-medial and final θ	+	+	+
Syllable-final d			
[t]	–	–	–
∅	–	–	–
Postvocalic r	+	–	+
Suffixal -z			
3rd singular	+	–	+
Possessive	+	–	–
Plural	–	–	+
Multiple negative	+	–	+
Copula deletion	+	+	+
Total +s	8	2	7

+ perfect stratification

– not perfect stratification

accordingly. Heightened social mobility accompanies the passage from pre-adolescence to adolescence, particularly with entrance into secondary school, where a variety of factors provide greater social choice and motivation to make that choice. It follows that while children's and preadolescents' social identity and linguistic patterns are largely determined by family and residence, adolescents' identity and linguistic patterns may be somewhat independent of these. Data from the few studies that separate these two age groups suggest that this may well be the case. Romaine (1984b) summarizes the evidence of social stratification among preadolescents, arguing that awareness of the social value of linguistic variables does indeed begin at a fairly early age. The two socioeconomic stratification studies that systematically separate preadolescents from adolescents show different patterns. Macaulay's (1977) data show that both age groups exhibit fairly regular socioeconomic stratification and a fairly regular age stratification within the full community age continuum. Wolfram's (1969) study of black speech in Detroit, however, shows a cumulative difference between the patterns of variation of adolescents (10–12 years) and adolescents (14–17 years). Wolfram presents eleven variables according to age group and socioeconomic class. Table 4.1 shows, for each age group, which of these variables show perfect social stratification. As the table shows, the adolescent age group (14–17 years) shows regular stratification for far fewer variables than the older and younger age groups.

The difference between Macaulay's and Wolfram's data falls in with the frequent observation that there is less socioeconomic mobility and greater class loyalty in British than American society (see, for example, Trudgill 1972). Both of these factors would presumably lead to greater determination of peer group membership by parents' class in Britain than in the United States, at all age levels. It is possible, therefore, that the stratificational similarity between pre-adolescents and adults in Wolfram's sample results from the close fit between individual identity and class assignment in these two age groups, while the lack of stratification in the adolescent sample reflects the relatively smaller relevance of parents' socioeconomic class to adolescent social identity. This interpretation will be strengthened by the following discussion, which will demonstrate that where individual adolescent identity conflicts with parents' socioeconomic class, speech patterns will conform not to parents' class, but to the individual's independent social identity.

Adolescent Social Structure

If any one thing makes the adolescent age group stand out in U.S. society, it is the intensity of its social life. This intensity has been attributed to anxieties and conflicts associated with sexual, cognitive and social development, and indeed is, if anything, over-explained. The overriding theme of all discussions of adolescent intensity is that of separation from the nuclear family and the development of individual identity. As they enter secondary school, American youth recognize that they are making a formal transition into a life stage in which they are expected to accomplish a separation from the family and parental authority. For most, this separation is achieved communally with the age cohort as it develops a social structure that provides the means for the development of an identity independent of the family structure.

As adolescents move away from the family, they seek to replace an ascriptive identity based on place in the family with one based on their characteristics as individuals in relation to a broader society – on what Eisenstadt (1956) calls “universalistic criteria.” In order to accomplish this, they need to enter a society that is sufficiently structured to compensate for the loss of the security of family structure and based on sufficiently broad social values to provide a meaningful basis for identity. Insofar as American adolescents are isolated during this period, the society in terms of which they must develop this identity is defined almost entirely in terms of their age group, hence the social forms that give rise to such constructs as “adolescent society” or “adolescent culture.” Peer interactions are particularly consuming for the adolescent because these relationships represent the main alternative to the family, and the anxiety over separation from the security of the family contributes to the emotional investment in the evolving substitute. The resulting highly normative nature of most

adolescent peer groups accounts for what is commonly (and disparagingly) referred to as adolescent conformity or “peer pressure” – a careful monitoring of all aspects of social behavior and an intense involvement in such systems of identity symbols as adornment and musical taste. The participation of language in the adolescent system of social symbols is popularly recognized in such consciously manipulated features as those associated with “Valley Talk” and in the general phenomenon of teenage slang, both of which arise within specific segments of the teenage population and have social group significance within the age group. It is reasonable to assume that the rapid development of social structure in preadolescence and adolescence is intimately associated with the development of patterns of linguistic variation, and that the social significance of variants for adolescents would be associated with the system of social differentiation arising within the cohort.

The following discussion focuses on the development of a basic social division within the adolescent cohort, which begins around the time of entrance into secondary school. The discussion is based on three years of participant observation in several high schools in the Detroit suburban area, in particular on two years in one school, in which one graduating class of 600 students was followed through their junior and senior years.¹ The schools, typical of Detroit suburban schools, have virtually entirely white student bodies, among whom the major social differentiation is based on socioeconomic class. While the picture developed here is complicated in ethnically diverse schools, the mechanisms of the fundamental division are common to schools across the country and interact variously with ethnic divisions as a function of the relation between ethnicity and class in any given community.

Secondary schools provide the major locus of contact among the various segments of a local adolescent population, and since the school represents an extension of parental authority, orientation to the school becomes the basis of social issues within the cohort as the cohort reinterprets familiar childhood issues within a broader context. In public secondary schools throughout the United States, the fundamental issue of acceptance or rejection of adult authority is played out in the opposition between two social categories: those who center their lives around the school and its activities on the one hand, and those who reject the hegemony of the school on the other. These categories, building on differential expectations, needs, and interests that are fed by class differences, represent a fundamental split over orientation to adulthood and over the basis of negotiation of a relationship with the adult world.

In the schools under study, as in schools across the country, working-class and middle-class students overwhelmingly separate into vocational and

¹ This research was sponsored by the Spencer Foundation, the Rackham School of Graduate Studies at the University of Michigan, and the National Science Foundation (BNS 8023291).

college-preparatory curricula, with middle-class students showing a greater rate of completion and academic success.² Furthermore, while middle-class students dominate extracurricular activities, working-class students pursue social activities independently of the school.³ The present discussion will take as given the broad range of dynamics between students and adults that contribute to this differentiation and will focus on dynamics within the student cohort that organize these differences into a peer-based social structure that will eventually emerge as an adult class system.

