LISTENER PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIABLES: THE CASE OF (ING)

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Abstract

Understanding the structure of sociolinguistic variation requires understanding what information it coveys to listeners and how. Variation not only correlates with social structures but carries social meaning, influencing listener perceptions and through them social structures. This research demonstrates that listeners' interpretations of the English variable (ING) (working/workin') depends on contextual factors and its correlates interact with each other perceptually.

The study employs the Matched Guise Technique, using digitally manipulated stimuli differing only in tokens of (ING). The stimuli were created from spontaneous speech from eight speakers, two men and two women each from the South and the West Coast. Listener reactions to the manipulated recordings were collected in two phases. Group interviews (N = 60) provided open-ended information regarding the recordings generally and listener ideologies about (ING). This data was used to construct a survey (N = 124) to collect more structured responses.

The findings show that (ING) is connected to a network of social meanings, including education, articulateness, formality, region and the rural/urban divide. Overall, speakers were rated as more educated and more likely to be articulate when they used *-ing*. The data also show that variation-based social meaning is not compositional but instead the impact of a variable depends on its context. Regional accents triggered expectations regarding (ING) use and meaning, which influenced the impact of actual uses. (ING) shifted the relationship between pairs of meanings, such as masculinity and intelligence or socioeconomic class and formality. Finally, listeners showed agency selecting what cues to attend to and how to interpret them. The effect of (ING) depended, among other things, on the positive or negative reaction of

the listener. Using *-ing* could make a speaker sound more intelligent to some while making others think only that the speaker is trying to sound more intelligent.

These results show that variation does influence listener perceptions, i.e. carries social meanings. These meanings, however, are not static. To understand their structure, a fully developed theory of style is needed, explaining not only how variation contributes to larger impressions, but also how overall impressions influence the contribution of a single variable.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

A thorough understanding of variation must by definition include an understanding of how it is heard and processed. Because language use fundamentally involves communication, every use implies both speaking and listening, encoding and decoding, expressing and interpreting. The study of variation has for the most part focused on the correlates of speakers' use of variation and comparatively little effort has been spent on listeners. Listener perceptions of variation are of inherent interest in that they are as fundamental an aspect of linguistic variation as correlates of speaker and situation. They are additionally valuable in offering answers to the many questions regarding the existence and nature of social meaning in relation to variation.

One of the central questions in the study of variation is how instances of variation connect to social structures. The concept of social meaning has helped us to understand the flexibility of socially linked variation. Variation is one of the many tools that people use to create meaning in their day-to-day lives. Seeing this has allowed us to explain many patterns of variable use that otherwise might remain a mystery (Eckert 2001b). Other questions are raised by this approach, however. Foremost among these is how to establish if variation actually carries meaning from speaker to listener. If so, how? Does all variation do so or only some? Are there limits on the meanings speakers can convey and where do they come from? When we speak of meaningful variation, what are we talking about in cognitive terms? Listener perceptions of variation offer insight into all of these issues and more.

This dissertation adapts existing methods to investigate social evaluations of a single variable, the English variable (ING). The work uses an adapted form of the Matched Guise Technique, using recordings digitally manipulated to create minimally paired stimuli, differing only in (ING). The stimuli were developed from recordings of spontaneous speech taken from sociolinguistic interviews with eight speakers, balanced by gender (four men and four women) and region (four from the South and four from the West Coast). Listener responses were collected in two phases, through group interviews and a survey. The results demonstrate the existence of social meaning, as indicated by observable changes in listener perceptions based on the manipulation of a single variable. They also demonstrate the crucial role of context in determining that meaning, the interconnected nature of social responses and the potential for variability among listeners as well as speakers.

This chapter provides the theoretical background on the conceptual issues of variation addressed by this project. First, I discuss the role of social meaning in understanding of sociolinguistic variation and introduce the important concepts in this tradition, including the co-constructed nature of meaning and the notion of indirect indexicality. I then discuss the significance of listener perceptions and briefly introduce work which has theoretically developed the role of listeners. Finally, I describe the structure of the rest of the dissertation in detail.

1.1 The problem of meaning

The earliest work on variation brought local meanings to the fore, examining the crucial role of local strife in the production of linguistic variants. Labov (1963) tied the use of locally salient vowel shifts on Martha's Vineyard to speakers' orientations towards the economic and social changes then underway on the island. Fischer (1958), which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2, also addressed some level of social meaning, looking at differences in (ING) use and how they related to different identities or personalities. Fischer found that a "model boy" used more *-ing* while a "typical boy" favored *-in*. Much of the work that directly followed in the late 1960's and early 1970's stepped up to a larger scale, carrying out surveys and community studies

with large populations and random samples. These studies did not engage explicitly with meaning, but rather concentrated on issues of "social significance" (Labov 1966; Trudgill 1974) or how social position influenced linguistic performance. They did engage implicitly with social meaning, drawing on concepts such as stigma and prestige.

In recent years, researchers have been increasingly drawn to the issue of social meaning and in particular the local nature of such meaning. In trying to establish the theoretical groundwork for understanding the social meaning of variation, semantic notions of meaning are not very helpful. Silverstein (1976) discusses the wealth of ways in which language can carry meaning other than semantic, referential meaning.

> To say of social behavior that it is meaningful implies necessarily that it is communicative, that is, that the behavior is a complex of signs (sign vehicles) that signal, or stand for, something in some respect. Such behavioral signs are significant to some persons, participants in the communicative event, and such behavior is purposive, that is, goal oriented in the sense of accomplishing (or in failing to accomplish) certain ends of communication, for example, indicating one's social rank, reporting an occurrence, effecting a cure for a disease, and so forth. (Silverstein 1976:12)

Silverstein lays out a number of important concepts regarding indexicality and language. His use of the term *index* draws on the three-way divide in Peirce (1901) which divides **signs** into three categories: **icons**, in which the sign vehicle is associated with it signified by virtue of a similarity (e.g. a road sign with a schematic of an intersection); **indexes** in which the sign vehicle co-occurs with or predicts the signified in space or time (as smoke signals fire) and **symbols**, which constitute the rest of signs, in which the relationship between the signified and the signifier is arbitrary (as for most words). Although much of linguistics focuses on the semantic meaning carried by symbols, Silverstein points out that this is just one among many functions that language can take on. He formalizes the ways that linguistic indexes rely on aspects of the speech situation for their meaning. Further, he suggests a classification system based on two dimensions: the referential/semantic meaning carried by an indexical marker (e.g. tense is both referential and indexical while honorific markers

of speaker/hearer relationships are not) and the degree of performativity or creativity the markers allow for (e.g. locative deictics are fairly constrained while honorifics allow speakers to shift social situations within certain boundaries).

This work provides crucial theoretical structure by formalizing indexical meaning. It is extended to address indexing by linguistic variation by Ochs (1992), who looks specifically at linguistic indexing of gender. Her crucial insight is that "Few features of language directly and exclusively index gender" (Ochs 1992:340). Most linguistic behaviors associated with gender are used by both men and women, though perhaps to different amounts: "the relationship between language and gender is distributional and probabilistic" (Ochs 1992:340). Additionally, forms associated with gender tend to carry other social meanings and "the multiplicity of potential meanings allows speakers to exploit such inherent ambiguities for strategic ends" (Ochs 1992:340).

Ochs refers to these two observations as characterizing the "non-exclusive relation" between language and gender, the first of three characteristics she identifies. The third (temporal transcendence) does not concern us here. But the second characteristic is what Ochs calls the "constitutive relation" and is the basic idea of indirect indexicality, which will be important in the current discussion. Ochs proposes that linguistic resources may directly index gender or other social meanings such as speech activities (e.g. oratory), speech acts (e.g. ordering) and affective stances (e.g. coarseness). All of these meanings, including gender, work to constitute each other. Because the various social meanings all help to constitute each other, a given linguistic resource may be used in the production of gender or another meaning, even when it lacks a direct indexing relationship.

> It is in this sense that the relation between language and gender is mediated and constituted through a web of socially organized pragmatic meanings. Knowledge of how language relates to gender is not a catalogue of correlations between particular linguistic forms and sex of speakers, referents, addressees and the like. Rather, such knowledge entails tacit understanding of (1) how particular linguistic forms can be used to perform particular pragmatic work (such as conveying stance and social action) and (2) norms, preferences and expectations regarding the distribution of

> this work *vis-a-vis* particular social identities of speakers, referents, and addressees. (Ochs 1992:341-2)

The central idea is that a given resource may be used in the production of social meanings that it is not directly linked to. Instead, it may index that meaning indirectly, via an intervening meaning. Ochs' model introduces a sort of miniature semantic network, whereby a linguistic resource may be connected directly to a given social meaning which is itself connected to others. A correlational variationist approach might discover that women are more likely to use the word *please* than men, but Ochs's point is that associating the word with women directly would be a mistake, as is evident from the many examples where men may use the word without attempting to sound like women or being perceived as feminine. Instead, the word *please* may be directly linked to the notion of politeness, which is in turn connected to femininity or appropriate behavior for women.

This is the basic idea of social meaning for linguistic resources with which I am working. Social structures link together in a complex web, to which language connects at different points. The model Ochs presents is primarily aimed at situating gender and its relationship to language within the larger frame of mutually constitutive meanings. This theory applies more widely than gender, however.

Viewing linguistic variation as carrying social meaning rather than straightforwardly reflecting social address involves an important theoretical shift. If variation may be used strategically to convey particular kinds of meaning which impact a social situation, it means that rather than merely reflecting the social world, language is in fact central to constructing it. Identities like race or gender, as well as other aspects of the social world, do not simply exist as inherent qualities in people, places or situations, but are are co-constructed as people interact with one another. The "co-" aspect of co-construction means that this process of construction is a joint project, one which all interactants contribute to. It does **not** mean that all contribute equally, that they engage with a spirit of cooperation or that a consensus is reached. We often also speak of social meanings being contested, to emphasize the competitive or even combative nature of some group processes of constructions (see (Rickford 1986) for a discussion of non-consensus based understandings of social class). This phrasing also

highlights the continual aspect of the process—meanings are continually contested, always under construction and never completed. The word **intersubjectivity** also removes the temptation to view meaning-making as necessarily cooperative, substituting the image of meanings occurring in the space between subjects (people) with no one able to claim final ownership.

The process of co-construction depends crucially on the perception of meaningful social cues, including sociolinguistic variation. Research which adopts this theoretical framework draws more heavily on the processes involved in social perception. However, interpretation of socially meaningful variation or, indeed, variation in general, is studied significantly less often than its production. The research that has been done shows that social cues are bound up intimately with the interpretation of linguistic signals of all kinds. Although researchers traditionally place social judgments with semantic meaning at the "top" of the interpretation hierarchy, even the most basic processes of phonemic identification may be influenced by social factors. Phoneticians interested in the mechanisms of speech perception have discovered that listeners use a range of information regarding the speaker in order to normalize their perceptions, by creating a frame of reference to use during perception (Verbrugge *et al.* 1976; Assmann *et al.* 1982; Johnson 1990). Niedzielski (1996, 1998, 1999, 2001) established that in addition to these physical cues, purely social information also influences listeners' phonetic perceptions at a very low level. Niedzielski provided listeners from Detroit with recordings of another Detroit speaker whose speech showed features of both the Northern Cities Chain Shift (NCCS) and Canadian Raising (CR). She had previously determined that while the NCCS did not figure largely in the metalinguistic awareness of Detroit residents, CR did, although they believed it was limited to residents of Canada. Listeners were told either that the speaker was Canadian or from Detroit and were asked to select synthesized tokens which most closely matched the vowels she produced. When hearing the vowels influenced by CR, which carried social awareness for these listeners, the speaker's supposed nationality significantly influenced their selections. Those who believed they were listening to the Canadian speaker tended to select raised variants which were in fact closest to the actual token. Those who believed the speaker was from Detroit, however, more often selected

either standard or hyper standard variants. In the case of tokens influenced by the NCCS, the purported nationality of the speaker had no effect on listeners selections. Instead, listeners for the most part selected synthesized vowels that corresponded to the standard pronunciation of the segments, instead of the actual shifted variants they heard. Even when nationality is not implicated in the ideology, the social information of what token is appropriate or expected had a stronger effect than the sounds they actually heard.

What the current literature has neglected to date is the actual influence of specific variable on the interpretation of a linguistic performance. This question is crucial to treating linguistic variation as reflecting a system of social meaning. This becomes an issue because of the multiple associations any single variable may have. In real instances of use, a variable may respond to a range of situational and personal factors. Much early work on (ING) shows that it correlates with both socioeconomic status and the formality of the speech situation (Labov 1966; Trudgill 1974). Labov and Trudgill both suggest that variants associated with higher levels on the socio-economic hierarchy are more valued and thus more likely to be employed in situations where speakers are attending to the forms of their speech. A different, although related, explanation is that the meaning of (ING) is one which is of different use in different situations and also is valued or used differently by people of different socioeconomic classes. Eckert (2001a) suggests that (ING) primarily signals formality, with *-ing* being a more formal way of speaking and *-in* seen as more casual. Both the social and stylistic stratification might result from this kind of meaning, as different classes are likely to have different orientations towards formality and different situations involve different levels of formality as well.

The introduction of social meaning allows more powerful generalizations by sensibly linking divergent uses of the same variable. Even so, the range of uses found, particularly for stable and widespread variables such as (ING) makes it difficult to point to a single monolithic meaning. It is at this point that the concept ofindirect indexicality becomes useful, as discussed previously. The possibility of indirect indexing allows us to explain a range of otherwise puzzling data. It also greatly expands the world of possibilities for linking language and social meaning. Because of this

expansion, we run the risk of throwing open our theoretical understanding to predict infinite flexibility. If any resource can mean anything, how do speakers choose what to say? How do listeners make sense of what they hear? What prevents anyone from combining any combination of variables to mean anything they wish? Since we know there are limits on the actual performances and interpretations we must insure our theory accounts for these.

While the terrain laid out by indirect indexical meeting is flexible, it is not infinitely so. There is structure in the linguistic realm, as well as among the social meanings. This structure limits the choices speakers may make and shapes the processes of both speaking and listening. Meaningful linguistic variation is structured by markedness relations, by different levels of salience, by cognitive limits and by the habits of speaker/listeners form over time, to say nothing of internal linguistic constraints themselves. Social meanings bear structured relationships to each other and this structure is further shaped by ideologies and conscious beliefs. The more we understand about the structures of these two domains the better we will be able to understand the possibilities and the behaviors of the interface between them. I will briefly discuss each of these structural influences, beginning with the linguistic factors of markedness and salience.

Sociolinguistic variation is structured in such a way that certain variables and variants are more perceptible to speakers and listeners than others, leading to different patterns of use and different likelihoods of taking on social meaning. Linguistic variables may be more or less salient, for example the pilot work described in Chapter 2 revealed that listeners tend to be more conscious of (ING) than they are of the release or non-release of /t/. This may be due to the form the variable takes; a lexical item may be more quickly noticed from a single use than a phonological shift. Labov (2001) articulates the varying degrees of consciousness speakers have for different variables with a three-way divide: indicators, markers and stereotypes. **Indicators** are socially stratified linguistic behaviors which have no social awareness associated with them, are not topics for discussion and are difficult for listeners to detect. **Markers** are patterns with a degree more social awareness, a difference Labov hypothesizes results from them being further along in their process of change. In

this case speakers are more likely to display style shifting and to respond negatively to stigmatized forms. The highest degree of awareness is the **stereotype**, linguistic variation which is subject to overt commentary, potentially to the degree that speakers may discuss the form and its stigma without realizing they use it themselves (Labov 2001:196). The variable under study in this project, (ING), is clearly in the last category. Speakers discuss it easily, have conventionalized terms for referring to it (most commonly, "dropping one's G's") and easily articulate ideologies concerning its use. The degree of consciousness that listeners have for particular variable is likely to affect the ways in which they respond to its presence in the speech of others.

While variables may be more or less salient, within a single variable, variants may be structured in terms of markedness. The concept of markedness refers to which member of a given paradigm is considered more natural, and less noticeable, either in general or with respect to contextual factors. In phonology, the unmarked member is the one which appears in absence of specific conditioning (Anderson 1985). In morphological paradigms, this default member is frequently the one with the least amount of explicit morphological marking. In a variable paradigm, the unmarked member might similarly be said to be the one which appears most often, which appears in absence of conditioning factors and which carries a lighter burden of social or situational meanings. In most settings, listeners seem to conceptualize *-ing* as the unmarked member of the paradigm of (ING), as I discuss in Chapter 7. Of course, a system of markedness being present in a variable does not mean that all speakers and listeners will agree on the distribution of markedness. Likewise, different variables will be more or less salient within different communities. One of the things which influences the distributions of markedness and salience is the habitual mode of speaking for a given speaker/listener, the patterns of language they are most accustomed to using and hearing. Although assessments of markedness do not depend solely on expectations derive from habit, it is likely that those variants which depart more strongly or unexpectedly from a listener's customary experience are more apt to be noticed and assigned meaning than those which differ only slightly. As a result, patterns of markedness may be similar to social meanings themselves in being different for different people or groups and subject to contestation.

Just as linguistic variation is structured, so too is the social realm with which it is entangled. As part of constructing the social world, people form associations between certain concepts, considering them to be related, or likely to co-occur. These are built both from direct experience and from explicit beliefs about the structure of the world. Some of these patterns are stable and wide-ranging; researchers into language attitudes have found a consistent correlation between listeners' ratings of the speakers' intelligence, education and socioeconomic status across a variety of populations (Zahn and Hopper 1985). While this combination should surprise no one, it reflects a structuring of the social world, particularly when contrasted with the relative lack of correlation between these qualities and those typically associated with dynamism in this same literature, including qualities like forceful, persuasive, or self-assured. This structuring of listeners' perceptions influences the potential interface points for linguistic variation. Given the lack of correlation between status and dynamism and the association of regional dialect features with lack of education, this structuring makes it likely that dialect features will affect status-related qualities more than dynamism traits.

In addition to implicit associations, listeners' images of the social world are structured by explicit beliefs and ideologies. Eagleton (1991:1) provides a list of potential definitions for the word ideology, including these two: "the medium in which conscious social actors make sense of the world" and "action-oriented sets of beliefs". The beliefs that people hold about the social world and its relation to language shape the choices that speakers make and the interpretations listeners construct. Niedzielski's work, discussed above, reflects not only the possibly implicit association of a specific linguistic pattern with Canadian speech, but also the ideological stance of Detroit residents that their speech is standard and therefore lacking this particular feature they perceive to be marked. This ideology is a weighty one because it does not limit itself to this single linguistic phenomenon, but reflects a widespread adherence to the notion of standard. It also requires a set of beliefs regarding what constitutes standard language and the belief that the speech in their region is perfectly reflective of that standard. Ideologies need not concern themselves directly with language in order to influence linguistic behaviors. For example, ideologies about education and

intelligence may lead to listeners' discounting the effect of language on a speaker's intelligence if the message content reflects a level of educational attainment.