The age cohort, upon entrance into junior high, undergoes an abrupt polarization into two opposed social categories that grow out of elementary school networks which, in turn, are loosely related to neighborhood networks. The “Jock” category, comprised primarily of middle-class students who have enjoyed prominence and faculty favor in elementary school, enter junior high with the intention of maintaining this favor in preparation for college and of centering their social lives around the activities of the school. The “Burnout” category, on the other hand, intending to leave secondary school for the blue-collar workforce, focuses on the enhancement of social networks and pursuits independent of the school. Students apply these names to members of both sexes and to themselves as well as to others. These particular names arose in many schools around the country during the 1970s, when drugs came to be associated with adolescent rebellion just as sports have long been associated with the clean-cut life style of the school-oriented adolescent. In other times and other places these categories may have different styles and different names – for example, “Collegiates,” “Soc’s” (“Socialites”), “Preppies,” for the Jocks, “Hoods,” “Greasers,” “Freaks” for the Burnouts – as a reflection of differences in region and era.⁴

Although Jocks and Burnouts take their names from athletics and drugs respectively, these are neither necessary nor sufficient criteria for category membership. While in general usage a Jock may be simply a person who engages regularly in some sport, it is most frequently used for someone whose life style embraces a broader ideal associated with sports in American culture. The high school Jock embodies an attitude: an acceptance of the school and its institutions as an all-encompassing social context and an unflagging enthusiasm and energy for working within those institutions. An individual who never plays sports but who participates in school activities may be

² The literature on this subject is vast. See, for instance, Cicourel and Kitsuse (1963), Coleman (1966).

³ This observation dates back to the earliest studies of adolescent society: Hollingshead (1949), Coleman (1961).

⁴ Whatever other categories may come and go (“Beatniks,” “Punks”), they are structurally subordinate to the hegemonic opposition between Jocks and Burnouts. See Eckert (1989a) for a discussion of this structural differentiation.

unquestioningly referred to by all in the school as a Jock. And just as there are Jocks who are not athletes, there are Burnouts who do not do drugs. Drugs are this generation's most frightening form of rebellion, and as such they are taken as a symbol by and for the school's alienated category. The complexity of the connotations of the category names is reflected in their use. Although the terms *Jock* and *Burnout* are used in certain unambiguous contexts to refer to an athlete or a *druggie*, such specific reference is frequently disambiguated through compounding: *Jock-Jock*, *Sports-Jock*, and *Burned-out Burnout*. The names and the stereotypes of the Jock and Burnout categories belie a broader distinction and a profound cultural split, which reflects in turn the split between the adult middle and working classes.

Representing the extremes of school orientation, Jocks and Burnouts form separate cultures, which lead to different exposures, attitudes, and reactions to the linguistic changes that are in progress at any given time. A good deal of the facts of the spread of sound change can be better understood in the context of differences in the structure and content of Jock and Burnout networks. Basic to the spread of linguistic change, as to adolescent socialization, is the drive of the average adolescent for independence from parents and for identification within a peer-defined world. The ways in which Jocks and Burnouts seek independence from adults lead to very different kinds of social norms and networks and to different kinds of linguistic influence.

Industrial societies remove adolescents from a heterogeneous society and isolate them into age-segregated institutions that by and large focus on the training of the future middle class and marginalize those headed for the blue-collar workforce.⁵ This marginalization is effected not only through the devaluation of vocational education in the schools but also through the schools' investment in a corporate life style and stigmatization of alternative styles. The opposition between Jocks and Burnouts is primarily the result of predictably different reactions to this context on the part of students from different backgrounds and with different plans for adulthood. And while the cohort perceives the opposition between the Jock and Burnout categories in terms of differences in interests, attitude toward authority and schoolwork, and a variety of symbolic behavior such as dress, demeanor, and substance use, there are deeper differences in social network structure and norms that reflect the spheres in which the two categories function. As the following discussion will show, the Jocks' assimilation to the corporate norms of the school involves regular negotiation with adults and the development of highly localized networks, within which relationships are largely hierarchical, instrumental, and competitive. On the other hand, the Burnouts' pursuit of personal networks

⁵ See Stinchcombe (1964) for a discussion of this marginalization.

independent of the school community, and of direct experience with the metropolitan environment, involves oppositional relations with parental-aged adults, close, egalitarian, and cooperative peer networks, and loose extra-local ties. These differences, along with the major differences in contact and influence that they bring, create significantly different orientations to local dialects and to sound changes in progress.

The Jocks and the Corporate Structure of the School

By providing a comprehensive social sphere away from home, the high school offers the opportunity to play adult-like roles away from parental, if not adult, supervision. In return, the student must endorse the corporate norms of the school and the overriding authority of the adults who run it. As a substitute for participation in the larger community, the school offers mobility within an elaborated corporate structure, which is clearly intended as preparation for later participation in an analogous adult structure. The school thus strikes a limited bargain with its student population that mitigates, for some, the loss of freedom that attendance imposes. By and large, this bargain is accepted willingly by those students, particularly the college-bound, whose plans for adulthood require the continued sponsorship of adults and adult institutions, and for whom the kinds of corporate roles offered within the school provide preparation for those they anticipate playing as adults. On the other hand, those who plan to leave high school directly for the blue-collar workplace can see little benefit in participation in this system. While the school has a direct role in procuring college entrance for its academic students, it does not play an analogous role for its vocational students in the blue-collar job market. And while the extracurricular institutions of the school provide training in corporate skills that its future middle class will find valuable, these skills are maladaptive in the blue-collar workplace. The opposition between Jocks and Burnouts therefore is not simply – as many of them believe – a matter of docility versus rebelliousness, but of deep and adaptive differences in norms. The high school extracurricular sphere has the essential features of the adult corporate organization:⁶ strict delimitation from other communities, a hierarchical internal structure, action-set determination of personal relationships, and role-determined identification of individuals. The mechanisms of the Jock–Burnout split are directly related to proposed reactions to this structure, and these reactions, in turn, are related to class background and to individual aspirations. The corporate structure of the school embodies norms that are likely to be more familiar and more acceptable to the adolescent from a middle-class background than to the one

⁶ The structure of the high school closely follows the features of corporate organization as described in Kanter (1977).

from a working-class background. The Jock and Burnout categories embody norms that coincide and conflict, respectively, with the corporate norms of the school, and that can be seen as adaptive to entrance and participation into the corporate and the blue-collar workplaces, respectively. In this sense, these categories constitute class cultures within the adolescent context, and indeed class of origin is related to category affiliation. Sociological studies in the past have shown that those who participate in and dominate school activities tend to come from the upper end of the local socioeconomic continuum, while those from the lower end of the local continuum tend to be alienated from the school and its activities (Coleman 1961; Hollingshead 1949; Larkin 1979). There is a similar tendency in the population to be discussed below, with a correlation between class origins and category membership. However, as there is significant crossover, it would be a serious error to claim that class determines category affiliation; rather, category affiliation constitutes something more like a pivot between childhood class and future adult class. The fact that it is difficult to leave one's childhood networks for a very different network with different norms is clearly an important limiting factor in social mobility.

Effective participation in the high school corporate structure requires that the individual develop a corporate identity, merging personal interests and motivations with those of the organization. This identity is not entirely acquired in school but builds on norms and values characteristic of the middle-class home. The middle-class student brings to school social norms and skills that are adaptive to the corporate structure set out by the school and that conflict in many areas with the norms and skills acquired in working-class homes. Perhaps the most fundamental of these norms is the middle-class career orientation. The Jocks see their high school life as a limited career within the school organization, as a rehearsal for career-making in later life, and as a means of qualifying for entrance into the institutions that create careers. This career is built through upward mobility within the extracurricular institutions of the high school, particularly student government and activities centering around sports.

The Jock career aims at prominence in a hierarchy based on control of crucial school resources. These resources – space, information, freedoms, visibility, the right and the materials to organize a variety of social events – are ultimately controlled by school personnel and are distributed to the student body through student brokers. These brokers are Jocks who are sufficiently successful at dealing with adults to gain the confidence and cooperation of school personnel and who at the same time command a significant student network within which to trade these resources. The integrity of the Jock hierarchy depends on the consuming involvement of its members and on the careful delimitation of its membership. Thus students' commitment to the school involves not only effective participation within the community but also renunciation of involvement without. Jock social networks, therefore, include

virtually only people attending the same school. This limitation plays an overt role in Jock social norms, as demonstrated by one student as he explained why he was giving up his friendships with a group from another school:⁷

I don't know, I think if I spend too much time with those guys, the guys at Belten will think I'm a loser.

WHY A LOSER?

Well, maybe not a loser exactly, but like they'll wonder about me always being with guys from Cabot, like I don't care about Belten, and they won't accept me.

Since the school is the locus of Jock activities, Jocks spend relatively little time beyond the school district or even beyond the area served by their specific school. Since their social activities are by and large limited by the school population, taking place either in the school itself or in their own homes, they do not explore the urban area for distractions. The mass exodus of whites from Detroit over the past forty years has brought about the establishment of an almost exclusively white suburban area. Some whites have left Detroit primarily to flee the rapid racial integration of their neighborhoods, while others have left Detroit also as part of an upward socioeconomic move. The latter group, in particular, have left Detroit behind – suburban adults rarely go there and discourage their children from going. To them, Detroit represents danger and trouble, and Jocks, like their parents, have overwhelmingly turned their backs on Detroit, going there only for an occasional sports event:

DO YOU EVER DRIVE AROUND?

We don't go, as a group, to Detroit... You know, it's- it's like you're inviting trouble. You go down there, and you got to- you know, it's- it's something that we don't have to do. It- you know, it just doesn't appeal to us, going out of the city and doing something.

The school population is delimited not only geographically, but by strict age grading. For the Jock, the high school years represent a discrete life stage organized internally by the progression through clear stages represented by each successive year in school and delimited externally by graduation. For Jocks, leaving high school represents a break as they enter the next discrete life stage, which, for most of them, will be college. After graduation, many Jocks will take up residence in college for most of the year, leaving behind not only their school and homes but the social networks they have built in high school. Jocks will return to the high school and reunite with their high school friends only on ritual occasions – occasions that will serve above all to measure the growing differences within the cohort as they pursue their adult careers.

⁷ The quotations that follow are taken from tape-recorded interviews with adolescents in Detroit suburban high schools. My own speech is in small caps.

The internal organization of the school is also compartmentalized by age. Seniority in the school brings increasingly broad responsibilities and access to more visible and statusful roles within the schoolwide organizations. Thus within this age-graded frame, the Jock relates to an increasingly large population and gains increasingly broad responsibilities each year. But with this increase in domain, the Jock's ultimate power depends on his or her position within the hierarchy defined by the age set, because the school organizes much of its competition within and between age sets. Each graduating class has its own hierarchy which organizes class activities and competitions between classes. Access to roles in schoolwide organizations depends on the visibility and status gained through work within the strict age set of the graduating class and through the accumulation of schoolwide visibility and status as the age cohort matures within the organization. This age-set orientation results in age-homogeneous social networks; just as Jock networks are limited to one school, their primary friendship networks are limited to their own graduating class. While relations with members of other classes are necessary for the success of the individual and of the class, these relations are dominated by upward deference and downward paternalism. Jock norms stigmatize the age integration of friendship networks because such integration violates the hierarchical organization of power. Cultivation of close relationships with members of higher age groups is seen as the cultivation of unfair influence. One Jock described his friends' attitude toward a member of their group who had hung out in junior high with his older brother's friends:

A lot of people didn't like it, I mean that I know, because they'd all say, "well, he's," you know, "just tagging along with his brother," you know, "and using his brother's name and stuff"...