At present, we know quite a bit about the structure of linguistic variation and our knowledge of the structure of the social meaning is growing rapidly. Research into the processes by which listeners interpret linguistic variation will help us learn more about the interface between these two. This, in turn, will help to eliminate the impact of this interface on the long term maintenance and change in patterns of linguistic variation. The research described in this dissertation will help us understand the ways in which listeners negotiate these linguistic, social and sociolinguistic structures to perform their share of the process of co-construction. Using listener perceptions to answer these questions is still somewhat unusual. In the next section, I will briefly discuss some of the many reasons that listener perceptions are useful objects of study.

1.2 Why do listener perceptions matter?

When contemplating the role of listener perceptions in the structuring of linguistic variation, it is apparent that speakers who differ in their linguistic preferences and social sense of meaning while speaking must also differ while listening. As a result, we would expect patterned variation in the responses that listeners give to particular variables, much as we witness patterned variation in the performances of speakers themselves. Indeed, not only are these likely to correspond, but the knowledge on which the performance is based must be to a large extent gained through observation of the performances of others. Further, to the extent that speakers are aware of this variation in their audiences or potential audiences, it will shape the performances they create.

Studies of listener perceptions have been carried out with a range of goals and a range of methodologies. Linguists may wish to investigate listener perceptions for the simple reason that listening is part of the overall process of language use and development and is thus as valuable a subject of inquiry as language production. Labov (1966), in his study of the English of New York City, speculated that the convergence of stylistic and socio-economic factors shown in his production study was

due to a common agreement as to the social status of the given forms. Labov designed the "subjective evaluation test" with which to verify this hypothesis. Rickford (1985) used a subjective reactions test to investigate the structure of the creole continuum in Guyana. Coming from a more technical perspective, Elman *et al.* (1977) demonstrated that the phonetics characteristics of segment perception are different for different languages, even within the same bilingual speaker.

In many cases, linguists may wish to study phenomena that are relatively rare in speech, making it more feasible to study perceptions. Although it is not commonly included in a discussion of listener perception work, the classic technique of eliciting grammaticality judgments in theoretical syntax is of this type, as are more recent approaches which take their cue from psychology (see, for example, Bard *et al.* (1996)). Both of these rely on the notion that certain phenomena may be too rare to investigate fully using production (Pullum 1990). A similar example is the elusive phenomenon of "Gay Speech". Gay men, like straight men, present a range of personae and linguistic styles and thus there are no elements which tie the speech of gay men together and distinguish it from that of straight men (Kulick 2000; Podesva *et al.* 2001). Nonetheless, there is good evidence that there are some vocal cues which trigger a percept of "sounding gay" and that some of these cues are shared across some listeners (Gaudio 1994; Rogers and Smyth 2003; Levon 2005a). It is uncertain whether this style will turn out to consist of a particular set of variables, a set of practices in relation to the larger linguistic matrix or an ideologically defined concept which has no independent linguistic reality at all. Regardless, it is a pattern whose primary operational definition seems to be in terms of perception. I will discuss this phenomenon and its supporting literature in Chapter 5. Similar patterns may be seen in very early perceptual studies. Works such as Pear (1931) set out to find correlates between personality and speech. They succeeded in establishing that listeners are not very skilled at reading personality from speech, but that they tend to agree strongly with each other in their assessments. This suggests the possibility that the association of, for example, a deep voice with a commanding personality is one which exists mostly in perception rather than performance.

The study of listeners may be able to answer important cognitive questions about

processing of language. Niedzielski's work, discussed previously, demonstrated that social categorization of the speaker, in this case geographic region, operates at a very low level to literally affect the perception of the sounds of language. Strand (1999) and Johnson *et al.* (1999) show a similar phenomenon with respect to gender, drawing on the integration of linguistic and visual information first established by McGurk and Macdonald (1976). Plichta and Preston (2005) shows that listeners can process variables along a continuous basis and are capable of aligning that continuum with the social (or geographic) one. All of these studies answer questions about the cognitive abilities and/or habits of speaker/listeners and do so but a study of listening. In the case of vowel splits or mergers, perceptual results can shed light on whether listeners are maintaining distinctions that may be difficult to observe through traditional measurement methods (Labov *et al.* 1972; Di Paolo and Faber 1990).

Listener perceptions are perhaps most thoroughly studied within the covert study of language attitudes, using the Matched Guise Technique developed by Lambert and his colleagues (Lambert *et al.* 1965; Lambert 1967). This approach uses the study of perceptions of linguistic traits as a foil for investigating covert attitudes regarding groups of people. Because linguistic prejudice is frequently more socially sanctioned than other forms, Lambert and his colleagues hypothesized that respondents would express their opinions more openly if the responses were prompted by linguistic performances. Researchers use recordings created by the same person speaking in different manners to investigate listeners' beliefs and attitudes regarding the categories of people commonly believed to speak in those ways. By using the same speaker and varying specific traits, the aim is to eliminate irrelevant variation and guarantee responses which reflect only the differences under study. Since this is the technique used in this study, it will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, along with the description of the methods used in the current study.

Lastly, there's a great deal of evidence that speakers take listeners and their processes into account when constructing their performances. Communicative Accomodation Theory takes the interaction of linguistic behaviors between participants as crucial to the overall construction of variation (Giles *et al.* 1973; Giles 1973). Accomodation Theory began in the early 1970s as a way of incorporating an understanding

of style, style shifting and code choice into sociolinguistic understanding. It centers around the ways in which speakers orient towards the linguistic practices, real or imagined, of their interlocutors, converging or diverging strategically (Giles and Powesland 1975; Thakerar *et al.* 1982). Accomodation, or convergence, is the common behavior that "at least one member of an interactive diad tends to adopt the speech patterns of the person to whom he (sic) is talking" (Giles and Powesland 1975:156). This may occur for a range of reasons, usually relating to a desire to increase one's similarity to one's interlocutor and therefore one's attractiveness. Early experimental work established that increasing communicative similarity between speaker and listener also increased the listener's evaluation of the speaker's attractiveness, as well as their ability to predict and understand what the speaker is saying (Bishop 1979; Berger 1979; Triandis 1960). Convergence of this type relates to the speaker's desire for social approval and so the less powerful participant in interaction is more likely to converge to their interlocutor than the more powerful, since they are more likely to need approval to accomplish their social goals (Thakerar *et al.* 1982). In other situations, participants may diverge in order to express anger or distance.

Accomodation Theory is notable for the degree to which it focuses on the actual sociopsychological processes involved in "recipiency to talk", breaking it down explicitly into perceptual, labeling, attributional and evaluative dimensions (Coupland and Giles 1988:178). Coupland and Giles also emphasize the importance of combining detailed linguistic analysis with a good understanding of the relevant ideological factors and of combining observations of natural data and various kinds with sophisticated experimental work. Much of the early work in the framework focuses on relatively straightforward concepts of convergence and divergence towards the speech style of another, but over time more complex approaches have been developed. Atkinson and Coupland (1988) discuss incorporating ideologies into Accomodation Theory, noting that "situated talk is both conditioned by, and in some sense constitutive of, some higher-order, structured value-system" (p. 321).

This idea has been theoretically developed by others, as well. Drawing on work in Accomodation Theory, Bell (1984); Bell (2001) developed a model of audience design. Bell proposed that a comprehensive model of stylistic variation may be based

on individual speakers designing their performances for their audience, either real or imagined. The core of Bell's theory is that speakers form themselves into social groups which establish recognizable identities, familiar to themselves and others. As part of forming this identity, the social group differentiates its language from that of others through the exploitation of variation. As the larger community recognizes which language behaviors are associated with which groups, listeners may evaluate language used by others and assign social meaning to it. Because speakers in turn are aware of this, they "design their style primarily for and in response to their audience" (Bell 2001:143).

Bell's analysis crucially depends on the alignment between intraspeaker and interspeaker variation. In his assessment, intraspeaker style shifting derives directly from manipulations by the speaker made in response to potential audience evaluation, structured by interspeaker variation. Bell acknowledges the constitutive nature of certain kinds of style shifting, where speakers change their linguistic performance in order to change the situation, rather than responding to an external change. He labels this form of initiative **referee design** in which a social group which is not present in the interaction is invoked using linguistic means thus influencing the development of the interaction by being referenced within it. In this way he proposes a full account of stylistic variation based on the connection of linguistic resources to particular groups, while emphasizing the complexity of individual interactions.

Both of these approaches focus on the listener as an individual, influencing specific linguistic acts by being present in an interaction or referenced by a speaker. Another way to think about how speakers consider their audience is at a more general level. While speakers undoubtedly have models of actual interlocutors, they may also make linguistic choices on the basis of a broader ideological sense of how they are perceived. This is captured in the concept of a linguistic marketplace, put forward by Bourdieu (1982). This approach considers a setting for linguistic exchanges as a market, like a stock market or a vegetable market. Within this market, participants produce their linguistic "offerings" whose value is determined by a number of factors relative to qualities of the linguistic performances themselves as well as the vagaries of that particular setting. Different settings may assign value differently, for example

interactions within a university setting are likely to place greater positive value on the use of the standard language within a performance than might a factory, or a country music concert. As in other economies, the value of one's product determines and is determined by the amount one can get for it. For example, greater value might lead to a higher salary, greater social acceptance, more sales, or greater romantic success, to name a few. Because speakers will be, to varying degrees, aware of the market within which they are operating, they may be expected to craft their performances for maximum value, to the extent that they are capable of doing so. The concept of the marketplace allows us to understand one aspect of how large-scale patterns visible in interpretation feed back into those visible in production. Speakers' awareness of the expectations and beliefs of their listeners will lead them to construct their speech in such a way as to maximize their ability to achieve their particular goals in a given setting.

All three of these approaches speak to the crucial role of listeners in shaping the choices made by speakers. They, with the earlier points regarding the social and cognitive processes of listening itself, provide good reasons why the study of listener perceptions of socially linked variation is a useful endeavor. This provides some of the theoretical background and explanation for the purpose of this research. The following section describes the structure of the dissertation.

1.3 Organization of the chapters

This dissertation is intended to expand our knowledge of how listeners interpret linguistic variation and participate in the ongoing construction of social meaning, a process which shapes the face of linguistic variation. By understanding the factors which influence the interpretations that listeners construct, we can better understand the systems which connect small, idiosyncratic and context dependent decisions to large scale structures with broadly visible patterns. I explore the multiple and complex social meanings relating to articulateness, education, masculinity and regional difference which are all tied to (ING).

The research described here consists of an adapted version of the Matched Guise

Technique, using recordings of spontaneous speech digitally manipulated to create identical recordings differing only in (ING). Using these recordings, I first collected open ended qualitative data regarding listener perceptions of the speakers used in the recordings and of the influence of (ING) in particular. Using this data, I constructed the materials for a large-scale survey, which I carried out over the web, using students from two similarly prestigious but geographically distant schools. The quantitative and qualitative data show the paradox of broad scale relatively consistent and simple beliefs and responses regarding (ING), combined with intricate and curious individual differences based on the particular idiosyncrasies of the speech of the given speaker or the content of their utterance. I show that despite this seeming paradox, these idiosyncrasies are not exceptions to a larger norm, but rather the very behaviors which, in aggregate, make up these large-scale norms.

In Chapter 2, I survey the literature on (ING), highlighting the existing treatments of social meaning and social significance to find possible interpretations of the variable. The production literature has found a range of correlates for (ING), including socioeconomic status, situational formality, race, gender and educational background. Researchers have also found evidence linking (ING) to regional variation and specific performances of masculinity. I discuss all of these correlates and the suggestions they hold regarding the nature of (ING) and the possible meanings listeners might attach to it. After reviewing the literature, I describe a pilot study which investigated the effect of (ING) on listener ratings of speakers along the traditional axes of the matched guise formulations. This experiment demonstrated that it is possible to capture responses to linguistic variation using the matched guise technique. It also showed that that this approach, using the traditional metrics, does not provide sufficient complexity to truly understand listener behavior. I describe the methods used in the pilot and discuss the results. I then point out some of the shortcomings of this pilot study, setting the stage for the main study.

Chapter 3 lays out the methodology for my study. I review the history of the Matched Guise Technique and other work using listener responses to investigate linguistic variation. I also present the crucial methodological points of the current study,

drawing on this literature to support these choices. I then describe the actual procedures used in my study. The original recordings were created using sociolinguistic interviews. I used the software package Praat to manipulate tokens of (ING), creating minimal pairs of recordings. Both speakers and listeners were university students in the South and on the West Coast. I first conducted individual and group interviews eliciting general responses to the recordings, as well as specific reactions to the function of (ING). I then used the qualitative data to construct a survey instrument with ratings and adjective checklists and administered it over the web. The last section of this chapter describes the statistical procedures used in the analysis of the survey data.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 discuss the results of the study. Chapter 4 takes the list of social correlates from the literature on (ING) which are discussed in Chapter 2 and investigates their relationship to (ING) in the results of the study. It shows that while (ING) impacts our range of social perceptions, it tends not to do so in a straightforward way. Only two responses were influenced by (ING) across all of the data: speakers were rated as more *educated*[1] when they used *-ing* and were also more likely to be described as *articulate* in that guise. Other results were more complex. This chapter steps through each correlate in turn and discusses the relevant results.

One fundamental influence on the role of (ING) was the regional background of the speaker. Chapter 5 explores the relationship of (ING) to region and to the concept of accent. It shows the striking importance of language ideologies in how listeners understand the role of (ING) in a specific situation. It also shows the flexibility of the concept of accent and how (ING) influences the perceived performance of different accents. Specifically, *-in* increases the perceived ratings of *accented* speech on the part of the Southern speakers, while decreasing how *accented* a different speaker sounded, one whose accent was associated with urban centers and alternative sexuality.

Chapter 6 moves away from speaker-related influences to the role of the listener in creating meaning. This chapter discusses different listeners' reactions to individual speakers and to the social constraints involved in sharing the explicit evaluations of

[1]Descriptions in italics refer to responses on the matched guise survey, either checkbox or ratings or to exact quotes from respondents.

others. It shows that listeners with more or less positive reactions to a speaker may interpret a "social move" in very different ways. This chapter demonstrates that the limits on speaker agency are clearly provided by the agency of listeners who may assign a variety of meanings to a given performance, regardless of the original intent.

After going over the specific results of the study, I turn in the final chapter to the theoretical implications. Chapter 7 discusses the answers this research provides to the questions discussed in this chapter. It focuses particularly on the role of style as a cognitive tool, one which allows listeners to contextualize their linguistic and social expectations of a given speaker. After introducing the notion of style, I discuss the insight into its character given by the research presented here and describes some of the the many open questions regarding style and its role in the development of variation. Finally, I describe more generally the open questions are arising from this work.

Chapter 2

Background of (ING): Literature and pilot study

Given the wealth of social meanings available in even a single social interaction, it can be difficult to know where to start looking for meanings likely to be influenced by a given variable such as (ING). As discussed in Chapter 1, the logical place to look for guidance is the existing literature, which has extensively investigated the social correlates of (ING). Accordingly, the first half of this chapter is devoted to reviewing this literature with a particular focus on noting social correlates, to consider the suitability of each as a potential "meaning" of (ING), in the sense of being a perceptual as well as a production correlate.

This study aims to explore evaluative correlates of (ING) and proposes to do so with enough nuance and care for context to be able to think of them as meanings. Given that this is in many ways an entirely novel project, it makes sense to establish that some evaluative correlates exist before seeking the ways they vary. The second half of this chapter describes the pilot study carried out prior to the main study, in which a small sample of listeners rated excerpts of read speech which had been manipulated to create minimal pairs differing only in (ING).

This study revealed a number of correlates, showing that listeners do shift their perceptions of a speaker based on a single token of a variable. The study was limited in number of ways, however. After describing the pilot study in detail and exploring

its results, I will explain the ways in which it falls short, setting the stage for the larger study.

2.1 The literature on (ING)

The first half of the chapter reviews the existing literature on the variable (ING), focusing primarily on social factors. (ING) is one of the best-known sociolinguistic variables and has been studied in the speech of a wide range of English speakers with relatively consistent social, phonological and grammatical constraints across many communities. Research has documented (ING) variation in rural New England (Fischer 1958), New York City (Labov 1966), Detroit (Shuy *et al.* 1967), North Carolina (Anshen 1969), Philadelphia (Cofer 1972; Roberts 1994; Labov 2001), Norwich, England (Trudgill 1974), rural Northern Ireland (Douglas-Cowie 1978), Canberra, Australia (Shopen 1978; Wald and Shopen 1985), Ottawa (Woods 1979), Los Angeles (Wald and Shopen 1985), Edinburgh (Reid 1978) and among fraternity men in Virginia (Kiesling 1998). While (ING) has been shown to correlate with many major social categories, social class and situational formality are the most consistent.

The exact variants of (ING) differ from community to community, but the central choice is between a realization with a velar nasal, which I will call *-ing* and one with an aveolar nasal, which I will call *-in*.[1] The *-in* form may be realized in speech as [ɪn] or as [ən] or simply as syllabic [n] (Trudgill 1974), while *-ing* is generally [ɪŋ]. Some areas feature a third variant, such as [ɪŋk] in Canberra (Shopen 1978; Wald and Shopen 1985) or [in] in Ottawa (Woods 1979) and British English (Houston 1985), but these are limited in area and coexist with the first two, in most cases. I will not address them here.

The existing literature provides a crucial source of information about the social correlates of (ING). I will first briefly go over the internal constraints that have been documented, including phonological, grammatical and lexical constraints. I will then

[1] I use these terms in reference to the spelling given to each, in order to avoid involving the vowels preceding the nasals. Cofer (1972); Houston (1985) use G and N for similar reasons but I find these somewhat opaque.

discuss in detail the two most robust social correlates: socioeconomic status and situational formality and suggest what types of evaluative meanings might relate to them. Then I will move on to other social correlates that are found in the literature, namely race, gender, age and region and discuss what they tell us about the overall social meaning of (ING). After reviewing the literature, I will describe the pilot study and its results, implications and shortcomings.

Internal constraints

The phonological influences on (ING) are relatively few and straightforward. The variable only occurs in unstressed environments, as stressed syllables (e.g. in the noun *thing*) require an *-ing* pronunciation in most varieties. Non-categorical phonological constraints include regressive assimilation, with following velar stops favoring the *-ing* and alveolar stops favoring the *-in* forms. There is also progressive dissimilation, with velar stops favoring the *-in* forms and alveolar stops favoring *-ing* (Cofer 1972; Houston 1985; Roberts 1994).

The *thing* words (*something*, *everything*, etc.) have a strong influence on the rates of (ING) use in some communities, but these are divided into *something* and *nothing*, which favor *-in*, and *everything* and *anything* which are categorically or near-categorically *-ing*. Cofer (1972) and Houston (1985) observe that this is likely due to the syllable structure, in that the latter have a secondary stress on (ING). But while Houston's data from the American South shows a categorical divide for the two groups, her British data is much less sharp. Rather than categorical differences, the two pairs of lexemes show only a strong preference for their respective variants, suggesting that these varieties differ in some way either in their assignment of stress in these words or their constraints around (ING) and secondary stress. Table 2.1 gives those numbers, showing percent of *-ing* the two categories (Houston 1985:22). The set phrase *going to* in some areas is categorically *goin* or *gonna* (e.g. in Los Angeles), while in others it is variable but strongly favors *-in* (in Canberra) (Wald and Shopen 1985).

Houston (1985) and Labov (1989) both discuss the historical development of (ING)

	U.S. Southern		British	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Some/nothing	2	0	74	87
Every/anything	100	98	94	95

Table 2.1: Percentage of -ing in British and American Southern speech, -thing words. Reproduced from Tables 2.4 and 2.5 from Houston (1985:22-23).

in some depth, in particular how the current variable's grammatical constraints are residual evidence of (ING)'s beginning as an incomplete merger of two distinct morphemes. Table 2.2 shows the breakdown by grammatical category for Houston's data on the American South. This history bears out Labov's description of (ING) as "a case of stigmatization without change" (Labov 1966:394), in that it has been in use since the nineteenth century with roughly the same variants and social associations. This historical stability may account for the wide geographic and social range of the variable and the consistency of the internal constraints.

It is not clear the degree to which internal constraints influence the social structures involved in using and hearing linguistic variation. Categorical constraints are relatively straightforward, in that tokens which violate them will be infelicitous and thus impossible to interpret or otherwise be rejected. Conversely, tokens which comply with categorical constraints may lack social meaning, due to the lack of choice speakers have in selecting the variant. It is still not clear the degree to which knowledge of more flexible internal constraints contributes to social reasoning. One possibility is that variants used in disfavored environments will carry more social weight than others (the "oomph" hypothesis by Bender (2001)). Bender's work suggests that this may be the case but more work needs to be done.

In practice, it becomes prohibitively difficult to construct a study with the appropriate attention to social detail while also taking internal constraints into account (apart from categorical constraints, which must obviously be observed). In Chapter 3, I will discuss the reasons why it is important to use spontaneously produced speech in studies such as this. This makes it impossible to control for phonological

	p	%	N
every/anything	1.00	99	90
derived nominal	.74	25	12
monomorphemics	.70	25	20
gerunds			
accusative-in			
NP complements	.21	6	124
appositive			
reduced relative clauses			
verb phrase complements	.18	6	72
progressives			
quasi-progressives			
periphrastic future			
modifiers (+ part)	.09	2	326
some/nothing	.03	1	102
West Texas	.76	19	157
Atlanta, Georgia	.24	15	589
Input probability	.22	16	746

Knock out categories– 0% *-ing*: proper names, prepositions, modifiers (+ ger).

Table 2.2: Probability and percentage of -ing in U.S. Southern speech, by grammatical category. Reproduced from Table 4.37 from Houston (1985:152).

and grammatical environments perfectly, particularly in the case of (ING) which is a relatively rare variant compared to, say, vowels.

Even when read speech is used, as in the pilot, it is difficult to tease out the influence of internal constraints. Tokens which occur with different sounds around them must necessarily be occurring with different words. As we will see later in the chapter (and beyond), factors such as word choice and message content (what the person says) have a huge impact on listener evaluations of utterances and even the role of (ING) within them. For these reasons, this study will neglect the influence of internal constraints, while acknowledging that these must be addressed at a later time.

Most common social correlates

The social correlates of (ING) in the production literature represent the best information available about what the meanings of (ING) are or might be. Because (ING) has been studied in so many contexts by different researchers, there is a great deal of knowledge about its behavior, but it can be difficult to integrate this knowledge. The most thoroughly documented social aspects of the variable are socioeconomic status and context of speaking, particularly with respect to formality. I will discuss these first, then turn to the less commonly treated correlates.

Socioeconomic status

Different researchers have carved up class in different ways. But of those who have looked at class at all, all have found a strong positive correlation between proportion of *-ing* use and socioeconomic status (Labov 1966; Cofer 1972; Woods 1979). The exception to this is Fischer (1958), who found only the barest suggestion of a class-based pattern. He notes, however, that his work was centered in a very small, relatively homogenous community without strong class lines.

In the larger studies, class is a key feature of the distribution of (ING). Although the exact formula used to calculate class division differs from study to study, class is typically measured along multi-index scales, including occupation type, income, kind of housing, neighborhood and father's occupation (see, for example Trudgill (1974)). By combining multiple indicators, researchers create a measure of the complex construct of class, for example capturing the fact that while class is commonly linked to income level, some relatively high-paying professions may be ideologically connected to the working class (i.e. plumbers, electricians), while some professions carry more status than their income level might predict (i.e. teachers). This process is can be challenging and necessarily erases certain aspects of the social structures under study. Nonetheless, it provides a useful overall picture of the relationship of income, occupation and education to linguistic behavior. Using these measures, multiple studies have shown that the *-in* form increases in frequency in the speech of people lower on the class hierarchies while the *-ing* form increases in the speech of those higher up.

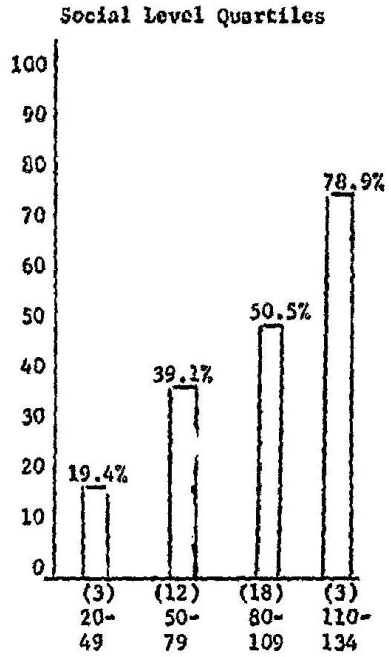

Figure 2.1: Percent -in by social level in Detroit. Reproduced from Figure 11, Shuy et al. *(1967:69)*

Shuy *et al.* (1967) have a simple graph demonstrating this pattern, giving the percent of the *-in* use for their informants by "Social level" quartiles and reproduced in Figure 2.1. Note that the top and bottom quartiles have only three members each. In addition to this main effect, they report an interaction such that the other differences (gender, race and age) are smaller among informants below the median "social level".

Reid (1978) also shows a simple correlation between socioeconomic status, in this case indicated by the occupations held by the fathers of the speakers, who were all preadolescent boys. Reid found that *-in* use increased as the prestige of the father's occupation decrease, as shown in Table 2.3.

In some of the studies more complex findings were reported. Anshen (1969) has argued that in his data the correlation with occupation type is a result of a link with education, which is the true correlate. It is difficult to generalize from his results

Occupational group	(ING) index
Professionals, managers (A)	18
Foreman, skilled manual workers (C)	66
Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers (D)	74

Table 2.3: Percentage of -in in Edinburgh preadolescent boys, by father's occupation. Reproduced from Table 8 from Reid (1978:167).

though, as his data concerns a small Black community in the South in the 1960s, in which both the educational and occupational opportunities for his informants were limited. In addition, because it was a small community, social interactions were not as influenced by occupation as might be the case in a more populated area (Anshen 1969:62). Labov (2001) also reports different behavior for occupation and education. In careful speech, (ING) use among his Philadelphia informants is heavily influenced by both their occupation and level of education. In casual speech, only occupation has an effect (Labov 2001:118). Douglas-Cowie (1978) highlighted the social nature of linguistic indexes of class by demonstrating that (ING) use among her informants tracked with their social ambitions as evaluated by their peers, rather than their actual educational achievements.

While it is clear that (ING) is linked to both education and occupation, it is not certain if it is more closely linked with one of them or if so, how. Indeed, the techniques for calculating class in large scale sociolinguistic studies make it difficult to determine what individual factors, if any, are involved in the use of a given variable.

Situational formality

The other stable correlate of (ING) has been most frequently termed style, generally in Labov's sense, referring to the formality of conversational context which influences the amount of "attention paid to speech". When people are reading aloud, for example, they are likely to be more conscious of their speech and make an effort to make their language more standard, while in casual conversation they are more focused on the content of their words than the form and allow their more natural vernacular to emerge. This image of style has been critiqued by a number of sociolinguists

(see Rickford and McNair-Knox (1994) for a thorough discussion) as unnecessarily compressing a number of distinct dimensions into one. For example, a reading style involves both increased attention to the processes of speech and the introduction of the written form of the language which is generally considered to require more formal linguistic behavior than the spoken. Wolfson (1976) provides a thorough discussion of the issues involved, with a particular attention to critiquing the premise of the vernacular as natural speech on which this model is founded.

Despite its limitations, this definition of style has the advantage of being relatively easy to the manipulate and it is the model used by many of the researchers studying (ING), beginning with Labov's own 1966 work, which identifies four main styles: casual speech (A), formal speech (B), reading (C) and word list (D). Across these categories, the variable has shown relatively consistent behavior with respect to style, with greater *-ing* use shown in those contexts with more formality or more of a focus on careful speech and greater *-in* use in those which are more casual, with less of a premium on standard speech. Because class and formality each influence (ING), many studies report both together in a single graph. Figure 2.2 shows class, formality and (ING) from Labov (1966). Later work in Philadelphia issued a similar pattern, as shown in Figure 2.3.

The earliest work discussing (ING), Fischer (1958), gathered data from children in a rural New England town. The style differentiation in his work is also formal interview vs. casual speech, although in his case both styles are within the larger context of speaking with a known adult (the researcher). Fischer's data also showed greater use of *-in* in the more casual interview setting than in the formally administered interview.

In some cases, the influence of style on (ING) use is mediated by class, as in Trudgill (1974). In his data, the middle class had similar rates of *-in* use in their reading passage, word list and formal speech styles. In contrast, the formal speech of the working class speakers was closer to their casual speech and less similar to their reading and word list contexts (Trudgill 1974:92). Figure 2.4 shows this pattern.

Working with similar categories, Reid (1978) found that his adolescent informants in Edinburgh as a group increased their *-in* use as the speaking situation became less

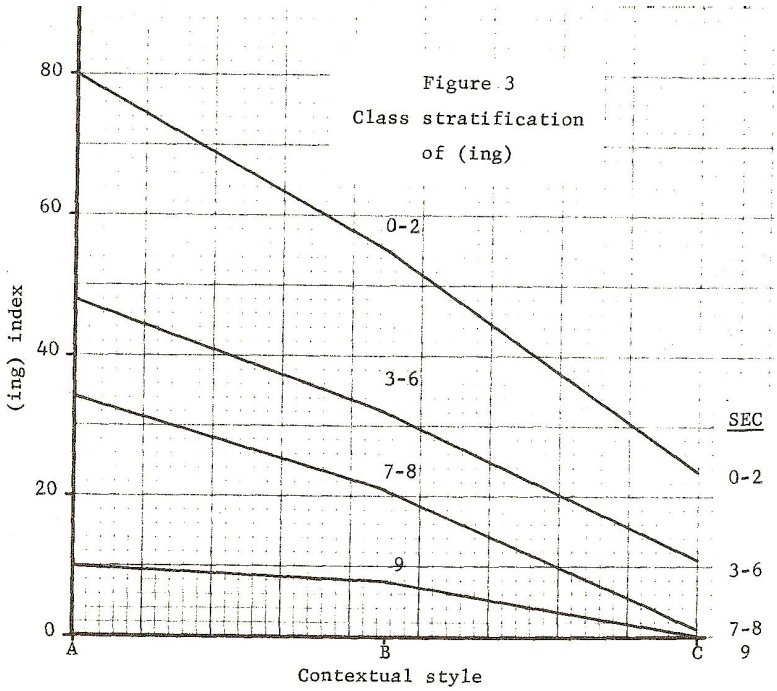

Figure 2.2: Percent of -in by class and situational formality in New York City. Reproduced from Figure 3, Labov (1966:398).

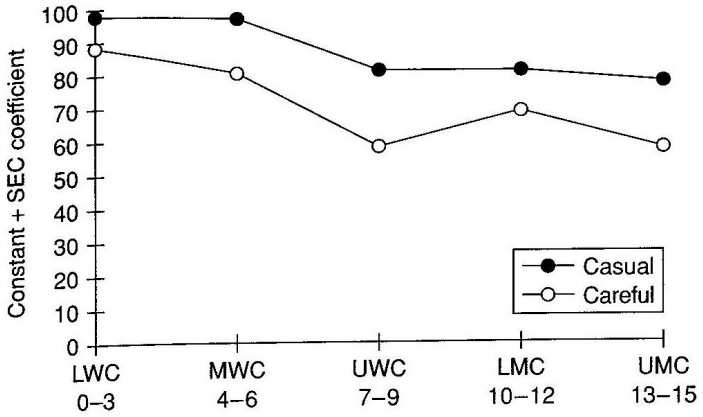

Figure 2.3: Expected values of -in by class and situational formality in Philadelphia. From regression analysis using age, gender, neighborhood and ethnic categories. Reproduced from Figure 13.1, Labov (2001:419).

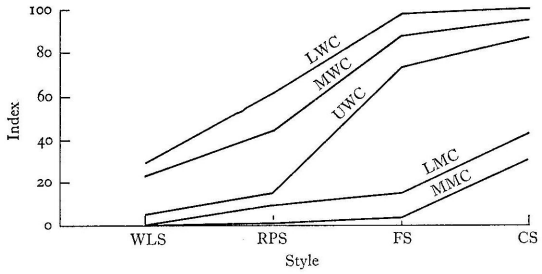

Figure 2.4: Percent of -in in Norwich by class and situational formality (Word List, Reading Passage, Formal and Casual Styles). Reproduced from Figure 14, Trudgill (1974:92).

focused on language and less oriented around adult agendas. Thus, the lowest use of *-in* was found in the reading passage, with much more in a formal interview, then a peer conversation in the presence of an adult and finally with playground usage having even slightly more instances of *-in* than the other peer situation. Reid also gives the indices in each situation for different speakers and notes the variation in patterns from speaker to speaker. Going further, he notes that a variety of linguistic and other cues indicated that different boys approached the interview differently, with some seeing it as clearly a very formal event while others displayed it confident and relaxed stance. This provides a useful reminder that despite our own evaluations of the formality of the given situation, participants may have different interpretations.

Situation	(ING) index
Reading Passage (RP)	14
Interview (IV)	45
Peer session (GP)	54
Playground (PG)	59

Table 2.4: Percentage of -in in Edinburgh adolescents, by situation. Reproduced from Table 6 from Reid (1978:163).

Douglas-Cowie (1978), working in rural Northern Ireland, used a very different techniques for manipulating the formality of the situation. The two different levels were recorded in separate sessions. In one case, in formants conversed in small groups with the investigator, who was herself and native of the small village and familiar to

all of them. In the second session, informants met one-on-one with a colleague of the investigators, who was unfamiliar to them and spoke with an educated RP accent. Although the 10 informants showed a wide range of (ING) usage, they consistently used less and *-in* in the presence of the unknown interviewer.

Cofer (1972) deliberately manipulated the ordering of the topics such that three sections of the interview are distinguishable. The early portion was formal by timing (assuming that informants start out more nervous and formal and relax later in the interview) and formal by topic, in this case background information and questions about lexical preferences. The middle portion of the interview was informal by timing and informal by topic, dealing with childhood games and stories of fights or great danger. The final section was informal by timing and relatively formal by topic, where interviewees were asked to describe how to tie a shoelace and to define common sense and a successful man. The results, shown in Table 2.5, differ by class, but in a different pattern from those of Trudgill. All of the speakers show relatively high *-ing* use in the first formal section and higher *-in* use with the middle informal section, but for the third section, the middle class speakers return to higher *-ing* use while the working class speakers remain with greater *-in* use (Cofer 1972:206).

Social Classes	(1)	(2)	(3)
Black working	54	72	66
White working	40	67	64
Middle-class	34	50	38

(1) = background-lexicon
(2) = games-fights-danger of death
(3) = common sense-shoelace-successful man

Table 2.5: Percentage of -in in Philadelphia, by class, race and formality. Reproduced from Table 4 from Cofer (1972:205).

The stylistic influence on (ING) in Woods (1979) (Figure 2.5) is also class-dependent and differs from the usual stratified pattern in that his most formal context, minimal pairs, causes a spread of (ING) rates by class, such that the class differences in this context are much greater than in any of the others.

Wald and Shopen (1985) stand out in the literature as the only work which uses

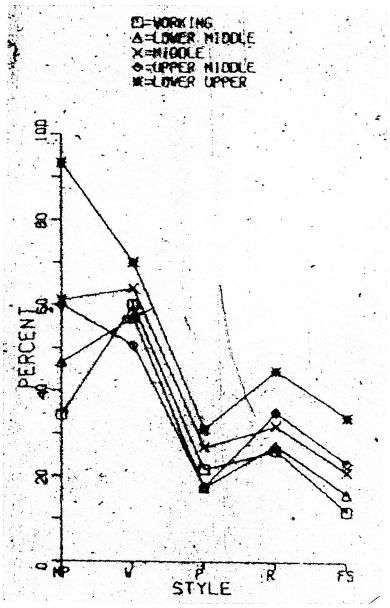

Figure 2.5: Percent of -ing by class and situational formality in Ottawa. Reproduced from Figure 5.3.a, Woods (1979:104).

naturally occurring speech rather than interview data. Although this provides important insight into the behavior of (ING) in other situations, their data were collected via notetaking, a process which is more susceptible to researcher bias than methods which involve recording. The stylistic contexts that they record are based on the speaker/addressee relationship (family, friend and other). Their Canberra data shows higher *-in* use among friends than with either family or others, as Table 2.6 shows. Their L.A. data has a subset limited to family conversation, within which they note a stylistic division between joking and arguing. Table 2.7 gives the (gendered) effect of this.

Relationship	% *-in*
Friend	22
Family	14
Other	14

Table 2.6: Percentage of -in in Canberra, Australia, by speaker/addressee relationship. Adapted from Table 3 from Wald and Shopen (1985:534).

Speaker	Joking Style	Arguing Style
Male	46	24
Female	28	21

Table 2.7: Percentage of -in in Los Angeles, California, by conversational context. Reproduced from Table 6 from Wald and Shopen (1985:539).

Overall, the existing knowledge suggests that *-in* is associated with contexts in which speakers are more comfortable, more familiar with their interlocutors, less focused on their speech and discussing less formal topics. This trend is further borne out by a vocabulary constraint in which *-in* forms occur more commonly with shorter, more common "everyday" words, while *-ing* is favored by longer, more ornate words (Fischer 1958; Wald and Shopen 1985).

Between these two axes of social variation, formality and class, we can derive a number of related concepts that might be relevant for teasing out the meaning of (ING). Based on the correlation with educational background and also with situations which emphasize care and attention to language, we see that (ING) may have some relation to education in general and educated language in particular. Because of the interplay between the concepts of education and intelligence, it would be inappropriate to look at one without the other. Studying evaluations of intelligence is a complex proposition, given that different people may orient to different types of intelligence, or may have different associations with words like *intelligent* vs. *smart*. The socioeconomic status correlate itself also invokes concepts like wealth, occupation, neighborhood or consumption patterns. From the relationship of (ING) to situational formality, we might want to examine contextual and emotional concepts related to formality, for example comfort, being tense or relaxed, politeness, respect and formality itself.