Although Jocks center their lives around an adult-dominated institution, autonomy is nonetheless a principal goal. By accepting the hegemony of the school, Jocks enter a contract among their parents, the school, and the Jock student body. Jocks' parents relinquish a certain amount of control over their children to the school, endorsing virtually any activity that is sponsored by the school (including all-night work sessions, trips, late week-night activities, etc.). Thus, the Jock is ensured the goodwill of the adult community and is relieved of a certain amount of direct parental control. And because the school itself depends on the goodwill of its Jocks for the success of its programs, it must in turn be cautious in its exercise of power over them. The school, therefore, gives liberties fairly generously as rewards for cooperation in school institutions. Enhanced personal freedom in the school, such as the freedom to walk around in the halls and to miss classes, partially fulfills the adolescent need for autonomy and serves as visible proof of individual status.

The Burnouts and the Metropolitan Environment

For those who plan to leave high school directly for the blue-collar job market, secondary school represents a very different set of opportunities. Some of the instruction, particularly the vocational instruction, provides clear job-related training. However, much of the school's corporate norms and organization stands in the way of, rather than enhancing, the future blue-collar worker's chances in the job market. While the closely bounded age-graded community of the school suits the Jock, for whom adolescence comprises a discrete and institutionally defined life stage, it conflicts with needs arising from the Burnouts' more fluid transition from adolescence to adulthood. While the Jocks' next life stage will be in an isolated and specialized institution like the high school, the Burnout will leave school directly to compete with adults in the workplace. While the high school negotiates the next life stage for its Jocks, it is of little use to the Burnout in finding a place in the job market. Although participation in school activities is an important qualification for college admission, it does little to enhance an individual's qualification for a blue-collar job, and while the school plays an active role in advising for college admission, it does little in comparison towards placing students in blue-collar jobs. Most Burnouts expect to rely on contacts outside of school to find employment, particularly on relatives and friends already in the workforce. Therefore, it is not in the Burnouts' interest to pursue social activities in school but rather to pursue activities and contacts that provide access to the local workforce.

This workforce is centered, not in the affluent suburbs, but in the urban center and the closer, more urban suburbs. A workforce orientation, therefore, is in many ways an urban orientation. Where the Jock finds personal autonomy in the acquisition of institutional roles, the Burnout finds it in integration into the urban working environment. Where Jock networks, therefore, are homogeneous with respect to both age and geography, Burnout networks extend to other age groups and across local boundaries into the urban area. Virtually all Burnouts have close friends outside of their graduating class, and well over half of them have close friends who do not attend their school. In contrast to the Jock norm, discussed above, of confining close relationships to age peers, Burnouts value having older friends. Burnout networks are to a great extent a continuation of neighborhood networks that go back to preschool days: networks that originate in a dense child population that is integrated into cooperative neighborhood-based adult networks. While many Jocks remember their childhood friendships as separate sets of dyads, most Burnouts look back upon a social life dominated by ascriptive membership in a mass of neighborhood kids. This mass, in addition, is based not on age but on residence, and

involves interconnecting sets of siblings. Since many within any cohort are put in the care of older siblings, who must take them along to their activities, working-class networks boast an overwhelming age heterogeneity. Children from these neighborhoods, therefore, enter elementary school with a ready-made social network not only within their own grade but extending into the higher grades.

The age heterogeneity of Burnout networks affords both far-reaching ties and a relatively early exposure to, and demand for, the adult prerogatives enjoyed by immediately preceding age groups. The attraction of adult prerogatives is enhanced by the fluidity between adolescence and adulthood. Jocks anticipate that their prolonged dependence on adults in segregated institutions will bring ultimate rewards and greater economic power. The Burnouts, on the other hand, feeling that they have nothing to gain from such dependence and segregation and recognizing that entry into the work-force brings the full range of adult responsibilities, see no advantage in sacrificing personal freedom during the years when they have the greatest leisure to enjoy it. They place considerable emphasis, therefore, on freedom and adventure, both because it provides entertainment in a world that provides virtually none for them, and because it provides experience in the “real world.” The Burnouts, in their eagerness to “have it all” while they have the leisure, lead their peers from junior high school in their demand on adult prerogatives. Earlier use of cigarettes, drugs, sexual and romantic involvement, and above all mobility, set Burnouts clearly apart from their Jock peers. Just as older siblings and friends provide an example of experience and maturity, so do peers from Detroit and the more urban suburbs. Continuing migration outward from the urban center guarantees that suburban children and adolescents are constantly reminded of the greater savvy of their urban peers. New arrivals enjoy considerable status among Burnouts for their greater independence and ability to cope with the challenging urban environment, and for their potential for providing contact with their urban knowledge and networks. The denser population and public transportation of the urban area provides greater mobility and contact than the suburban environment – a factor which alone makes suburban children appear more sheltered. One student who moved from Detroit while in elementary school said that her urban experience gave her immediate ascendancy over her new friends:

I thought they were pretty sheltered and stuff, you know, because I’d – you know, like I used to tell them that I used to go out, you know, and walk, you know, across Seven Mile and everything. And they couldn’t even cross the street and stuff, and like I’m crossing these big main streets, and, you know –

While mobility alone gives urban children greater autonomy, other kinds of early experience accumulate as they grow older. One Detroiters describe her shock upon arriving in the suburbs:

well, it was like we were years ahead of these people, it seemed... we were much more sophisticated because we, you know, we were all into all this stuff – like we, we had the weirdest ideas. Now this is when we were like little kids, like ten years old. We would sit around and talk about sex and everything, you know, and – it seems kind of ludicrous now, because ten years old, that's like – that seems so little. But then –

DID YOU KNOW PRETTY MUCH EVERYTHING?

Well, you know, we would find out, you know, if we wanted to know. And we had this big group that we all hung around, and we had this club, you know, and it was a real big deal, and I think what was – to get in, you had to wear a bra...

AND HERE THEY WERE ALL LIKE UH –

Yeah, they were – they seemed like, I mean, they were playing on – with dolls, you know, and everything, and I'm going, "oh, my God, what did I move into?" That's – that's why my parents wanted to move there, because things were starting to move like a little bit too fast, you know.