Other social correlates

While socioeconomic status and situational formality are the most consistently documented social correlates of (ING), they are by no means the only ones. Another

is gender, specifically a link between *-in* pronunciation and masculinity. In addition, researchers have linked (ING) use to race, region and age. I will go over these correlates and discuss the findings about them in the different studies. Lastly, I will discuss interview data from the literature which provide insight into speakers' overt beliefs regarding (ING).

Gender

There is a general trend in the literature for higher levels of *-in* to be associated with men and higher levels of *-ing* with women. Table 2.8 summarizes this trend across an handful of studies. This pattern does not hold in all cases, but it is common, while a difference in the other direction is uncommon.

Study	Location	Men	Women	Both
Labov (1966)	New York	36	-	31
Shuy *et al.* (1967)	Detroit	62	21	-
Shopen (1978)	Canberra	24	16	-
Houston (1985), <35yo	Britain	88	72	-
Houston (1985), >35yo	Britain	78	76	-
Wald and Shopen (1985)	Canberra	23	24	-

Table 2.8: Percentage of -in in men's and women's speech across studies.

However, the influence of gender interacts with class and context and it is rare for a study to show higher levels for men in all subgroups (i.e. within each intersection of class and style). Labov's data showed more *-in* use for men within the lower class speakers but also showed that in the middle class group men used slightly **less** *-in* than did their female counterparts. In Anshen's study, there was no significant difference in (ING) use between men and women, but there was an interaction between gender of the speaker and the race of the (male) interviewer. The subjects, all Black, used more *-in* with a Black interviewer than a White interviewer and this effect was larger among the men than the women. This pattern was the reverse of another variable in his study, /r/ use, suggesting that the behavior reflects something specific to the variables themselves.

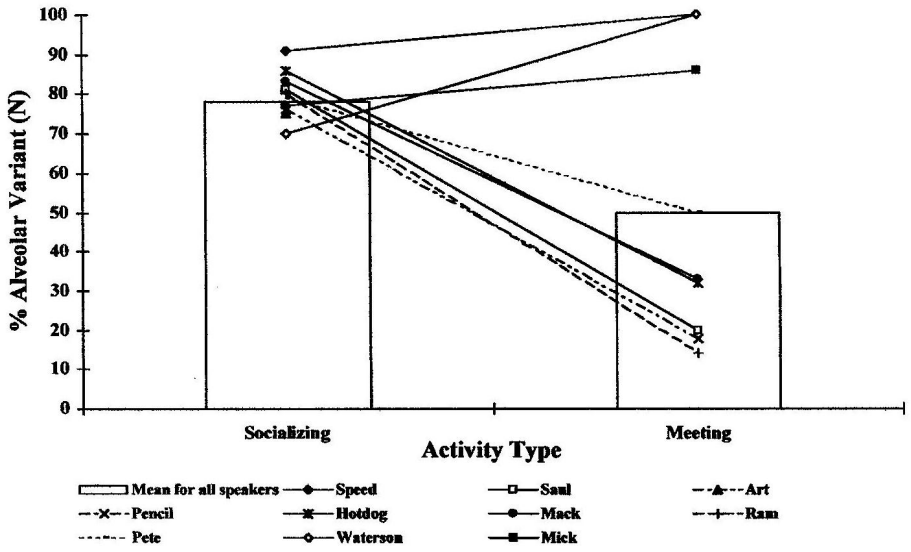

Figure 2.6: Percent -in for individual fraternity members across activity types. Reproduced from Figure 8, Kiesling (1998:85)

Trudgill looked at (ING) rates by gender within the cells broken down by class and context and found that in a majority of the cells (17 out of 20) the women led in *-ing* use. He suggests that this may be due to a combined effect of increased status consciousness on the part of the female speakers. He suggested that speakers associated the working class with masculinity, causing men to favor this class-linked form. This connection between (ING), the working class and masculinity (or a particular type of masculinity) is addressed in more depth by Kiesling (1998), who studied (ING) use within a college fraternity in Virginia. In Kiesling's data, some members maintained or increased their use of *-in* during fraternity meetings as compared to social times. These men also showed an allegiance to a particular type of physical masculinity which valued a working-class background, although not all of them had such a background. This use of *-in* as a masculine signifier does not contrast in his analysis with female patterns of speech, but with the masculinities (Connell 1995) displayed by other members, who use *-in* in social situations but favor *-ing* in meetings. Figure 2.6 shows the remarkable divergence of these three members.

Kiesling's findings are reminiscent of Fischer's anecdotal evidence that one boy in

his New England data who favored *-ing* almost exclusively was a "model" boy, who "did his school work well, was popular among his peers, reputed to be thoughtful and considerate" (Fischer 1958:49) while another boy who used both variants was a "typical" boy, described as "physically strong, dominating, full of mischief but disarmingly frank about his transgressions" (Fischer 1958:49). Table 2.9 gives the number of each variant used by the two boys in their TAT responses (most formal style). More generally, Fischer's data linked *-in* use with boys over girls, although

	-ing	*-in*
"Model" boy	38	1
"Typical" boy	10	12

Table 2.9: Tokens of (ING) in two New England boys. Reproduced from Table 2, in Fischer (1958:49). Chi squared: 19.67; $p < .001$

his breakdown showed that the "model boy" described was not alone in bucking this gendered split—there were two girls (out of nine) who used more *-in* than *-ing* and five boys (out of fifteen) who favored *-ing* over *-in*.

	-ing<*-in*	*-ing*≥*-in*
Boys	5	7
Girls	10	2

Table 2.10: (ING) preferences among New England children, by gender. Reproduced from Table 1, in Fischer (1958:48). Chi squared: 2.84; $.05 < p < .1$ (by 2-tailed test).

Gender differences are not always about men and women using different overall amounts of a variant. Wald and Shopen (1985) report a gender difference with respect to how men and women treat different kinds of addressees. In their Canberra data, the use of (ING) was similar for both men and women talking to family members and others and for women talking to their friends, while the remaining category, that of men talking to their friends, showed twice the rate of *-in* use. The gender of interlocuters also had an effect, in that both men and women used more *-in* when talking to men than women. This pattern contrasts with their Los Angeles data, in which women talking to their female friends used more *-in* than those talking to their

male friends. As in Canberra, having a female addressee favored *-ing* in all other contexts.

Race

Only a few studies so far have addressed race. Those which do have only contrasted Black and White speakers and, for the most part, report higher *-in* use among Black speakers than White. Shuy *et al.* (1967) found a rate of 55.8% *-in* use among their Black speakers overall, contrasted with 37.6% for White speakers (Shuy *et al.* 1967:67). Both Labov and Cofer found that Black speakers used *-in* more frequently than White speakers. Cofer noted that in his data this difference was within the larger differences based on class. In contrast, Anshen compared his work in North Carolina in a Black community with that of Levine and Crockett (1966) in a nearby White community and found that the race-based differences in (ING) use were much larger than those of education. This suggests that the relative weight of race and education or class may be regionally or otherwise variable. As mentioned above, Anshen's informants were significantly influenced by the race of their interviewer.

Labov, in New York, observed that his Black informants used more *-in* than the White ones, but that Black out-of-towners used the most of all, while White out-of-towners did not differ significantly from White New Yorkers, shown in Table 2.11. It is not clear whether this is a finding regarding the regional distribution of (ING) among Black vs. White speakers, or the distribution of regional origins among Black vs. White newcomers in New York City at the time.

	Style B (interview)	Style C (reading)
White New Yorkers	31	13
White out-of-towners	37	8
Black New Yorkers	62	18
Black out-of-towners	77	42

Table 2.11: Percent of -in used by native New Yorkers and out-of-towners, by race and situational formality. Reproduced from Labov (1966:397).

Region

There is little solid data concerning the regional variation of (ING), apart from this interaction with race observed by Labov. Work on (ING) has largely come from studies of local communities. It is not straightforward to compare (ING) rates across studies, given that the contexts of speaking differ. Wald and Shopen's data, collected by students from overheard conversations in Los Angeles and Canberra, shows some differences between the two cities. Their overall rates differed (24.8% *-in* for Los Angeles, 19.8% in Canberra), in addition to the difference in gendered patterns described previously. This suggests that there are, indeed, a real regional differences at least on a global level.

Many linguists and nonlinguists alike have a sense that speakers in the American South use more *-in* than the rest of the country. Labov (2001) says that in the Southern states, along with the North of England and Scotland, "the /in/ form is used almost exclusively in speech, even of the most formal kind" (p. 90). Cofer references a comment by Mencken (1963) than the *-in* variant is more common among educated Southerners that among their Northern or Eastern counterparts. Wolfram and Christian (1976) report that Appalachian speakers show higher rates of *-in* use that most other White speakers, including those in the non-Appalachian South, and that while class and stylistic variation is present to some extent in their data, it is signficantly less prevalent than that reported elsewhere. It is certain that regional differences exist, both in terms of overall use and the structuring of social and internal factors. What these differences are, however, remains somewhat uncertain. It seems likely that Southern speakers do use more *-in*, but regardless of the facts, the belief exists. This belief and its ideological effects will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Age

Age is the last social category discussed in the literature on (ING). Both Labov and Woods (1979) find that younger speakers use more *-in* than older speakers do. Table 2.12 gives the age variation in Labov (1966), broken down by linguistic style and class, while Table 2.13 shows age findings from Woods (1979), by formality. These

studies are snapshot (conducted at one point in time), as opposed to longitudinal (follows speakers over time). So we do not know for sure whether this age difference is one of "apparent time" due to older forms being preserved in the speech of older speakers (Labov 1966:318) or of age-grading, speakers changing their speech as they age. Given the stable nature of (ING), the latter is more likely.

	Class							
	Style A (casual)				Style B (interview)			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
20-39 years old	90	60	43	0	75	45	50	2
40 + years old	85	48	21	23	50	27	12	2

Table 2.12: Percent of -in used among New Yorkers, by age, formality and class. Adapted from Table 8, in Labov (1966:397).

Age	Minimal Pairs	Word List	Pictures	Reading	Free Speech
>40	63.0	63.9	30.9	36.3	25.5
<40	54.0	57.7	21.7	29.1	16.8

Table 2.13: Percent of -ing among Ottawa speakers, by age and formality. Adapted from Woods (1979:196).

Both of these studies show only two age categories, however. Different patterns emerged in two other studies which provide a finer grained age breakdown. The British data from Houston's study is shown in Table 2.14 while Shuy *et al.*'s Detroit data is shown in Table 2.15.

Language ideologies

In addition to tracking the rates of (ING) use in different settings and by different people, Wald and Shopen also looked into attitudes towards the variants, through interviews and self-reports. They confirmed that their speakers considered the *-ing* form to be the standard variant. They also found that women were more likely than

	Age			
	10-17	18-34	34-55	56 +
"inside" dialects	32	22	21	42
"outside" dialects	9	5	23	12

Table 2.14: Percent of -ing for different age groups in Britain, by region. Reproduced from Houston (1985:147).

Age	% *-in*
Child (9-12)	43.9
Teen (13-17)	52.9
Adults (30-50)	42.3

Table 2.15: Percent of -in in Detroit, by age. Adapted from Figure 11, in Shuy et al. *(1967:69)*

men to state a preference for *-ing* over *-in*. When asked to describe the sort of people who use the *-in* variant, respondents gave a range of descriptions. Wald and Shopen grouped these into three types: personally negative (e.g. *uneducated*, *lazy*, *careless*, *drunk*) which covered nearly half the response, socially lower (*working class*, *blue collar*) which made up about a quarter of them and neutral descriptions (*everyone says it sometimes*, *depends on origin* or *average Australian*), also about a quarter. These responses are revealing, but provide a particular slant on the views held by the interviewees, as the question asked focused on the personal qualities of people who use *-in* frequently and not on other aspects, for example in what situations most people might be expected to use *-in*.

2.2 Preliminary research

As a first step, I carried out a small, simple matched guise experiment on (ING) and /t/ release, although ultimately the main study investigated (ING) only. My goals were to test the effectiveness of the methodology and to get a better sense of the general meanings that listeners attach to the variables. Listeners rated speakers based on short recordings (one sentence long) and no contextual information. The results

showed clearly that listeners respond to the variables and that the aspects of behavior that were influenced by the variables fell within the arena of meaning sketched out by the production studies. (ING) influenced perceptions of the speakers' status, namely ratings on *wealthy*, *educated* and *smart* and also impressions of mood, including *casual*, *formal*, *relaxed* and *careful*. (ING) also was involved with two interaction effects related to regional origin and ratings of politeness which I will discuss in more detail below. /t/ release influenced some of the same qualities as (ING) did, but fewer of them, specifically *smart*, *casual*, *formal* and *relaxed*.

Methods

To make the recordings used in the experiment, I had four speakers (two male and two female) record a number of sentences, reading them in dialogue form to encourage a conversational tone. They were instructed at first to read the dialogue as naturally as possible and then the variables were described to them and several more recordings were taken using each (ING) or /t/ variant in turn. The most natural sounding version of each sentence was selected for each speaker and then a copy was digitally manipulated to splice in the alternate variant (each sentence has a token of only one of the variables under study). In this way, 19 pairs of recordings were created (due to technical problems, useful results were only collected for 17 of these pairs and only three of the speakers).

The study was conducted using 34 undergraduate students as listeners, running each one individually at a computer with noise-canceling headphones. Each respondent heard 10 pairs of recordings (except for the first few who heard 7). The recordings were presented in randomized order, adjusted slightly to ensure that paired recordings were never heard back to back. Of the 17 pairs used, 6 tested responses to /t/ and 11 to (ING). The disparity in numbers was due to a division between (ING) in verbal gerunds and the word *something*. Originally these were prepared as independent variables, but the data on them showed no difference and so in the analysis they were collapsed into one.

As each recording played, listeners were presented with a screen of questions to

fill out. The screen included a button to play the recording again at any time as they answered the questions. Listeners were asked to rate the speaker on a list of ten adjectives (*casual, formal, nervous, relaxed, careful, confident, wealthy, educated, smart, polite*), saying whether the speaker was *very casual* or *not at all casual* on a 5 point scale. Then they were asked to give an estimate as to the speaker's age and region of origin and were given a chance to enter further comments before proceeding to the next recording. The comment section was described in the instructions as a place for any other comments with the example "if the speaker sounds like they work in a particular profession or if they remind you of someone".

Results

The responses from this preliminary experiment were analyzed using Factor Analysis and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). I will first discuss the results of the Factor Analysis on the adjective ratings, which provides a useful window into the ways in which the listeners relate the various attributes to each other. I will then discuss the direct or main effects of the two linguistic variables, that is, the ways in which using *-ing* or *-in*, or release or non-release of /t/, causes someone to be perceived as more or less *intelligent*, or *casual*, etc. In addition to the adjective ratings, I will also discuss the effect of the linguistic variables on the final questions regarding the region that the speaker seems to be from and the comment section. After the main effects, I will talk about the interactions, specifically the ways in which the linguistic variables combined with the actual message content or the particular speaker to affect the responses. Lastly, I will talk about some of the other effects that were present in the data. For the most part these are "noise", variation which is orthogonal to the issues at hand in the investigation. Nonetheless, some of the patterning of this noise offers important insight into the issues involved in developing experiments of this kind which was useful in the development of the next phase. Finally, I will discuss the shortcomings of this study and how the larger project addresses them.

Factor analysis

Factor analysis is a technique for discovering the co-occurrence patterns in a set of data. In a set of ratings like this, factor analysis can tell us which of the attributes tend to have similar or exactly opposite values across the data. Factor analysis of the data in this study revealed three factors which I am calling Status, Mood and Politeness/Age. The rotated factor matrix in Table 2.16 gives the weighting of each adjective with the factors. In this table, the larger weights (in absolute value) indicate that that adjective is more strongly associated with that factor, while the sign of the weight indicates a positive or negative correlation. If the absolute value of factor weight is greater than 0.5, I assigned the adjective to that factor (indicated in bold). The factor distribution is consistent across the data for both variables.

	Status	Mood	Politeness/Age
educated	**.83266**	.06930	-.02119
wealthy	**.71765**	.03760	-.10127
smart	**.79491**	.02733	.05050
casual	-.24288	**-.79793**	.13539
formal	.41560	**.70214**	.06137
confident	.39519	**-.62631**	-.07453
relaxed	-.05433	**-.81031**	.20748
nervous	-.16996	**.74930**	.04684
careful	.38780	**.57617**	.28381
polite	.17746	.08642	**.86246**
age	.24817	.12819	**-.52650**

Table 2.16: Factor analysis on pooled data from (ING) and /t/

In the rest of the section, I will discuss the analysis on the individual adjectives, but I will approach the discussion in terms of the factor structure, discussing the Status adjectives first, then the Mood adjectives and finally politeness, age and the short-answer questions.

Direct effects of (ING) and /t/ release

The first place to look for answers regarding the meaning of (ING) and /t/ release is in the direct effects that they had on the responses of the listeners. If listeners showed a significant inclination to rate an utterance with one variant as higher on the scale of *casual* than the identical utterance with the other variant, this is a good indication that they consider that variant more *casual* than the other. The two linguistic variables had a direct effect on adjectives in the Status factor, on most of those in the Mood factor and on the responses regarding region and general comments. I will discuss each of these groups in turn.

The first factor consisted of the three status adjectives: *wealthy*, *educated* and *smart*. The most noticeable thing about the status adjectives is the discomfort that listeners had with them. The standard deviations of these three adjectives were markedly narrower than those of the others (.49, .67 and .60 respectively, while the others ranged from .80 to 1.04), as subjects were much less willing to rate anyone away from the central and therefore neutral value of three. Despite this, there was a good deal of agreement in the variation that did occur. The variable effects for (ING) were very strong (shown below in Table 2.17): speakers were rated as more *wealthy*, *educated* and *smart* when using the *-ing* forms as compared with the *-in* forms.

Adjective	*-in* mean	*-ing* mean	p value (one-tailed)	Effect size
wealthy	2.86	**3.09**	.000	.45
educated	2.99	**3.38**	.000	.57
smart	3.03	**3.32**	.000	.47

Table 2.17: Status means for (ING).

Table 2.17 gives the status effects of (ING): the means for each variant, significance of the effect (using the t-test) and effect size. Effect size is the difference between the means relative to the pooled standard deviation. Because different sets of data may involve numbers at different scales, it can be difficult to judge how big the difference between two averages is. Statistical significance can tell us how **confident** to be that a given difference is a real effect and not a fluke but not how large it is, relative to

the overall variability. Calculating effect size is a way of normalizing a difference and as such it is comparable across different scales and different data sets. In general, an effect size of around .20 is considered small, one around .50 is considered medium and one of .70 or more is considered large.[2] Effect size is particularly relevant in this case, given the compressed distribution of the status adjectives compared to the others. The status effects of (ING) showed that although listeners preferred to describe all speakers as of average wealth, education and intelligence, when they deviated from this line they agreed strongly that people using *-in* had less of each than those using *-ing*. In contrast, only one of the three status variables (*smart*) shows a real effect for /t/ release, as shown in Table 2.18.