As aging brings progressive mobility, Burnouts move from neighborhood hangouts to city parks and ultimately to metropolitan parks and public facilities (pool halls, bowling alleys, arcades) and urban cruising strips, which afford casual contact with young people from the more urban communities. As Burnouts progress in high school, their networks also provide contact with people from the urban area. Older friends and siblings graduate or drop out of school and get jobs, and friends made in the workplace provide urban contacts for members of their local networks. Peers moving into the school from Detroit share their networks from the old neighborhood and school. Burnout networks thus come to lead toward Detroit. Many have friends in Detroit, some hang out and go to parties in Detroit, all consider Detroit a highly desirable place to visit and cruise.

The corporate skills that prepare Jocks for their future careers are not simply useless but maladaptive within the blue-collar context. It is not competition with peers but cooperation and solidarity that ensures blue-collar economic security. Marginalized in the school, as they will be in the adult economy, Burnouts emphasize close supportive networks based on a clear understanding that those in authority over them are serving separate and conflicting interests. Like their parents in the workplace, Burnouts recognize that they can only protect their interests through solidarity among peers in opposition to their hierarchical superiors. This solidarity dictates a clear separation from the interests of the middle-aged adults who seek to control them in school and out, and the maintenance of close stable friendship networks that compensate for the loss of adult emotional and material support that accompanies this separation. For the Burnouts, therefore, the social network is perceived from the start as

a lasting one. Whereas Jocks change friends as their interests and activities change, Burnouts' friendships determine their activities. For most Burnouts, life after high school will be a continuation of high school life. They will stay and seek employment in the area, many of them will continue to live in their parents' homes, a few of them continuing at jobs they hold in high school. Leaving school, particularly after graduation, therefore, does not represent the break in social networks that it does for Jocks.

Polarization of the Categories

The fact that many students in the school do not consider themselves Jocks or Burnouts does not detract from the hegemony of this opposition; rather, the way in which these people perceive their own identities confirms it. Except for the few loners who are not integrated into the peer community, virtually all of the unaffiliated refer to themselves as 'In-betweens' and describe themselves in terms of traits shared with either category, sometimes in terms of linear distance between opposite poles. A few of the In-betweens associate with both Jocks and Burnouts, while others, whose network distance from either category is relatively great, do not associate directly with either. The In-between individuals and groups enjoy greater freedom of choice than those who are tied into the clear Jock and Burnout styles, but they sacrifice the ascriptive status associated with clear membership. Category affiliation during the extremely polarized years of junior high school is prerequisite for social status in the cohort. Jock and Burnout affiliation at this time, constituting a statement of alternative adolescent identity during the initial years when identity is particularly problematic, is tantamount to status within the cohort, and the social networks that form the core of each category constitute competing "popular" groups. The prototype member of each of these categories represents, to its members, the "typical teenager," claiming autonomy and age-group identity through a clearly defined teenage style.

Both the Jocks and the Burnouts seek autonomy in their involvement with youth society, but their definition of, and means of achieving, this autonomy conflict. Jocks seek autonomy in intensive involvement in a complex age-specific social structure and in the development of roles and identities within this structure. To the Jock, independence from adults is pursued in the management of adults and in controlling the closed community of the high school. Burnouts, on the other hand, seek autonomy in separation and independence from middle-aged adults and in dealing directly with the adult world beyond the family, school, and community. This difference cannot be neutral, since the behavior associated with each mode of separation threatens the basis of the other. Within this context, the Jocks and the Burnouts become intensely involved in their mutual differences, emphasizing them through whatever

means for symbolic differentiation are at their disposal. The progressive polarization of the Jock and Burnout categories is accompanied by the elaboration of a variety of symbolic oppositions that make Jocks and Burnouts readily distinguishable even to the most casual observer. They have distinct and opposed styles of dress, hair style, makeup, and other adornment; separate territories in school and hangouts outside; different tastes in music; and different patterns of substance use and display.⁸ As the following section will show, this symbolic differentiation extends to the use of local phonological variables.

Social Categories and Orientation to Sound Changes in Progress

The relatively high degree of phonological innovation in the adolescent age group with relation to other age groups is an indication that the development of adolescent social structure provides a major impetus for phonological change. Given the intensity of adolescent social life and of the emerging symbolic forms in nonlinguistic areas during this period, it stands to reason that phonological variation should participate in the social development of this age group. A variety of factors arising from the dynamics of the adolescent life stage could lead all adolescents to the use of innovative phonology. The need for autonomy experienced by most of the age cohort, and certainly for the Jocks and the Burnouts, provides a widespread motive to accelerate changes already present in the community. Comparison of speech patterns between parent-aged adults and immediately older peers establishes for each cohort of emerging adolescents the age-salience of innovative phonology and the established direction of change. The simple continuation in this direction, or exaggeration of changes already in progress, thus has the potential to symbolize age-group identity and autonomy from the parental age group.

Another factor in the adolescent use of innovative phonology is the importance of local identity to this age group. Simple limitation of mobility among adolescents dictates that their lives will by and large revolve around the immediate geographic area: their hometown and the surrounding communities. Given this limitation, the development of social identity will be based in the local area, and the intensity of this development will create a particularly strong sense of local identity. Furthermore, this limitation will dictate that local phonology will be sufficiently familiar and thus identifiable to serve as a symbol of identity for the cohort. Thus, local innovations can simultaneously represent for the adolescent the expansion of mobility beyond the family and affiliation with the local area. Adolescent separation from the family involves

⁸ See Eckert (1982, 1983, 1989a) for discussions of the symbolic differentiation of Jocks and Burnouts.

a gradual expansion of networks and of orientation, and this expansion itself is inseparable from the issue of autonomy. Involvement in local groups and activities, whatever they may be, emphasizes the adolescent's autonomy, and however limited this local context may appear to an adult, it represents a considerable expansion to the adolescent. Sound changes associated with the local area, therefore, can represent expansion and autonomy to the adolescent, as it represents the cohort's involvement in the world outside the home.