Adjective	burst mean	no burst mean	p value (one-tailed)	Effect size
wealthy	3.00	3.00	1.000	-
educated	3.23	3.16	.125	-
smart	**3.18**	3.01	.000	.33

Table 2.18: Status means for /t/.

The six mood adjectives: *casual*, *formal*, *relaxed*, *nervous*, *confident* and *careful*, make up the second factor in the factor analysis. These adjectives all relate to the short-term self-presentation of the speaker. The variable (ING) had a significant impact on the ratings for *casual*, *formal*, *relaxed* and *careful*, as shown in Table 2.19.

As Table 2.20 shows, /t/ release influenced ratings of *casual*, *formal* and *relaxed*, but not *nervous*, *confident* or *careful*.

These results suggest that both of the variables have an impact on listener perceptions regarding the formality of the situation. In addition, it suggests that the use of the *-in* variant causes speakers to be read as being less *careful*. Both variables have some influence on the perception of the speakers as more or less *relaxed*, although neither influenced ratings of *nervousness*. We can see in the means given in Tables 2.19 and 2.20 that the ratings for *nervous* are lower than the others overall, which

[2]Although specific tasks may have more specific criteria for what is a small or large effect size, the available statistical knowledge seems to be very much in agreement as to these rough classifications. See, for example, http://www.personal.psu.edu/faculty/k/r/krm10/effectsize1.

Adjective	*-in* mean	*-ing* mean	p value (one-tailed)	Effect size
casual	**3.51**	3.13	.000	.39
formal	2.49	**3.06**	.000	.57
relaxed	**3.32**	3.11	.002	.22
nervous	2.50	2.60	.101	-
confident	3.29	3.31	.363	-
careful	2.87	**3.26**	.000	.47

Table 2.19: Mood means for (ING).

Adjective	burst mean	no burst mean	p value (one-tailed)	Effect size
casual	3.03	**3.33**	.002	.30
formal	**2.92**	2.71	.021	.20
relaxed	2.93	**3.23**	.003	.26
nervous	2.66	2.64	.423	-
confident	3.28	3.26	.409	-
careful	2.94	2.85	.172	-

Table 2.20: Mood means for /t/.

suggests that the recordings overall did not lend themselves to percepts of nervousness. Neither politeness nor age were impacted by the linguistic variables and I will not discuss them here.

For each recording that they heard, in addition to the ratings just discussed, listeners made guesses as to where the speakers were from. The range of granularity was quite broad, as some respondents gave cities, some gave states and others regions. For looking at the data in the aggregate, the responses may usefully be divided

into four categories: West Coast, East Coast, South and Midwest.[3] As Table 2.21 shows, (ING) had a sizable impact on the assignment of region. By far the strongest relationship in the table is between the *-in* variant and the South, with over three quarters of the attributions of a Southern origin being in reference to the *-in* variant. The *-in* form also favored perceptions of a Midwest background to a lesser extent, while the *-ing* forms favored the coasts. Listeners declining to comment was also more common with the *-ing* forms, suggesting perhaps that these listeners heard it as the less marked variant. In the numbers given, the count for each region includes both

Region	*-in*	*-ing*
South	52 (83.9%)	10 (16.1%)
Midwest	20 (62.5%)	12 (37.5%)
East Coast	18 (42.9 %)	24 (57.1%)
West Coast	27 (38.6%)	43 (61.4%)
Other/none	108 (44.3%)	136 (55.7%)
Chi-square = 38.18, p=.000		

Table 2.21: Responses for region by (ING) variant.

the responses that named the region overall and those which named a specific location (usually state) within it. The groupings are thus affected by my own impressions of which locations fall into these very broad categories, for example listings of Texas were included in "South" although some residents of both areas would dispute such an inclusion (cf. Johnstone (1999)). Apart from regions, responses also mentioned type of neighborhood, i.e. city, rural or suburbs. However, not enough responses included this information to draw any conclusions about the effect of (ING) on them.

[3]Locations listed in each group were:

West coast California, "around here", West Coast, Bay Area, San Francisco, Silicon Valley, NorCal, Palo Alto, western US

East Coast East Coast, Eastern United States, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, New England, Mid Atlantic, Northeast, DC area, Pennsylvania, Boston, "East or Southeast US", Connecticut, "coastal North E. suburb"

South The South, Southern state, South Carolina, North Carolina, Louisiana, Kentucky, "South. Maybe Miss/Ala.", "southern, maybe FL", Arkansas, Arizona, Atlanta, Tennessee, Georgia

Midwest Midwest, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas City, Chicago

The last question on each recording was a space for comments. The degree to which listeners responded to this varied from many who entered no comments at all, to one or two who provided detailed and imaginative scenarios for every recording they heard. The two most common types of comment were personality evaluations (e.g. "nice" or reiterating one of the adjectives, most commonly *casual*) and guesses as to the speaker's profession. For the most part these were influenced by the content of the recordings, as with the professional attributions discussed with respect to the status ratings. Individual categories of comments were not common enough to perform statistical tests on, although comments describing the recording as *casual* were made more often regarding *-in* forms than *-ing* forms. One interesting thing to note about the comments regarding profession is that there were four comments that the speaker might have been a secretary and four that she might be a professional/in the business world. Of the eight, most were made regarding the sentence "I'm working downtown now" and all but one were of speaker S (the only speaker who said this sentence). However, all four of the secretary comments were in response to *-ing* recordings and all four of the professional ones in response to *-in* recordings. This suggests that although there is a good deal of agreement in a general sense about which pronunciation is higher status, in specific contexts (such as within the business world) the relative status of people using those variants may shift, based on the degree of engagement of specific roles with the standard language market.

Comments were made for the /t/ release sentences as well as (ING) sentences, but few of them seemed to reflect the variable itself. One possible exception is descriptions of the speaker as tensed or stressed, which occurred only in the versions with bursts, but as only 3 of these comments were made in regards to the /t/ sentences, this is somewhat tenuous.

One question that might be raised is whether this evaluation is taking place at a relatively conscious level or a relatively unconscious one. Clearly, the evaluation of the utterance as a whole is a conscious act. But it is not clear how conscious the influence of specific variables is. This may particularly be of concern given the large number of documented instances of speakers with "incorrect" conscious knowledge about their own speech patterns. It is not uncommon for a speaker underestimate their own usage

of stigmatized variables (Labov 2001:201). It would therefore be possible for a listener who is consciously evaluating a specific variable to respond differently than one who is making relatively unconscious decisions as they move through their day-to-day life.

The structure of this experiment certainly made it possible for some listener responses to be based on conscious consideration. Given that each listener heard a series of minimal pairs of recordings (albeit in scrambled order), they were given the opportunity to discover exactly which variables were under study and to respond based on linguistic ideologies concerning what they think the social weight of the variables ought to be, rather than evaluating the utterances as a whole. In order to check on this possibility, the data was coded for occurring before or after a given judge's first exposure to the second member of a pair— in other words, the first point at which the minimal-pairs structure of the experiment was potentially revealed. The data collected from each judge before that point would be a result of global evaluations made on the utterances overall and weight given to the variables under study likely to be due their own merit. The data past that point would be potentially subject to conscious manipulation based on understanding of the purpose of the study. Analysis which took this coding into account revealed little to no difference in the two sets of data. The only effect was a small tendency for the rating differences from the later data to be slightly smaller than the earlier data, which I interpret as deriving from listener fatigue increasing overall variability.

Interactions between the linguistic variables and other factors

In the previous section, we discussed the ways in which the linguistic variables (ING) and /t/ release influenced listener responses across the board. This kind of data is good evidence for what associations listeners have with the variables overall. As discussed earlier, these associations are only part of the story. In this section I will discuss the results that show interaction effects between the linguistic variables and other factors. Since this experiment was a relatively simple one, there are only two sources for other variables: the speakers' other linguistic and paralinguistic features and the message content, the actual words that they said. There are also listener

related factors which were undoubtedly present in the listening situation, but information was collected on only two of these: gender and region of origin.

(ING) showed an interesting interaction in the ratings for *polite*. There was an interaction between speaker and variant in that one of the speakers, speaker H, has the inverse pattern from the expected, being rated as more *polite* on average when she uses an *-in* form than when she used an *-ing* form. Speaker S shows the expected pattern, of being rated more *polite* when using *-ing* than *-in*, while speaker A shows no difference. It is not clear what caused this pattern but I suspect it relates to the fact that speaker H has a more casual, homier style and speaker S tends to be more formal. This pattern, combined with the fact that speaker H is from the South led me to thinking more about region and (ING). As a result, I looked at listeners who were from the South vs. those who were not and found another interaction.

Coding for listener regional origin was a challenge. Although I asked respondents both where they were from and where they grew up, most left the second question blank and put merely "California" for the first. Two who did this mentioned in the comments on one of the recordings that they were from the South, so it is also possible that others were from the South and did not reveal this fact. Using the information available to me, I found that Southern vs. non-Southern regional origin had a significant interaction effect with (ING) variant on the *polite* results ($p = .001$), shown in Table 2.22. This result is a suggestion only, as only three of the respondents were marked as from the South. It shows Southern listeners may hear *-in* as the more polite form while others think *-ing* is more polite.

Listener region	*-in*	*-ing*	difference
South	3.76	3.48	-.28
Other	3.48	3.64	.16

Table 2.22: Means across region and variants: polite.

Thus, in addition to ratings being directly affected by (ING), there were a few patterns in which the effect of (ING) was mediated by other factors: by the content of the message in the case of *wealthy* and *smart* and in the case of *polite*, by both the speaker's other aspects of pronunciation and voice quality and the hearer's regional

origin.

The interactions described here point to areas in which the relationship between the linguistic variable and the social meanings is not constant, but rather is influenced by the other factors in an utterance. Because of the relative simplicity of this experiment, assigning causes to these influences is difficult, but they suggest areas for investigation.

Effects of missing context

Lastly, I will discuss an effect found in the data that did not involve (ING) or /t/ release at all. Throughout the data, there were many instances where the ratings were impacted by either the semantic content of the utterance or the particular speaker reading the line, or an interaction of the two. In terms of the experimental design, this may be regarded as "noise"—variation which does not relate directly to any of the research questions and as a result is something to be minimized. The judges participating in the study and listening to the recordings do not, of course, share this view. All of these effects are direct evidence that something in the wording, meaning, pronunciation or voice quality of the recording carried some kind of meaning, a phenomenon which should not be surprising to sociolinguists.

I would like to highlight one in particular, as it provides a useful example of the richness that accompanies every act of interpretation whether the immediately available information appears sparse or complex. Given the preliminary nature of this phase of the research, as discussed previously, listeners were given no information as to the context of speaking, either with regard to topic, frame or speaker role. As a result of this lack of information, the listeners used clues in the content of the recordings to fill in this contextual information. As mentioned in the discussion of the comments, some of the listeners created elaborate scenarios detailing where the speaker was, who they were talking to and why and the exact mood and reasoning behind it. While these bordered on overkill, they are extreme examples of a process that all of the listeners seemed to engage in to some extent. In particular, a large number of the comments given indicated that the listeners were using the words involved in the recording as a springboard for assigning a profession to the speaker. As a result

of these assignments, the status ratings were higher for the sentences which elicited comments regarding high-status professions and lower for those which triggered lower-status associations. For example, the sentence "Can I get you something to eat?" was graded down in terms of status and comments suggested that the speaker sounded like a waiter or waitress, while "I'm working downtown now." was rated more highly, as was "How have you been feeling?", which also received comments of the speaker sounding like a doctor, therapist or nurse.

The content of the utterances also influenced mood ratings in (ING) data and a range of ratings in the /t/ release data, but the comments were not as helpful in determining the reasons for this effect. As a result, the influence of listener-created contextual information is an unknown. This serves as a useful reminder that while it is impossible to fully control all of the factors, it is important to address the issue of utterance context in a thoughtful way, in order to minimize the range of divergent contextual imaginings contributed by the listeners.

2.3 Summary

Overall, the pilot data links (ING) to formality, with the *-ing* forms seen as more *formal*. Status was also implicated, with higher status ratings going to *-ing* over *-in*, but the comment section suggested that specific contexts are capable of producing images which invert the status assignment. The data from politeness gives a hint as to the more complex interactions that may be involved when this signal of formality is interpreted in context.

The results for /t/ release are not as wide-ranging but still suggestive. Unlike for (ING), listeners associated the release of bursts with being *smart*, but not *educated* or *wealthy*. This may indicate an association of /t/ release with more personal qualities as opposed to (ING) which is also associated with institutionally defined qualities of education and wealth. Like (ING), /t/ release is influential on the *casual/formal/relaxed* axis.

These findings provide support for the production literature on these variables, which linked (ING) to broad notions of class, gender and socioeconomic status. In

contrast, /t/ release has been linked to local style construction. This coincides with the association in this study of /t/ release to more individual qualities only, while (ING) also influences more interactional notions of education, wealth and politeness.

Taken together, the literature on (ING) and the results of the pilot study suggests that (ING) is related to class measures such as wealth and education as well as intelligence and formality. They also suggest that race and especially region are likely to influence these and other associations. Perhaps more importantly, the pilot results show that the specific context of the utterance has a large impact on both perceptions overall and the role of (ING) within them.

While this pilot study revealed useful information, it was limited in several ways. Using read speech limited the believability of the performance and made the context of speaking more difficult to interpret. The study also featured only three speakers, making it difficult to tease apart which speaker-based factors were the relevant ones in any given effect. Lastly, the limited data collected from the listeners made it difficult to understand the reasons for their choices. The comment section opened up fascinating possibilities for the larger social images on which the listeners based the ratings, but did not allow us to confirm these.

All of these limitations have been addressed to a greater or lesser extent in the literature on language attitudes. In the 40 years or so since the Matched Guise Technique has been developed, researchers have come up with a number of refinements and variations to enhance the effectiveness and complexity of the method. Some of these have been incorporated into regular use, while others are only sporadically seen. The following chapter introduces the methods for the main study. It will first review the existing literature on the Matched Guise Technique and its relatives, then it will detail the specific methods used in this study.

Chapter 3

Methods for exploring the social consequences of listening

Because listening, like speaking, is a ubiquitous aspect of language use, its study has been approached for a wide range of reasons and with a wide range of methodologies. Chapter 1 discussed some of the theoretical approaches that have been taken towards the role of the listener in linguistic variation and change, with particular emphasis on socially meaningful variation. This chapter turns from the theoretical background of variation and its significance to the methodological history of the techniques employed in the study.

The core approach is a minimally paired version of the Matched Guise Technique (MGT), a tool developed by Lambert and his colleagues in the 1960's (Lambert *et al.* 1960; Anisfeld *et al.* 1962; Lambert *et al.* 1965; Lambert 1967; Tucker and Lambert 1969). Chapter 2 showed a very basic example of this technique, used in the pilot work. Although it provided interesting and useful information, this reduced version falls far short of the social complexity needed to fully explore the role of (ING) in constructing meaning. A much richer and more nuanced set of data must be gathered. Each of the individual techniques employed in the main study has a history within the existing MGT literature: using digitally manipulated speech, creating stimuli from spontaneous as opposed to read speech, conducting open-ended group interviews both for data gathering and as the basis for a survey approach, using a Web-based survey

to widen the geographic scope of the study. None of these techniques can yet be described as routine (although for some of them it is to be hoped that they soon will be), however all have been employed before. The methodological significance of this study is that it combines these techniques and that it does so in pursuit of a novel goal: to uncover the social meaning of a single linguistic variable from the perceptual point of view in a nuanced as well as rigorous manner.

This chapter describes the methodology employed in the current study and positions it within the literature. I first review the history of the MGT and its relatives, developed within the field generally known as "language attitudes". Although I provide a broad overview of the topics, languages and language varieties which have been explored using these techniques, I take particular note of techniques and innovations which researchers have used to augment the validity and depth of these approaches over the years. After describing the methodological history on which this research is based, I explain in detail the methods used in the present study.

3.1 Previous research on language attitudes

The Matched Guise Technique is typically employed in order to learn about the attitudes that speakers have towards language, both their own and that of others. Many worlds of complexity hidden behind those two words, "language" and "attitude". As sociolinguists we are intimately familiar with the multitude of levels on which language may vary. When talking about differences in relation to language, we may be referring to variation occurring at level of the sound, morpheme, word, phrase, discourse or in paralinguistic cues. Working along another dimension, differences may arise with respect to specific individual variables, sets of variables correlated into styles, whole language varieties or completely separate languages. Speaker/listeners have attitudes towards and reactions to variation along all of these dimensions and more. This makes the field of studying attitudes towards language an incredibly rich and interesting one, but also means that the questions to be asked and ways finding the answers will vary tremendously depending on which specific aspect of language is under investigation.

The concept of attitude in the psychology literature is likewise a flexible and multilayered one. One commonly quoted definition is that attitudes are "a disposition to react favorably or unfavorably to a class of objects" (Sarnoff 1970:279), however recent work in the larger framework of attitudes has suggested that this is overly simple, in that attitudes may "not always be simply positive or negative, but may subsume both positivity and negativity" (Haddock and Maio 2004b:1). There is also increasing evidence that not only do people differ in which attitudes they hold, but even in how their attitudes are structured (Haddock and Huskinson 2004).

Attitudes are generally held to have three components: **affect** (how we feel about French, or about a Southern accent), **cognition** (the beliefs we hold about them) and **behavior** (how we speak and react to others' speech). As a result, attitudes are diverse and sometimes contradictory, shifting based on how they're measured, the context of measurement and a range of interpersonal factors. Although measures of these three components (affect, cognition and behavior) do correlate under many circumstances, under others they don't (Haddock and Huskinson 2004), making it difficult to be sure exactly what the stable, underlying character of attitude is, or if one exists.

As a construct, attitudes have been primarily explored within the field of social psychology, which devotes itself to a deeper understanding of the mental processes involved in interpersonal behavior of various sorts. Studies in language attitudes have been carried out by social psychologists working in this context who have a particular interest in language or aspects of language. They have also been conducted by sociolinguists whose primary focus is the structure of language and its relationship to social constructs and processes (see Thomas (2002) for a review of sociolinguistic uses of perception studies). Although these two threads of research have slightly different perspectives, they share a great deal of common interest. Through the years, there have been repeated efforts to bring these two fields into closer alignment (Giles 1992; Milroy and Preston 1999; Edwards 1999). Social psychologists are best able to contribute a detailed understanding of the psychological processes involved in the evaluative reactions and other social behaviors. Conversely, sociolinguists are uniquely qualified to explore the evaluative aspects of specific forms of variation and

other socially meaningful aspects of language. Edwards (1999) points out that we "would benefit, therefore, from efforts to bridge the work of psychology and linguistics in this regard; the effect would be to refine and particularize our knowledge of how specific aspects of speech elicit specific types of evaluative reactions" (p. 105).

Because of the complexities of both of these definitional elements of the field, theoretical and methodological difficulties are intricately tied together in the study of language attitudes (Agheyisi and Fishman 1970; Lee 1971; Forgas 1983; Giles and Bourhis 1976; Ryan *et al.* 1982). In the following sections, I describe the main thrust of the literature on language attitudes, focusing particularly on the use of the MGT and its methodological history and innovations. After that, I discuss the particular tools in the literature which I have adapted for the current study and describe their importance, before moving on to describe my own methodology in detail.

Methods for exploring language attitudes

The study of language attitudes or listener perceptions encapsulates a range of questions and methods. The most direct method of investigating attitudes is to ask speakers to tell their opinions through surveys, interviews and questionnaires. This approach may be used on its own and has been in such diverse populations as Arabic university students (Zughoul and Taminian 1984; Al-Haq 2000), participants in a multilingual school in Spain (Fitch and Hopper 1983), French-speaking Walloons in Belgium (LefÈVre 1979; LefÈVre 1978), Flemings in Belgium (Geerts *et al.* 1978), French and English speakers in Canada (Bourhis 1983; ClÉment and Noels 1992; Landry and Bourhis 1997), Italian and English speakers in Canada (Bourhis and Sachdev 1984), English speakers in Detroit (Shuy and Williams 1973), Puerto Ricans in New York City (Fishman *et al.* 1971; Wolfram 1973), residents of Alsace (Vassberg 1993), Israelis and Palestinians in Israel (Kraemer 1992), Vietnamese speakers in Australia (Pittam *et al.* 1991), students in Wales (Roberts and Williams 1980) and about topics such as beliefs about language and gender in the U.S. (Kramer 1977; Kramer 1978; Scott 1980) and attitudes of U.S. teachers (Taylor 1973) and others (Hoover 1978; Speicher and McMahon 1992) towards African-American Vernacular

English and of residents of Scotland towards English and Scots (Pollner 1987), residents of Zimbabwe towards Shona and English (Mparutsa *et al.* 1992), Australian aboriginal children towards Aboriginal English and Standard Australian English (Purdie *et al.* 2002) and Australians of Anglo, Italian and Greek descent towards a variety of ethnic groups (Callan and Gallois 1983). In some cases, it is even possible to use overt questioning to investigate speaker attitudes towards individual variables, as in Boberg (1999), which explores listener beliefs about the appropriate pronunciation of the written letter (a) in foreign loan words in American English. A more detailed approach to the overt questioning method is language diaries, which Lawson and Sachdev (2004) combined with a more general questionnaire to investigate the language choices and code mixing patterns of Sylheti-Bengali students in London.

The field of perceptual dialectology is based on a particular subset of the direct question method, focusing on the individual speakers' beliefs regarding regional variation (Preston 1986; Preston 1989; Williams *et al.* 1996; Preston 1999b; Preston 1999a; IannÀccaro and Dell'Aquila 2001; Long 2002; Preston and Robinson 2005). One of the crucial contributions of perceptual dialectology is its emphasis on the structural aspects of speaker/listener beliefs. Although the entire field of language attitudes is devoted to the study of speaker beliefs regarding language, much of that study presupposes both the linguistic and social structures to be investigated. In contrast, work in perceptual dialectology is devoted to uncovering what divisions speakers make between regions on a linguistic basis and what terms and descriptions they use in labeling the linguistic varieties they have delineated. Preston (1989) makes this point in describing how one would interpret results of a hypothetical matched guise study examining listener reactions to various U.S. regional dialects: "though it is accurate to report, in terms of production dialectology, that the response was to a New England voice, it is surely as important (perhaps more) to determine where the respondents believed the voice was from and eventually important to relate that to the group's overall taxonomy of dialect differences" (p. 3).

In pursuit of this goal, researchers in perceptual dialectology have employed a range of tasks, the most common one being the map task, in which respondents are

given a relatively blank map of their country or region and asked to draw lines indicating which areas contain people who speak the same way. Other tasks include asking respondents to rate individual areas (such as U.S. states) for speech qualities such as correctness and pleasantness, as well as the "pile-and-sort" method in which participants sort cards labelled with states to prove them into piles of similar linguistic patterns. These kinds of approaches have been used to investigate speaker beliefs about the regional divisions within the U.S. as a whole (Preston 1989; Williams *et al.* 1996), Ohio in particular (Benson 2003), Ladin-speaking southern Europe (IannÀccaro and Dell'Aquila 2001), Wales (Williams *et al.* 1996) and Great Britain more generally (Inoue 1996), among others.

Although overt questioning can produce interesting results on its own, it may also be used within larger sociolinguistic projects. For example, Labov (2001) discusses a comprehensive study of variation in Philadelphia, using interviews which culminated in explicit questions regarding speech in the area. Many studies combine overt questions with the MGT or verbal guise approaches discussed below (d'Anglejan and Tucker 1973; Williams 1973; Kerkhoff *et al.* 1988; Garrett *et al.* 2003). Ladegaard (2000) goes even further, by combining general attitude questionnaires with a verbal guise task as well as correlating these with actual linguistic behavior, investigating the attitudes and uses of teens in Denmark toward the vernacular of the area. The overt approach is primarily useful when examining attitudes towards easily conceptualized units of language, for example separate languages, language varieties or speech in specific geographic areas.

Another approach for learning about the attitudes present in an area or community is content or media analysis. This does not examine the beliefs of individual speakers, but rather looks at discourses available in the larger culture by studying demographic patterns or historical events and their impact on linguistic beliefs and behaviors, as well as the the themes that emerge from literature, media and other public sources (St Clair 1982). Work in this domain involves analyzing, for example, the deployment of accents in movies (Lippi-Green 1997). On a larger scale, researchers may explore sociohistorical and demographic trends and how they affect beliefs and attitudes regarding a particular language such as French (Bourhis 1982), Chinese (Li 2004),

varieties such as New Zealand English (Gordon 1989) or a topic such as the history of language legislation in Belgium (Geerts 1988) or the interaction of language and gender (Kramarae 1982). This approach, too, may be combined with others, for example Stevens (1983) uses general social issues to supplement his direct knowledge of attitudes towards Arabic and French gained from interviews and ethnographic observation in Tunisia.

These two methods of inquiry focus on beliefs and ideologies that speakers may articulate about language, either at the individual level or within cultural discourses. This information does not necessarily shed light on the role that linguistic traits play in day-to-day individual interactions. To address that question, we need data which reveals more about how individuals listen to each other's linguistic performances and respond to them. In the 1960's, Lambert and his colleagues developed the Matched Guise Technique to covertly elicit individuals' attitudes towards members of different ethnolinguistic groups (Lambert *et al.* 1960; Lambert *et al.* 1965; Lambert 1967; Tucker and Lambert 1969). The technique involves having a single speaker produce two (or more) recorded stimuli in different languages or varieties. For example, a bilingual speaker might record the same passage read aloud in French and English or a bidialectal speaker might read a passage aloud twice in English, once with a standard accent and once with an accent which is regionally or socially marked. Participants in the study are asked to listen to the recorded speakers and evaluate them on a range of qualities, for example, how intelligent, educated, friendly or trustworthy they sound.

Because listeners are not told that the alternate recordings have been produced by the same person, they evaluate each "guise" (language or accent performance) as an individual speaker. However, because the recordings have been produced by the same person, many of the paralinguistic cues are (hopefully) held constant, for example speech rate, pitch contours and various aspects of voice quality. Likewise, since the speaker is usually recorded reading aloud the same passage, the content of the utterance is is also held constant. As a result, it is possible to (at least tentatively) assign any differences in the evaluations to ideas that the listeners have regarding the specific languages or varieties being used.

This basic innovation was remarkably brilliant and relatively straightforward and

quickly spawned an entire body of work. As researchers adopted the basic idea to a range of goals and situations, they introduced new aspects to the approach. In addition, critiques of the very real limitations of the technique (Agheyisi and Fishman 1970; Lee 1971) led to refinements and improvements. The following discussion will detail the situations in which this technique has been employed and the adaptations that have been made to it.

Contrasting languages, varieties and variants

Research using the MGT has been carried out on a range of linguistic situations including multilingual settings (Edwards 1983), for example exploring attitudes towards Hebrew and Arabic in Israel (Lambert *et al.* 1965), French and English in Canada (Lambert *et al.* 1960; Genesee. and Holobow 1989), Spanish and Quechua in Peru (Wölck 1973), Tamil and Kannada in India (Sridhara 1984), Castilian and Catalan in Spain (Woolard 1984; Woolard and Gahng 1990), Swiss German and High German in Switzerland (Hogg *et al.* 1984) and English, Cantonese and code switching in Hong Kong (Gibbons 1983). In addition to competing languages, the MGT has been used to investigate attitudes towards regional or social varieties such as regional accents in England (Strongman and Woosley 1967; Giles 1971a; Giles *et al.* 1983a; Giles *et al.* 1990; Giles *et al.* 1992; Dixon *et al.* 2002), Welsh accent and RP in England (Giles 1971b; Creber and Giles 1983; Brown *et al.* 1985) and Wales (Price *et al.* 1983; Garrett *et al.* 2003), Indian accents in England (Elwell *et al.* 1984), English and Scottish varieties in Scotland (Cheyne 1970; Abrams and Hogg 1987), different regional accents in Ireland (Edwards 1977), Hawaiian Creole English and Standard American English in Hawaii (Ohama *et al.* 2000), Spanish-accented English in the U.S. (Mckirnan and Hamayan 1984), Chicano English and Standard American English in L.A. (Arthur *et al.* 1974; Bradac and Wisegarver 1984), gendered perceptions of female English speakers (Batstone and Tuomi 1981; Giles *et al.* 1980), Appalachian English in the U.S. (Luhman 1990), French Canadian accents in Canadian English (Webster and Kramer 1968), Jewish accents in Canada (Anisfeld *et al.* 1962), "broad" and "refined" Australian accents (Ball *et al.*

1984) as well as global and non-native varieties of English in Australia (Ball 1983; Callan and Gallois 1982; Seggie 1983), standard American and Chinese-accented English in the U.S. (Cargile 1997) and Japanese-accented English in the U.S. (Rubin *et al.* 1991; Cargile and Giles 1997; Cargile and Giles 1998). Researchers have also investigated reactions to class-based linguistic variation in Ireland (Edwards 1979) and French-speaking Canada (d'Anglejan and Tucker 1973) and levels of formality in Canadian French (Taylor and ClÉment 1974). Race has also been a significant topic, particularly in the U.S. (Fraser 1973; Johnson and Buttny 1982; Purnell *et al.* 1999; White *et al.* 1998), as has age, particularly in the U.K. (Giles *et al.* 1990; Ryan and Laurie 1990).

In early work, Giles (1973) used an interesting version of the technique to establish the basic principle of Accomodation Theory, that speakers change their performances based on their interlocutors. Rather than using deliberately designed stimuli, he conducted interviews with a series of teenagers from Bristol, arranging an interview first with himself then with a peer of the students. Playing excerpts of these interviews for listeners from both Bristol and Wales, he established that the switch in interviewers created linguistic changes in the teen subjects which were perceptible to others.

When the varieties to be studied are not usually spoken in the same area, or when the goal is to compare more than two or three varieties in a single study, it may be difficult to find speakers who can convincingly portray all of the necessary guises. To investigate such situations, researchers have turned to the "verbal guise" paradigm (Cooper 1975). This version of the matched guise technique dispenses with the controlling factor of using the same speaker in favor of more believable performances. Although it makes it more difficult to be confident that it is the varieties themselves which are causing differences in evaluation, much useful information can still be obtained in this way. This technique has been used to investigate responses to children's speech (Sachs *et al.* 1973; Edwards 1979) and multiple levels of standard or nonstandard speech including French speakers in Canada (d'Anglejan and Tucker 1973), socioeconomic variation in the U.S. (Harms 1967; Shuy 1973) and Costa Rica (Berk-Seligson 1984), reactions to Black and White speakers in the U.S. (Hopper and Williams 1973; Fraser 1973; Rosenthal 1974; Irwin 1977;

Graff *et al.* 1986; Larimer *et al.* 1988; Baugh 1996), regional U.S. accents (Smith and Bailey 1980), nonnative accents in the U.S. (Stewart *et al.* 1985; Gill 1994), regional accents in the U.S. (Frazer 1987), Hawaiian Creole English (Slaughter 1982; Yamamoto and Hargrove 1982), Spanish accents in the U.S. (Ryan and Carranza 1975; Ryan *et al.* 1977; Zerda and Hopper 1979; Podbresky *et al.* 1990; Dailey *et al.* 2005), Asian accents in the U.S. (Podbresky *et al.* 1990), Cantonese-accented Mandarin in China (Kalmar *et al.* 1987), nonnative English and Chinese speech (White and Li 1991), regional accents of Danish (Kristiansen and Giles 1992; Ladegaard 1998a) and French (Paltridge and Giles 1984), Danish attitudes towards regional varieties of English (Ladegaard 1998b), German speakers' ability to identify world Englishes (Stephan 1997), nonnative accented English in Canada (Kalin *et al.* 1980) and the U.S. (Mulac *et al.* 1974; Wylie 1980), the accent effects of moving in adult life (Munro *et al.* 1999), local and global accents in New Zealand (Huygens and Vaughan 1983; Bayard 1991; Wilson and Bayard 1992; Bayard 1999) and Australia (Gallois and Callan 1981; Callan *et al.* 1983; Gallois and Callan 1985) and attitudes towards adults with a child-like voices cross-culturally (Montepare and Zebrowitz-Mcarthur 1987). Verbal guise techniques have also been used to document one of the basic premises of descriptive linguistics, that differences between standard and nonstandard speech are socially defined, by showing that listeners unfamiliar with a given language are unable to detect aesthetic differences between varieties (Trudgill and Giles 1976).

Early work within the verbal guise paradigm was inspired by a desire to investigate the extent to which listeners are able to accurately deduce personality characteristics from speech (Pear 1931). In one sense this research was a failure, as it revealed little in the way of consistent connections between speech and actual personality of the speaker. It did however, uncover a surprising degree of agreement across listeners as to the perceived personality traits signaled by specific qualities. Some work investigating the connection between paralinguistic cues and detailed personality factors and moods has continued to this day (Kramer 1963; Scherer 1974a; Scherer 1974b; Bezooijen *et al.* 1983; Feldstein and Sloan 1984; Brown and Bradshaw 1985).

When using different speakers it can be difficult to establish which aspects of the speech trigger which aspects of the evaluation. Brennan (1977) suggested that this

issue may be addressed by developing scales of accentedness for Spanish-accented English (also reported in Ryan (1973)). By correlating specific linguistic traits with psychophysical scaling responses, Brennan attempted to develop consistent linguistic metrics to evaluate the degree of accent present in a given speech sample, a measure which could then be correlated with other evaluative responses (Brennan *et al.* 1975; Brennan and Brennan 1981). While it is not clear that this particular approach is the right one, it makes an important point that there is likely to be more stability in examining specific attributes over a larger number of speakers than in relying on the theoretical similarities across guises of one or two multilingual speakers.

Another approach is to use written materials, in order to perfectly control the linguistic features being manipulated. While this is not particularly effective for phonetic or phonological variables, it has the advantage of eliminating such factors from the performance, as well as being easy to arrange. Written materials have been used to examine factors such as lexical diversity (Bradac and Giles 1988; Ruva and Bryant 1998), the use of quotatives (Buchstaller 2003; Buchstaller In Press; Buchstaller To Appear), effects of gendered speech styles (Kramer 1974; Erickson *et al.* 1978; Mulac *et al.* 1985; Siegler and Siegler 1976), patronizing speech towards older adults (Ryan and Cole 1990; Ryan *et al.* 1991; Giles *et al.* 1993), powerful/powerless speech (Nigro *et al.* 1989; Smith *et al.* 1998; Adkins and Brashers 1995) and various forms of hate speech (Leets and Giles 1997; Leets 2001). Some work combines written and spoken materials in order to provide a "control" for noncontent cues (Trees and Manusov 1998).

When it is not possible to manipulate the linguistic performance of a single speaker, it is often possible to investigate the interactions between linguistic cues and those from other modalities, be they visual cues (Elwell *et al.* 1984) or explicit information such as the race (Dixon *et al.* 2002) or age (Ruva and Bryant 1998) of the speaker. Rather than having alternate guises, entirely new personae may be created. This approach has been most thoroughly explored in the domain of education. Williams (1973) used videos of children combined with the same audio track to investigate the influence of visual cues of race on teacher evaluations. Conversely, Rubin and Smith (1990) showed that visual cues marking a lecturer as Asian increased undergraduates' perceptions of the speaker's accent and actually lowered

their comprehension of the material. Seligman *et al.* (1972) looked at teacher ratings of a combination of pictures, samples of read speech and examples of student work. They found that teacher ratings were not only influenced by each of these factors independently, but that they interacted in important ways as well.

The MGT has also been extended to look at more specific speech variables, beginning with Addington (1968), who looked at an astounding seven speech qualities, three levels of speech rate and three levels of pitch variation, all crossed with each other for both male and female speakers. Other such studies include examinations of speech rate (Scherer *et al.* 1973; Smith *et al.* 1975; Apple *et al.* 1979; Street and Brady 1982; Jr. *et al.* 1983; Brown *et al.* 1985; Giles *et al.* 1990; Ray *et al.* 1991; Giles *et al.* 1992; Ray and Zahn 1999) and pitch variation (Apple *et al.* 1979; Ray *et al.* 1991; Ray and Zahn 1999). Linguistic investigations have more often looked at the effect of a range of smaller variables combining into a more general phenomenon such as powerful/powerless language (Lind and O'Barr 1979; Hosman 1989; Gibbons *et al.* 1991; Hosman and Siltanen 1994; Adkins and Brashers 1995; Schmidt and Brigham 1996; Hosman 1997; Smith *et al.* 1998; Holtgrades and Laskey 1999; Hosman *et al.* 2002; Parton *et al.* 2002), confidence (Scherer *et al.* 1973), dynamic vs. conversational modes of speech (Schweitzer 1970; Pearce and Conklin 1971; Pearce 1971; Pearce and Brommel 1972), disfluencies (Miller and Hewgill 1964; Sereno and Hawkins 1967), language intensity (Mccroskey and Mehrley 1969; Bradac *et al.* 1979; Bradac *et al.* 1980; Aune and Kikuchi 1993), lexical diversity (Bradac *et al.* 1977; Bradac *et al.* 1979; Bradac and Giles 1988; Levin *et al.* 1994), verbal immediacy, that is, how closely speakers link themselves to the topic of the message (Bradac *et al.* 1979; Bradac *et al.* 1980), patronizing or over-accommodative speech towards elders (Ryan and Cole 1990; Ryan *et al.* 1991; Edwards and Noller 1993; Giles *et al.* 1993; Smith *et al.* 1998; La Tourette and Meeks 2000; Ryan *et al.* 2000), degree of accentedness (Rubin and Smith 1990; Cargile and Giles 1998), impact of timing on interpersonal attraction (Siegman 1979), managerial style (Rubin *et al.* 1991) and factors influencing politeness including explicitness, dominance and form of argument (ClÉment and Noels 1992), as well as positive or negative "tone of voice" (Laplante and Ambady 2003) and nonverbal cues (Trees and Manusov 1998).