Finally, the pressure of adolescent group norms can be expected to exert pressure for conformity to differentiated linguistic norms. Adolescents' anxiety over the loss of ascriptive family status leads them to cleave particularly tightly to their social groups and to monitor each other's behavior closely for signs of disaffection. The rigid group conformity that arises in adolescence as a function of identity development makes adolescent norms tighter than adult norms, and can be expected to exert greater linguistic pressure on their members.⁹

While sound change has a similar function for the entire cohort in symbolizing autonomy from the adult age group, one might also expect it to function to signal distinctions within the cohort. Insofar as the cohort is involved in an emerging and intense social structure, in which differences within the cohort are becoming institutionalized, one might expect the cohort to use the same phonological innovations to emphasize differences among themselves. One might expect, for one thing, the adoption of innovative phonology to be more intense among those for whom the symbolization of independence from adults is the most crucial.

The data to be presented below were collected during two years of participant observation in and around one Detroit suburban school, during which time I followed one graduating class through its last two years of high school. The linguistic sample of 52 speakers to be discussed here was selected from tape-recorded interviews with 200 people from a broad range of social groups in the same graduating class.¹⁰ The interviews were free-flowing discussions of adolescent life and social structure.

The change used to illustrate the role of social categories in the spread of phonological change is the backing and lowering of (uh), a recent step in a series of vowel changes known as the Northern Cities Chain Shift. This shift, characteristic of the northern U.S. cities of Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, and Chicago, is discussed in detail in Labov, Yaeger and Steiner (1972). Their

⁹ Milroy (1982) has pointed out this linguistic potential stemming from the tightness of adolescent groups.

¹⁰ The phonetic transcription of (uh) was done by Susan Blum. Orthographic transcription of the interviews was done by Lynne Robins, Marcia Salomon, and Mary Steedley. Michael Jody joined me in the fieldwork in Redford. I am indebted to all of them for their long and meticulous work on this project.

discussion focuses on the earlier stages of the shift: the tensing and raising of (aeh) and the fronting of (a) and (oh). These shifts are followed by the more recent backing and lowering of (e) and (uh), which are currently spreading out to the suburbs from the urban center. Variants of (uh) in the Detroit area range from the conservative [ʌ] to extremely backed [ɔ], and rounded [ʊ], and to an extreme lowered variant [ɑ]. The [ɔ] and [ʊ] variants are favored by labial environments, particularly when they precede the vowel. In addition, there are small numbers of occurrences of the fronted variants [ɛ] and [ɪ]. Values for each speaker are based on 50 tokens of the variable in free-flowing interview speech. Occurrences represented are all stressed, and occurrences in a few environments have been excluded because of their near categorical backing effect on the variant: occurrences following [w] and occurrences in *just* and *but* have been excluded. In Figures 4.1 and 4.2, variables are assigned weighted values: 0 for non-backed or lowered variants, 2 for the extreme variants [ʊ], [ɔ] and [ɑ], and 1 for intermediate variants (backed and lowered [ʌ]). Each dot represents the average value for the variable (uh) for one speaker.

If the individual's use of innovative variables were a function of socioeconomic class per se, or even neighborhood, one would expect a correlation between adolescent patterns of variation and their parents' socioeconomic membership. Figure 4.1 shows the values for (uh) grouped according to socioeconomic class: working, lower middle, and upper middle. These class assignments are based on combined educational and occupational levels, choosing the highest level attained by either parent. (The resulting figures show no noticeable difference from grouping according to mother's rank, father's rank, or combined values for the two.) It is clear from this figure that parents' socioeconomic class has no significant effect on the individual's participation in this sound change.

Figure 4.2 shows the values of (uh) according to social category affiliation. Those classified in the figure as Jocks or Burnouts are members of Jock and Burnout networks *and* refer to themselves and their friends as members of those categories. Since the In-betweens constitute a residual category, they can best be classified as individuals failing either of the criteria of inclusion as Jocks and Burnouts. As it happens, all of those classified here as In-betweens also refer to themselves as In-betweens. The Jocks represented are all involved in school activities, belong to the same extended cluster within the school social network, and work together on a regular basis in school. Because many of the Burnouts in the school moved there late in elementary school or during high school, the availability of "native" local speakers is far smaller for that category than for the Jocks, hence the smaller representation of Burnouts in the sample. As Figure 4.2 shows, the correspondence between the (uh) variable and social category affiliation is far closer than with traditional parameters. Specifically,

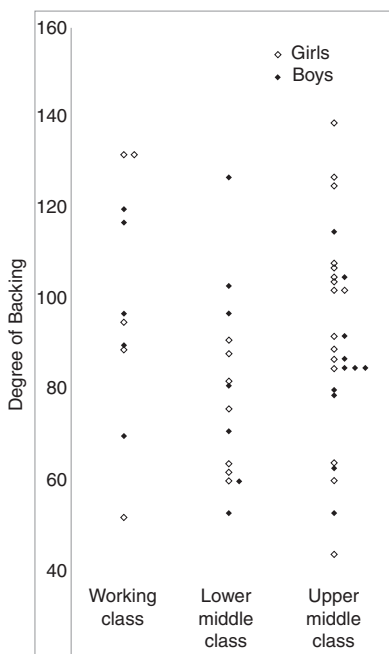


Figure 4.1 (uh) values according to parents' socioeconomic status.

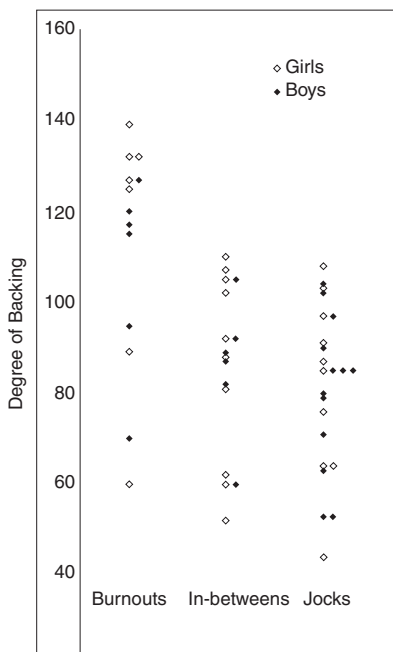


Figure 4.2 (uh) values according to category affiliation.