A smaller body of research explores which cues listeners use in identifying language varieties (Clopper 2000; Flanigan and Norris 2000; Clopper and Pisoni 2001; Clopper and Pisoni 2003). Many of these employ digital manipulations in order to dampen information from certain sources (for example, segmental information) in order to investigate whether listeners are still able to identify a particular variety on the basis of the remaining information (speech rate and prosody). This approach has investigated how listeners identify regional dialects of Dutch (Bezooijen and Gooskens 1999), the impact of different modes of speech on persuasive arguments (Pearce and Conklin 1971; Pearce 1971), race and sex identifications in English (Lass *et al.* 1979; Lass *et al.* 1980; Foreman 2000) or general social responses (Bezooijen 1988). A cautionary note on approaches of this sort is given by Bezooijen and Boves (1986), who point out that the elimination of vocal qualities by these techniques may not be exactly as theorized. Other work uses these approaches to learn more about how listeners process speech of different kinds, for example demonstrating that listeners exposed to a wider range of regional varieties learn better how to categorize them (Clopper and Pisoni 2004a; Clopper and Pisoni 2004b).

As advances in digital technology make it easier and less expensive to create plausible sounding synthetically manipulated tokens, sociolinguists have become increasingly interested in creating studies which explore specific variables via the MGT. Early work was only possible for paralinguistic cues such as speech rate and pitch (Apple *et al.* 1979), but in recent years this ability has been extended. Graff *et al.* (1986) took recordings from a Black speaker in Philadelphia and used digital manipulations to create versions containing regional vowel markers specific to White speech in the area. Fridland *et al.* (2004) used monosyllabic tokens to create synthetically manipulated guises with different vowel formants and used these to investigate listeners' abilities to recognize certain variants as more Southern. Podbresky *et al.* (1990) took an ingenious approach to compare standard American English speakers with nonnative speakers with audible Spanish and Asian accents. Because these varieties would have been prohibitively difficult to obtain believable matched guise examples, they adopted a verbal guise technique, but used electronic manipulation to align the speech rates and intensity levels of each recording, so as to minimize the impact of

these paralinguistic cues on the results.

Although the MGT was developed specifically to allay concerns about the role of idiosyncratic speaker differences in listener reactions, very little work has been done on the ways in which those idiosyncrasies influence the topics being investigated. Arthur *et al.* (1974) represents an excellent exception to this rule, examining the ways in which Chicano guises of different speakers were rated differently. In particular, they noted that their raters (Anglo undergraduates in Southern California) showed a wider variation of ratings between speakers when responding to the standard guises than to the Chicano guises. Rather than a straightforward distinction between negative and positive reactions, Arthur and his colleagues documented a more subtle form of discrimination. The listeners responded in more complex ways to the standard, which was the closest to their own variety and compressed the range of their responses in response to the unfamiliar and potentially stereotyped Chicano variety.

In addition to factors such as region or ethnicity, researchers have also investigated the influence of gender, both of the speaker and the listener. Although there is a significant body of work on the topic, it is not always included in general discussions of the field. Many studies examine gender as part of a larger project, for example Addington (1968), mentioned above and Edwards (1979), who found that teachers in Ireland rating speech samples of nine and ten year olds rated "nondisadvantaged" girls more favorably than their male counterparts, while no such gender difference was seen among the "disadvantaged" children. Further, the male teachers rated the disadvantaged children more favorably than their female colleagues (Edwards 1979:39).

Other studies position gender as central to the research question. Sachs *et al.* (1973) showed the degree to which linguistic differences between men and women are attributable to social processes rather than biological ones by establishing that adults can distinguish between the voices of boys and girls pre-puberty. Mulac *et al.* (1985) established that both beliefs about male and female speech and actual gendered linguistic traits influence listener ratings independently. A number of papers on language and gender, inspired by Lakoff (1973), sought to test her claims regarding the attributes and perceptual consequences of so-called "women's speech" (Siegler

and Siegler 1976; Erickson *et al.* 1978; Newcombe and Arnkof 1979). Other work explored speakers' stereotypes concerning male and female speech and the ease with which they are identified (Kramer 1974; Kramer 1977; Kramer 1978). Batstone and Tuomi (1981) took a curious approach, carrying out a standard verbal guise study on female voices, collecting the scales to be used by asking participants about qualities relevant to sexiness in young women.

Although many of the studies discussed above incorporate gender as a minor variable, two stand out as unusually rich discussions. Elyan *et al.* (1978) found that female RP guises were rated as more feminine than their corresponding Lancashire guises, but were also judged to be more masculine in particular ways, for example lacking in warmth and higher in adventurousness and independence. Giles *et al.* (1980) explored perceptual correlates of a feminist ideological stance in female speakers. They found that in spontaneous speech (on topics purportedly unrelated to feminism), feminist speakers were perceived as more feminist, more intelligent and more sincere and were rated as less frivolous, superficial and standard-speaking. However, when limited to reading a passage aloud, many of these assessments were reversed, with the feminist speakers rated as less fluent, less standard and less intelligent.

These creative approaches to presenting stimuli to participants in order to elicit their evaluations is made necessary by the wide range of linguistic behaviors researchers have sought to examine. This diversity likewise necessitates diversity in the evaluative tasks requested of listeners, with respect to both topic and technique.

Status and solidarity

Many studies have focused on how language attitudes contribute to larger patterns of intergroup relations. Different social settings have been shown to lead to different patterns and language attitudes. In some, distinct linguistic groups maintain mutually hostile or suspicious relationships, each favoring speakers of their own varieties on skills such as honesty or friendliness (Lambert *et al.* 1965). In other cases, speakers of minority varieties seem to have internalized the negative attitudes present in their culture, rating their own varieties as badly or even worse than outsiders do (Lambert

et al. 1960; Genesee. and Holobow 1989), or they may share these negative opinions but to a lesser extent (Ohama *et al.* 2000; Dailey *et al.* 2005). Alternatively, speakers of minority varieties may note the negative status of their own variety, while upgrading its speakers on affective terms such as honesty or friendliness (Wölck 1973). These patterns can get more complex, as in Luhman (1990), where Appalachian listeners downgraded their own variety in terms of status, while favoring it in terms of solidarity, but only for the male speakers. Ryan (1979) discusses a range of studies exploring positive regard for nonstandard varieties, while Ryan *et al.* (1982) discuss the possible orientations towards a nonstandard variety more formally.

Researchers have repeatedly found connections between the perceived **ethnolinguistic vitality** of a language or variety and the covert attitudes towards it (Bourhis and Sachdev 1984; ClÉment and Noels 1992; Giles and Johnson 1981; Ryan *et al.* 1982). Along similar lines, the perceptions of Spanish-speaking high-school students regarding the presence of Spanish in the **linguistic landscape** (Landry and Bourhis 1997) around them correlates negatively with their evaluations of Anglo speakers (Dailey *et al.* 2005).

When reasoning about the meaning of different ratings for different varieties, it is important to remember the class associations of the particular varieties and speech styles employed in the experiment. Because many regional varieties are associated with lower socioeconomic status, it is difficult to determine which associations are being reflected in attitude responses (if, indeed, these can be separated). Abrams and Hogg (1987) argued that much of the downgrading of regional varieties, particularly with respect to status, reflected class assumptions which went unexplored in the original studies. In their study, which used two varieties of Scottish middle-class accents in addition to RP, they found a preference for the ingroup (Scottish) varieties across solidarity and status dimensions.

Although most work in this field has centered around a three-way connection between language, group membership and personal qualities, we should not assume that a conscious knowledge of a specific group membership forms the crux of this picture (Preston and Robinson 2005). Supporting this cautionary point is Ladegaard (1998b), who showed that Danish listeners with minimal exposure to English-language

cultures share stereotypes appropriate to the regional and social varieties of English, although their identification rates for the varieties are relatively low. This suggests that through exposure to performances of English in media, they have incorporated such stereotypes while bypassing knowledge of the actual regions or countries involved. Williams *et al.* (1999) provide further evidence, documenting that while teens in Wales showed very poor performance recognizing the specific dialect regions of other teens, they nonetheless grouped speakers from each region together on a scales of Welshness. This seems to indicate that although the listeners did not have conscious knowledge of the dialect regions, their social calculations took regional differences into account.

These findings regarding the relative perceptions of status and a social attractiveness for different varieties are interesting, but they represent only a small fraction of the meanings and associations that speakers may hold with respect to language. Deciding what kinds of questions to ask participants is one of the great challenges of this type of research.

Expanding the range of reactions

A crucial aspect of the MGT is the selection of the questions to ask. The most common approach is to present listeners with a set of rating tasks, allowing them to indicate (on a scale of one to six, or one to seven, etc.), how educated/uneducated or friendly/shy the speaker sounds (a **semantic differential**) or alternatively how strongly the listener agrees with a statement like "I would want to have this person over for dinner" (a **Likert-type item**). Even within this restricted framework, there is a wide range of variation for selecting the qualities to be evaluated.

Zahn and Hopper (1985) conducted a thorough overview of the measures that had been used to that point and developed a comprehensive version, which they named the Speech Evaluation Instrument (SEI). One of the more remarkable aspects of this literature is the ease with which researchers all over the world have induced subjects to rate disembodied voices on an amazing array of qualities including not only intelligence, correctness of speech or friendliness, but also height, physical attractiveness and even metaphorical qualities such as sweet/sour. Despite this variety, Zahn and

Hopper note that in most of the existing work the variation in responses can be summarized by a few core dimensions.

Virtually every study has found one factor involving intelligence, although depending on the other available attributes it also encompasses socio-economic status, education, competence, correctness of language, height and good looks. Likewise, most studies have also found a factor called likeability, solidarity, trustworthiness or aesthetic quality. Many researchers have also identified factors related to dynamism, confidence or self-assurance. Zahn and Hopper also note a few studies which, looking at standard vs. nonstandard accents, have identified nonstandardness or ethnicity as a major factor, for example Williams *et al.* (1976). The similarity in the names of the factors through the literature should not be taken as an indication of a deeper consistency, however, as the details of which actual qualities fall into each factor differ from study to study.

While Zahn and Hopper had an eye specifically on developing an approach to listener evaluations of linguistic diversity (specifically regional and ethnic diversity), they suggest in their discussion that it may be general enough to be used in other speech evaluation tasks. The generality of their set of attributes is clearly a strength in some ways, for example it allows for easier accumulation of results across studies. At the same time, it is also be a weakness, as it will fail to detect meaning differences that are framed entirely in local meanings. For this reason, some researchers have chosen to conduct pilot studies to discover the appropriate terminology for a specific setting (Lambert *et al.* 1960; Fraser 1973; Williams *et al.* 1976), or adopted other methods for insuring the meaningfulness of their evaluation instrument (Wölck 1973).

In addition to having listeners evaluate speakers along individual qualities like intelligence, some researchers have explored other qualities, such as the degree of control listeners believe the speaker to have over their speaking style (Bradac and Wisegarver 1984). Others have investigated the impact of speakers' linguistic traits on listeners' moods and the degree to which listening to the speaker made particular aspects of their own identities salient (Cargile and Giles 1997). In some cases, researchers have asked participants not only to indicate their evaluations, but also to separately describe how confident they are as to their accuracy (Edwards 1979).

When the message content includes a purportedly real-life narrative, it is possible to also ask listeners questions about the specific events involved, for example how responsible the speaker was for an automobile accident, or how guilty they seem to feel about it (Giles *et al.* 1990). Working with child respondents, Giles *et al.* (1983a) had them draw pictures of the speakers, to investigate whether their status perceptions would be reflected in the relative sizes of the people in the drawings. Persoons (1988) asked Flemish high-school students to describe the hypothetical responses of the majority outgroup (francophone Walloons) to Flemish speakers with particular linguistic choices and histories.

In a handful of cases, researchers have gone beyond the evaluation paradigm to investigate actual interactional strategies in response to experimental stimuli. Work in Accomodation Theory has been particularly successful in developing ways of eliciting actual responses, by manipulating real interactions and noting in which cases participants converge or diverge linguistically (Putman and Jr. 1984; Bourhis 1984). For example, speakers of minority languages such as Flemish or Welsh are more likely to diverge into their own varieties when a speaker of a standard variety makes an explicit challenge to their ethnolinguistic identity (Bourhis *et al.* 1979). Bourhis and Giles (1976) developed another approach for investigating behaviors in response to linguistic attitudes, by using different guises to request moviegoers to fill out a questionnaire regarding in a given theater (also reported in Giles and Bourhis (1976)). This revealed patterns not only overall, but also in the ways that people attending different kinds of events responded differently. This methodology was repeated with intriguing results in Denmark (Kristiansen and Giles 1992).

A further step in the direction of naturally occurring interactions is to investigate the correlations between perceptions and linguistic traits in spontaneous interactions (Scherer 1979). Although this limits the degree of causality which can be inferred from the results, it provides a different perspective which may be combined with more experimental approaches either in a larger research program or within a single study.

Garner and Rubin (1986) investigated linguistic behavior, having a Black researcher interview Black attorneys in the South and deliberately introducing style shifting part way through the interview. As it turned out, this manipulation was

redundant as all but one participant initiated style shifting on their own. Willemyns *et al.* (1997) carried out a very similar study, showing that job applicants in Australia converged towards an interviewer with a broad accent, but not towards one with a cultivated accent. Natale (1975) investigated the degree to which speakers converged towards interlocutors with respect to vocal intensity by artificially manipulating the intensity of the interviewer's utterances during the interaction. Moving away from linguistic responses, Riches and Foddy (1989) used a group pattern-matching task to see how ethnic identity, signaled by accent, affected participants' willingness to accept input from a fictional "partner". Bishop (1979) used actual confederates to examine the influence of race and language variety on participants' perceptions and actual behaviors in a face-to- face simulated interview. Although the study required intensive training of the confederates to attempt to control their behavior across subjects, it revealed some fascinating results, including an effect of race and dialect on the relationship between overt ratings of liking/willing to be friends with the interlocutor and nonverbal behavior such as body position and eye contact. For these White subjects, these measures were positively correlated when interacting with the White confederate, not correlated when interacting with a standard-speaking Black confederate and negative when interacting with a Black confederate speaking Black English.

Researchers in more applied areas have used a variety of evaluation techniques to explore the factors involved in hostile speech, such as sexual harassment (Kinney 2003) and racial insults (Leets and Giles 1997; Leets 2001; Leets 2003). Social psychologists examining the effects of prejudice against various minority groups have developed a range of tools for investigating links between prejudice (as measured by attitude questionnaires and the like) and behavior. One such example is the lost email technique, investigating how frequently individuals with more or less prejudiced overt opinions returned a "misaddressed" e-mail to the senders, based on whether the e-mail contained good or bad news and whether the intended recipient appeared to be a member of a minority group (Bushman and Bonacci 2004).

The evaluation task is not the only area in which we benefit from an increase of complexity. Earlier research using the matched guise technique aimed to divorce

the task as much as possible from the extralinguistic context, including the speaking situation and the content of the message. Researchers have increasingly shifted their perspective to one which acknowledges the centrality of context. This theoretical shift has likewise been accompanied by some fascinating methodological innovations.

Increasing the complexity of the judging situation

One of the important lessons to emerge from the language attitudes literature is the necessity of dealing with the context of speaking (Lee 1971). This has not always been a concern in the same way, as the early studies strove for "neutral" message content and gave no contextual information to their subjects. Researchers rapidly came to realize that conversational context is always a variable and if it is not provided, subjects will fill it in, explicitly or implicitly, in the process of evaluation (see Bradac *et al.* (2001) for a discussion of this). What exactly constitutes the context of a given utterance is complex, since the information influencing listeners' evaluations shifts as new social moves are made and as a given interaction develops, "different language behaviors are afforded different salience" (Cargile *et al.* 1994:216).

The current state of the field deals with context in much broader terms however, for example contrasting conversations set at school with those from a social interaction (Callan *et al.* 1983; Creber and Giles 1983; Gallois *et al.* 1984), in a social interaction with an employment interview (Street and Brady 1982; Jr. *et al.* 1983) or other formal/informal situations (Hogg *et al.* 1984; White *et al.* 1998). Much of the research into the effect of context has looked at the complex ways that context interacts with other factors. Cargile (1997) found an important contextual influence on the impact of accented English, showing that listeners graded speakers in a job interview setting equally well regardless of whether they had an American or a Chinese accent, while if the same recordings were presented as excerpted from a lecture, the Chinese accented guise was significantly downgraded.

Context may be manipulated to eliminate the effects of linguistic variables as well, for example, speech rate generally influences ratings of competence in a linear way with slower speakers rated as less competent. But this effect disappears if the speakers

are introduced as explaining a difficult topic to an audience of beginners (Brown *et al.* 1985). Instead of manipulating the context, listeners may in other cases be asked to describe which contexts are appropriate for specific ways of speaking (Taylor and ClÉment 1974; Hoover 1978).

Much of the work on context has approached it in the broad sense as the setting in which the speech is taking place. Some suggestive research has also been done on more specific aspects of context, such as the content of the message being evaluated (Ray *et al.* 1991). Cargile and Giles (1998) examined the influence of message content, looking at the interaction between accent (Japanese- vs. American-accented English) and the "aggression" of the message, specifically whether the speaker explicitly criticized US policies. They found that there was an interaction between accent and message content on the ratings of dynamism. Smith and Bailey (1980) demonstrated that both message content and speech activity (reading or speaking spontaneously) influenced speaker perceptions significantly.

Other aspects of context include preceding message(s) (Bradac *et al.* 1977; White and Li 1991), or the information provided to listeners regarding the situation, for example whether listeners are informed that the speaker is of high or low social and educational status (Bradac and Wisegarver 1984), or that the elderly addressee resides in a nursing home or in the community (La Tourette and Meeks 2000). The friendliness or likeability of the speaker also has an impact on the evaluation of other aspects, for example their competence, even though listeners may not be aware of the effect (Nisbett and Wilson 1977). Other mood-influencing aspects of the interaction also affect ratings of speakers, including artificially introduced white noise which interferes with a communication task (Sebastian *et al.* 1980; Ryan and Laurie 1990).

Another way of thinking about context is the larger context of the speakers, listeners and the study itself. For example, researchers into issues of fairness in education have investigated the role of linguistic variation in teacher perceptions of students (Seligman *et al.* 1972; Williams 1973; Edwards 1979; Slaughter 1982; Yamamoto and Hargrove 1982) or student perceptions of teachers (Edwards 1977; Gill 1994). Work in education is particularly relevant given the very real social impacts of language bias in the educational context and the potential for research and

awareness of these issues to mitigate those effects (see Bradac and Giles (1991) for a discussion). Another context with very real applied consequences is that of patronizing or accommodative speech used by caregivers towards elders (Edwards and Noller 1993; La Tourette and Meeks 2000). Others have investigated the role of linguistic traits on perceptions in court, both evaluating the impact of regional or non-standard accents on how guilty a suspect sounds (Seggie 1983; Dixon *et al.* 1994; Dixon *et al.* 2002) and the influence of powerful/powerless speech styles on the credibility of witnesses (Lind and O'Barr 1979; Hosman 1989; Nigro *et al.* 1989; Schmidt and Brigham 1996; Hosman 1997; Ruva and Bryant 1998; Smith *et al.* 1998; Sparks *et al.* 1998). A handful of studies have addressed evaluation of medical messages, i.e. doctors explaining illness or treatment regimens to patients (Ray *et al.* 1991). Because of the natural opportunities for evaluation, job interviews have also been popular contexts to explore (Hopper and Williams 1973; Shuy 1973; Zerda and Hopper 1979; Kalin *et al.* 1980; Ball *et al.* 1984). A large body of work in social psychology is devoted to understanding the factors which influence the success or failure of persuasive messages, including some linguistic or paralinguistic cues (Miller and Hewgill 1964; Sereno and Hawkins 1967; Pearce 1971; Sparks *et al.* 1998).