Table 4.2 *Probability of use of extreme backed and lowered variants of (uh) by social category*

Jocks	In-Betweens	Burnouts	p
.43	.48	.59	.000

the Jock and Burnout values cluster toward the lower and upper ends of the schoolwide continuum, while the In-betweens fall into an intermediate range.

Table 4.2 shows clearly that individual adolescent social identity, rather than ascriptive class, is a powerful determiner of phonological variation. This observation is statistically confirmed by the results of the variable rule program (VARBRUL), which shows socioeconomic class to be insignificant and social category membership to be highly significant in predicting the backing and lowering of (uh).¹¹

These statistics are based on the same data as shown in Figures 4.1 and 4.2. However, while the individual values in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 are based on 3 degrees of change, the data subjected to VARBRUL are binomial, with only the extreme values ([ʊ], [ɔ] and [ɑ]) being counted as change (note that figures like 4.1 and 4.2, based on percentages of extreme values, are only negligibly different from those based on weighted values). In addition, phonological constraints are included in the regression, giving better control of accidents of lexical occurrence in the data than can be accomplished with the averaged values.

The urban status of the backing and lowering of (uh), as this change spreads outward to the suburban area, is reflected in differences in vocalic values between Livonia and Redford, the suburb lying directly between Livonia and Detroit. The Redford data were gathered during five weeks of participant observation in the high school serving the southern half of Redford. While the socioeconomic characteristics of the two schools are similar, the Redford school is the wealthier of Redford's high schools, while the Livonia school is in the middle range of Livonia's four high schools. Redford adolescents consider Livonia to be "super-suburban," while Livonia adolescents look upon Redford as almost part of Detroit. Many of the Livonia Burnouts have friends in Redford, and Burnouts from both cities meet frequently on Detroit cruising strips and particularly in Hines Park, a long park that runs east and west through the western urban-suburban continuum. As shown in Figure 4.3, the range of variation in Redford is considerably greater than that in Livonia,

¹¹ I would like to thank David Sankoff for his coaching in the use of this program, and Susan Pintzuk for providing her adaptation of the program to the IBM PC.

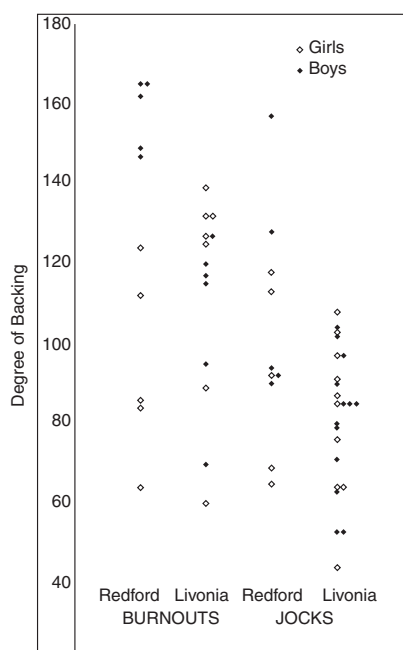


Figure 4.3 (uh) values in Redford and Livonia.

with some very low values but with noticeably higher values at the upper end. Most noticeable is the higher values for boys in both categories, and the particularly high values for the Burnout boys. While the Burnout boys clearly lead the Jock boys in the change, the girls' categories show little difference. The Redford Burnout girls' low values in relation to both the Redford Burnout boys' and the Livonia Burnout girls' are striking and defy explanation at this point, particularly since the ethnographic background in Redford is far less detailed than that in Livonia.

The Burnouts' overwhelming lead in the backing and lowering of (uh) is entirely predicted by the ethnographic facts, inasmuch as the Burnouts have both greater exposure to urban speech and greater motivation than Jocks to adopt variants associated with urban speech. The Burnouts' contact with peers from closer to the city brings them into greater contact with urban changes, while the Jocks' limitation to peers from their own community provides a more localized exposure. Jock and Burnout differences in attitudes toward the urban area, furthermore, provide the Burnouts with greater motivation than the Jocks to emulate the urban patterns they encounter. Burnouts undoubtedly respond to urban speech as symbolic of the urban knowledge and autonomy that they associate with their urban peers and that they themselves value. The

more conservative speech of their school community, on the other hand, is associated with those forces aimed at depriving them of this knowledge and autonomy.

The two categories' difference in relation to the age spectrum also provides very different linguistic contacts and motivations. The Burnouts' emphasis on rejection of adult domination might in itself lead to more innovative patterns, while the Jocks' cultivation of cooperative relations with adults might lead to more conservative, adult-like patterns. Furthermore, the Burnout friendship networks, including – from childhood – members of immediately preceding age groups, brings them into contact with the extreme patterns of adolescent speech at a fairly early age, and their general wish to emulate these age groups, like urban groups, no doubt extends to speech patterns. This early contact could thus bring about an acceleration of change as each age cohort of Burnouts is exposed earlier to adolescent patterns and to the social structure that accompanies these patterns.

Finally, one might expect the simple opposition between the Jocks and Burnouts, and their continual efforts at mutual differentiation, to extend to their use of patterns of variation. As long as a variant is unambiguously associated with the urban center and with Burnouts, one might expect Jocks to avoid it. This oppositional model, however, implies a simple linguistic polarization between Jocks and Burnouts, leaving no room for change to spread through the community. It is obvious, however, that the Jocks are using urban variants of (uh), and repeated observation of the social stratification of sound changes in progress suggests that they will use more of them as time goes on.

The question is what mechanism, given the oppositional nature of the categories, can account for the spread of change between them? The intermediate position of the In-betweens in the linguistic continuum cannot be simplistically interpreted as representing a transitional network or the gradual spread of sound change. Some In-betweens are transitional in the sense that they have friends in both the Jock and the Burnout categories; some in the sense that they fall between the two categories in the social network in such a way that they never associate directly with either, but with other In-betweens who themselves fall more toward one or the other pole. The former represent a close network connection between the two categories, while the latter represent a point in a more gradual continuum. But while the In-betweens may not represent a simple continuum of exposure between the two poles, they do represent a vehicle for the reinterpretation of the symbolic value of sound change. A variant that might be unacceptable to a Jock by virtue of its exclusive association with Burnouts becomes more acceptable as it comes to be associated with less extreme individuals who share aspects of the Burnouts' autonomy. A certain amount of independence is required for any adolescent to be socially successful, whether in the Jock or the Burnout category, and the Jocks are, indeed, sensitive to the

appearance of adult domination. As variants move beyond Burnout groups, they become somewhat disassociated from that category and associated, within the school context, with broader values that certain In-betweens share with Burnouts. At that point, they may become attractive and acceptable symbols for Jocks to use to express their own autonomy and, at the same time, lose their value to Burnouts as symbols of urban identity. This development has been confirmed in Eckert (1986), which shows that Jock–Burnout differentiation decreases with the age of the sound change.

The clear sex differentiation commonly found in patterns of phonological variation is noticeably missing in these data: indeed, VARBRUL shows sex to be insignificant in predicting the backing and lowering of (uh). Older changes in the Northern Cities Chain Shift show the American pattern of change found in Labov (1966), whereby females lead males in the use of innovative variants in more casual styles. A hint of this pattern shows up in the (uh) data among the Burnouts. Figure 4.2 shows a group of female Burnouts leading the entire community in this change, while among the Jocks and the In-betweens there is no clear pattern of sex differentiation. The issue of sex differentiation in phonological variation is as complex as the social salience of sex, as shown most notably by Eckert, Edwards, and Robbins (1985) and Milroy (1980). The small but observable difference in sex constraints between Burnouts and others could be explained by differences in constraints on the sexes in the social categories. As Trudgill (1972) has pointed out, the relative lack of opportunity for social mobility through economic roles leads women to rely more on symbolic manifestations to assert their identities.

An analogous situation exists in the high school, where girls' status still depends to a great extent on physical appearance and contacts. Girls, therefore, are constrained to exert considerable effort in the symbolic sphere and to pay particular attention to their place in the social system. Thus Jock girls are constrained to maintain a "pure" image, and Burnout girls are eager to express their "toughness" and urban ties. The bind is greater for the Burnout girls, because although the Jock girls can act out their purity, it is riskier for Burnout girls to act out their toughness. With adolescents, girls lose the physical parity that once enabled them to deal on an equal basis with boys. One Jock girl told me, with some nostalgia, of the time in elementary school when she and her best friend had beaten up a (future) Burnout boy who was known as a bully. She expressed a certain loss of satisfaction when, as they got older, they had to resort to more "ladylike" and less direct means of social control. While Burnout girls as a whole continue to fight further into preadolescence and adolescence than Jock girls, they cannot fend for themselves in the urban setting the way boys can. To a great extent, therefore, they must rely on other devices, among them the symbolic, to express their urban identities.

It is perhaps worth pointing out that the two Burnout girls at either extreme of the linguistic spectrum (shown in Figure 4.2) also represent the two extremes of the Burnout social spectrum. The girl with the lowest value for (uh) comes from a Burnout neighborhood and has remained in her Burnout network. However, in junior high school, she wanted to participate in school activities and tried unsuccessfully to convince her friends to do so with her. After a considerable struggle, she abandoned her efforts and dropped out of school activities in order to remain with her friendship group. While she considers herself a Burnout and is thoroughly integrated into the Burnout network and their activities, she expresses little hostility towards Jocks and continues to regret her lack of participation in school activities. The Burnout with the most extreme high values for (uh), on the other hand, is the school's widely acclaimed prototype ("burned-out Burnout"). She sports the most extreme Burnout style of dress, is heavily involved in drugs and marijuana, spends much of her time in the urban area, dates primarily older Detroit boys, and contemptuously regards many Burnouts as "Jocks."

Adolescence and Sound Change

The degree to which a given individual modifies his or her patterns of linguistic usage throughout life remains an empirical issue. However, there is little question that the emotional involvement in social identity during adolescence far surpasses that at any other life stage. It is reasonable to postulate, therefore, that in our society the very uncertainty of the adolescent life stage, and the need to capture a clear identity in the face of uncertainty, provides greater motivation than at any other time in life to adapt linguistic patterns to community structure. This age group, therefore, provides an important key to the study of the mechanisms of such adaptation.

While class differentiation in speech begins in the early years of language learning, to be molded and modified throughout the school years and beyond, it is in the secondary school that the age cohort develops and manages its own class structure, which gives concrete meaning and utility to the adoption of speech varieties. The Jock and Burnout categories articulate socioeconomic class for the adolescent age group, as specific class-based cultural differences between the categories provide contrasting orientation to the local environment and to the adolescent life stage. Burnouts, seeking direct connection and immediate integration into the metropolitan community and orienting themselves to its public facilities and those functioning in it, embrace changes that are identified with that community. Their identity, based on membership in networks that extend into the urban area, provides them with greater exposure to, and motivation to adopt, urban vernacular features. The Jocks, seeking to transcend the community and the urban area through participation in networks and

institutions that are abstracted from the local context, are removed from some of the motivations to adopt urban changes in progress. The hostility between these two polarized groups, furthermore, lends motivation for mutual differentiation. The complexity of the relation among adolescent social category affiliation, class, and the metropolitan environment ultimately yields a clear and simple explanation for patterns of the spread of sound change that have been observed on a demographic scale. The explanatory power of these categories clearly illustrates the need for sociolinguists to explore more deeply the rich texture of ethnography, to find the intervening variables between broad demographic categories and the daily realities of social and linguistic life.