Although they are not usually considered as such, the listeners themselves also form a part of the context of evaluation. For example, whether listeners are participants in an interaction or merely observers has been shown to influence their responses. Street (1985) had student interviewers and interviewees rate each other and compared these ratings to those made of both by observers listening to the tapes afterwards. He found no correlation between the ratings of participants and those of observers and in some cases found that they displayed opposite preferences. For example, interviewers rated those interviewees with longer response latencies and slower speech rates as more competent, while observers had the opposite response. Although not dealing directly with language, Harkness *et al.* (1985) supports this point by documenting that participants in their study judged a fictional person differently and used more complex reasoning to form their judgments when they believed that they would be interacting with that person on a regular basis.

Researchers have also investigated the role of individual listener traits, not only

their ethnic or other demographic memberships, such as age (Ball 1983; Paltridge and Giles 1984), sex (Paltridge and Giles 1984) and regional background (Paltridge and Giles 1984), but also more specific qualities. For example, Aune and Kikuchi (1993) demonstrated that both the actual and perceived similarity between speaker and listener in terms of language intensity correlated with, among other things, listeners' evaluations of the speakers' credibility and how likely the listener was to agree with the speaker. Edwards and Noller (1993) found that elderly women rated potentially patronizing communication strategies as less patronizing and more respectful than nursing and psychology students did. It is also possible to investigate the connections between specific evaluation behaviors and more abstract listener qualities, as measured by various profiling questionnaires, such as racial bias (Robinson 1996) or "African self-consciousness" (White *et al.* 1998).

Because these studies are usually carried out by playing listeners pre-recorded interactions, the speaker's interlocutor also forms an important part of the context, distinct from the listener. Researchers working in the framework of Accomodation Theory (discussed in Chapter 1) have used the MGT to explore listener perceptions towards shifts in languages or varieties relative to an interlocutor. For example, Australia listeners rated a job applicant as particularly flippant when they heard the applicant maintain or enhance a "broad" accent when interacting with a job interviewer who had a "refined" accent (Ball *et al.* 1984). Similar work has also been done looking at interactions between French and English speaking Canadians (Giles *et al.* 1973; Genesee and Bourhis 1988), English speakers and Cape Afrikaans speakers in South Africa (Dixon *et al.* 1994) and different ethnolinguistic groups in Switzerland (Doise *et al.* 1976). Convergence or divergence can also occur with respect to smaller variables such as lexical diversity (Bradac and Giles 1988), or speech rate, utterance duration and response latency (Street 1982).

These contextual factors represent some of the most exciting developments of the field. As we deepen our understanding of the ways that different factors in the linguistic interaction influence each other, we deepen our understanding of the social structures built by language. However, much of this work takes the linguistic material itself to some extent for granted, identifying linguistic changes in broad and sometimes

imprecise terms. This is where sociolinguists come in, with our passion for linguistic detail and for discovering exactly what aspects of a linguistic performance are relevant for particular social constructs.

Sociolinguistic approaches

Although sociolinguists have participated in the language attitudes literature, they have commonly adopted very different perspectives and approaches than many of those described above. Sociolinguists and social psychologists often have different conceptions of what constitutes an interesting question about language. In some cases, sociolinguists have used perception experiments similar to the MGT to investigate how listeners are able to identify speakers' regional origin or other information. These studies have investigated not only whether listeners are able to identify regional variation, but also frequently examine specific linguistic correlates of given identifications.

In other cases, sociolinguists have conducted more typical evaluation studies, but sought to identify the specific linguistic traits which trigger the evaluations. One example is Labov (1966), who included in his comprehensive treatment of variation in New York an evaluation study of the main vocalic variables in his study. Instead of using the MGT, he took recordings of a number of speakers reading the same passage aloud. The passage itself was constructed so as to showcase each variable in a different paragraph. The listeners heard a different speaker read each sentence in a given paragraph and were asked to rate the speakers in terms of the highest profession they could hold, given their speech. Because of the manipulation of the passage, each sentence elicited evaluations of each speaker's value on a single variable.

Similarly Rickford (1985) used the matched guise technique to elicit reactions in Guyana to samples of speech representing three points along the Creole continuum, such that speakers along different points used the appropriate percentages of the relevant variables. Rickford found that while speakers tended to agree on the relative socioeconomic status of speakers using basilectal, mesolectal and acrolectal forms, their solidarity ratings tended to favor the speakers most like themselves (Rickford

1985:152) (see also Rickford and Traugott (1985), which further incorporates media analysis).

Another area of research is the ways social information influences the processing of sounds, discussed in Chapter 1. This work does not follow the methodological paradigm of the MGT, as it focuses on the influence of extralinguistic information on linguistic perception, rather than the influence of the variant on the social evaluations. Research in this paradigm has explored the influence of visual cues (McGurk and Macdonald 1976), gender (Johnson *et al.* 1999; Strand 1999) and nationality (Niedzielski 2001; Niedzielski 1999). It has also looked at the perceptual aspects of bilingualism (Elman *et al.* 1977).

Other linguists have employed a typical MGT approach to investigate evaluative reactions to specific sociolinguistic variables. With the advent of software allowing for more natural-sounding manipulated recordings, it has become possible to create minimally paired stimuli to elicit listener regional identifications, for example. Plichta and Preston (2005) showed that listeners are capable of aligning a linguistic cline with a geographic one, even when they believe that they cannot. Similarly, Fridland *et al.* (2004) used resynthesis to investigate connections between perceived Southern accents and a range of vowels. Other perceptual work on variation has examined quotatives such as *like* and *all* (Buchstaller 2003; Buchstaller In Press; Buchstaller To Appear).

The literature on gay speech, discussed in detail in Chapter 5, has relied almost exclusively on listener perceptions. They have looked for correlates of listeners identifying male voices as gay, examining pitch (Terango 1966; Travis 1981), pitch variation (Terango 1966; Lerman and Damste 1969; Travis 1981; Levon 2005a; Levon 2005b), silibant duration (Crist 1997; Linville 1998; Levon 2005b), silibant peak frequency (Linville 1998) and overall size of vowel space (Pierrehumbert *et al.* 2004), among others.

As the linguistic units of analysis become more detailed, we begin to stretch the notion of "attitude" to its limit. It seems perfectly natural to talk of a listener's attitude towards French, or towards a Southern accent. It is somewhat less so to speak of their attitude towards the length of /s/ in an utterance. If we are to successfully marry the fields of language attitudes and variation, a better understanding of the

construct attitude is needed.

Understanding attitudes

As Bradac *et al.* (2001) discuss, attitudes towards a group of people or a particular linguistic performance form part of a larger recursive system of interaction through which speakers conduct their daily business. In the course of this process, attitudes are constantly formed, shared, acted upon, reacted to and reshaped. The attitudes studied in a given situation are affected by a range of things, including the listeners' goals, mood and available knowledge (Cargile *et al.* 1994). The study of attitudes in psychology extends far beyond the study of attitudes about language and psychologists are still in the process of reconciling the established methodologies with appropriately sophisticated theoretical models (Haddock and Maio 2004a).

As sociolinguists, we are faced with the challenge of not only comprehending the psychosocial significance of a listener's overall "attitude" towards a speaker, but also with merging this understanding into our existing models of the social meaning of linguistic choices. This study documents a connection between the use of a given variant of (ING) in a specific situation and a change in the rating of a listener on a list of labelled scales. In social psychology terms, this is establishing information about the relative attitudes of the listener(s) to the two linguistic styles presented. This opens the question of how to translate that information into knowledge about the specific variables themselves and what the theoretical relationship is between the behavior changes registered by the measure and the concepts of "social meaning" or "indexing" discussed in Chapter 1. This bridge is not yet built, but its construction represents the central theoretical work of the research program of which this dissertation is a part.

3.2 Methodological choices

The current study draws on a range of techniques within the literature for its methods. Because it pursues a new kind of information, it combines these existing methods in

a new way. The most important methodological elements of the study are: the use of digitally manipulated stimuli, the use of speech from interviews rather than reading passages, the inclusion of multiple samples from each speaker and the collection of both open ended interview data and categorical survey data. Before going over the methods of my study in detail, I will touch on each of these tools to mention its previous uses and discuss its importance.

Any sociolinguist with an inclination toward experimental methods will dream of being able to perfectly manipulate a speech sample for any variable and create believable results. While we are not yet at that level of technological bliss, we have come so far in even the past 10-15 years that it may seem like we have reached it. Thirty years ago, it was possible to use technology to change the rate, pitch and pitch variation of a sample of speech (Brown *et al.* 1973; Brown *et al.* 1974; Smith *et al.* 1975; Apple *et al.* 1979). Today, we can use available software to alter the formants of a vowel (Graff *et al.* 1986; Fridland *et al.* 2004; Plichta and Preston 2005). While the current technology cannot yet transform an /n/ to a /ŋ/, it can allow for a "cut-and-paste" approach and still produce a natural-sounding token (described in detail below).

The benefit of such manipulation is in the precise control it gives over the behavior to be evaluated. Barring synthetic manipulation, the usual method of constructing matched stimuli is to have speakers (naturally bilingual or bidialectal or occasionally professional actors) perform each version, consciously shifting the variables as they speak. This may be straightforward when investigating attitudes towards whole languages or varieties. When exploring more "molecular" variables (Scherer 1979), it becomes difficult using this method to ensure that only the variable in question is changed. We understand very little about how different variables interact in the perception process, which means that when judging the success of such manipulations, it is unclear how far to trust our perceptions of whether other aspects of the performance have changed. We can still gather interesting and relevant information regarding the larger perceptual consequences of, say, fast or slow speech. What we cannot do is be sure what the precise linguistic triggers of this perceptual change are.

Another advantage of digital manipulation is that it opens the doors to using a host

of different speakers and speaking situations, by eliminating the need for conscious control on the part of the speaker. It is possible to use naive speakers or speakers of only one variety and to create speech samples from spontaneous or even completely naturally occurring speech. Although much of the literature on the matched guise technique has used read speech, there have been exceptions (d'Anglejan and Tucker 1973; Palmer 1973; Wölck 1973; Apple *et al.* 1979; Huygens and Vaughan 1983; Mulac *et al.* 1985; Graff *et al.* 1986). There have also been the other attempts to solve the problem, for example Johnson and Buttny (1982), which took interview transcripts, altered them appropriately, then had the same speakers learn them well enough to read them comfortably.

There are many reasons to prefer spontaneous speech for these purposes. There is a significant body of work documenting the differences between read and spontaneous speech with respect to prosody (Fowler 1988; Bruce and Touati 1992; Dascalu-Jinga 1992; Blaauw 1994; Howell and Kadi-Hanifi 1991; Laan 1997; Guaïtella 1999; Hirose and Kawanami 2002). Relative to spontaneous speech, read speech has a different rate (Kowal *et al.* 1975), a different number, length and arrangement of pauses (Kowal *et al.* 1975; Barik 1977; Howell and Kadi-Hanifi 1991; Guaïtella 1999), different patterns of shortening for repeated words (Fowler 1988) and different tone boundaries (Howell and Kadi-Hanifi 1991).

Not only do such linguistic differences change the linguistic performance itself, they signal the origin of the speech so that listeners know that it was produced by reading aloud. Listeners show agreement in how to punctuate speech that has been read aloud from a text, but not how to punctuate spontaneously produced speech (Guaïtella 1999) and the process of detecting phonemes is influenced by different factors in the two modalities (Mehta and Cutler 1988). Listening to recordings of teachers reading or telling stories to children, listeners could distinguish the two even when the recordings were manipulated to eliminate segmental information (Levin *et al.* 1994). More significantly for the current study, Giles *et al.* (1980) found that the relative intelligence ratings between feminist and non-feminist women's voices were completely reversed between the spontaneous and read speech conditions. Smith and Bailey (1980) demonstrated that listeners' evaluations differed significantly based on

whether the speakers were reading aloud or speaking spontaneously and further found that the specific effects of speech activity differed for different speakers.

When using read speech, most of the research has used linguistic variation primarily as a foil for getting at covert judgments of social groups. As a result, both the researchers and the listeners are assumed to subscribe to the ideology that a person's essential characteristics come through in their speech regardless of the context of speaking. In this research, I have shifted the focus away from beliefs about personality and looked more widely at the interactions of linguistic variables, message content and idiosyncratic speaker traits. To do this, it was necessary to use spontaneous speech to create the recordings.

One of the potential drawbacks to using spontaneous speech is that it is difficult to control content of the recordings. Unsurprisingly, the content of what speakers say impacts the judgments others make about them. This has been an ongoing issue in the literature but for the most part work has been devoted to minimizing its influence, primarily by creating "neutral" content. This construct has been critiqued a number of times (e.g. Agheyisi and Fishman (1970)) and rightly so. Clearly, content and factors like word choice and sentence structure influence the interpretation of the speaker and may influence the role of other variables, including the ones of interest in a given study. To address this issue, I included four recordings from each speaker, in order to begin to explore the role of content as well as provide some variation within the data from each speaker.

The key elements of this method are the stimuli and the evaluation task that the listeners perform. As discussed above, there is a standard collection of qualities which tend to collapse into familiar factors such as status, social attractiveness and trustworthiness. These selections are primarily designed for learning about the fundamental personal differences which divide members of different linguistic groups perceptually. Having a standard set of qualities is useful for building on others' work (Ryan 1979) but it presupposes that the standards are the relevant ones for a given population and stimuli. In this study, I employed open ended group interviews which provide a rich data source in their own right as well as

a set of pilot data for the second stage of surveys. This kind of piloting is unusual but does have a history in the literature (Lambert *et al.* 1960; Fraser 1973; Williams *et al.* 1976), while other studies have developed culturally appropriate and nuanced stimuli without the use of formal piloting (Wölck 1973). Instead of piloting it is also possible to ask listeners to describe their reasoning after completing a more restricted questionnaire, allowing a deeper insight into the evaluation process (Giles *et al.* 1990).

The rest of this chapter will be devoted to describing the methods of the study in detail, beginning with the creation and manipulation of the recordings, then describing the the methods for data collection and finally the statistical analyses.

3.3 Creating the stimuli

As discussed in Chapter 2, the existing literature and the pilot study suggested that there may be regional differences in the use and interpretation of (ING). Accordingly, I sought participants from two distinct areas in the U.S., one from within the South (North Carolina, specifically) and one from outside the South (California). Because so much of this experiment was breaking new ground, I used university students as both speakers and listeners since they are easily available. I selected eight speakers in all. Table 3.1 gives the names (pseudonyms) of the speakers, divided by region and sex. Four were students at North Carolina State University, two men and two women,

	Women	Men
North Carolina	Bonnie	Robert
	Tricia	Ivan
West Coast	Elizabeth	Sam
	Valerie	Jason

Table 3.1: Speakers, by region and sex.

all of whom had grown up in North Carolina, in the middle or eastern portions of the state. I chose NCSU due to the large population of in-state students, which increased the chances of finding speakers who were from the area and who had perceptible

Southern accents. As it turned out, only three had perceptible accents, a fact which created interesting complexities in the data. The four West Coast speakers were all students at Stanford, three of whom had grown up in California and one of whom was from Seattle. All eight speakers were White, as the literature suggests that race has an effect on (ING) use and I did not have the resources necessary to incorporate race as a variable.

Gathering material

To make the recordings, I met with each speaker twice. At the first meeting, I explained the overall structure of the study and told them I would be manipulating excerpts of their speech and playing them for others to evaluate. I did not tell them what linguistic features I would be changing. We then conducted a sociolinguistic interview, approximately one hour in duration. The first part of the interview focused on schoolwork or other work experiences and the second part on their recreational activities and/or family life. The questions were designed to find topics of interest to the speakers and expand on those to obtain fluent, comfortable speech. I attempted to put speakers at ease and avoid awkward speech but did not tried to elicit a particular style of speech or obtain the speakers' vernacular.

After each interview, I transcribed the resulting tape, then met again with the speaker. I explained in more detail the point of the study, including the variable to be manipulated. We went through the transcript and I asked them to produce alternate tokens for each instance of (ING) from the original interview. For instance, I would indicate a point in the transcript, for example "I'm planning on going to grad school." I would play that excerpt from the original interview and ask the speaker to capture the speed and intonation of the original as much as possible. They would then produce two tokens "I'm planning on going to grad school." and "I'm plannin' on goin' to grad school." In this way, I collected alternate tokens for every occurrence of (ING) that was likely to be of use in creating the final recordings.

Selecting excerpts

Once the raw material was available, the next step was to select short clips of each interview to use in the study. In order to explore the effects of message content and topic, I chose four passages from each speaker: two about school or work and two on recreational or family topics. Each excerpt was a single uninterrupted turn, with only the speaker's voice audible on the tape.

After experimenting with multiple possibilities for the length of the recording, I determined that recordings of approximately 15 seconds in length would provide enough material to give listeners adequate information and enough space for multiple tokens of (ING) to appear. On the other hand, they would be short enough to enable listeners to hear and judge all eight speakers without undue fatigue.

Although the aim was to find recordings 15 seconds in length, I made it a priority to select recordings that were relatively coherent, with natural breaks in content and intonation. The recordings ranged in length from 10 seconds to just over 20 seconds. In a couple of cases, it was impossible to find an excerpt of appropriate length with sufficient tokens of (ING). In these cases, I did a small amount of manipulating. For example, for one excerpt I removed a portion of the recording containing my own minimal response, so as to create a longer uninterrupted turn for the speaker. in another, I joined two turns together into a single utterance, eliminating an intervening question.

The number of tokens of (ING) varies in each recording, ranging from two to six tokens. The majority of the recordings had three or four. For the transcripts of each recording, see Appendix A.

Manipulating the variables

I used the software package Praat to digitally manipulate the selections, creating minimal pairs of recordings. I spliced in both *-in* and *-ing* variants, to minimize confounding differences introduced by the manipulation. Although manipulating both sets did not ensure identical recordings, it made it more likely that differences based on artifacts of the manipulation process would be minor and limited in scope, rather

than consistent across all tokens.

In order to minimize variation across token pairs, I created a routine for the manipulation, departing from it only when necessary to create believable tokens. For most of the tokens, I had matched alternatives available, tokens of *-ing* and *-in* in matching phonetic environments created in the follow-up sessions with each speaker. In a handful of cases, the alternates did not exist or were not usable. When this happened, I took alternates for other tokens that were phonologically similar, ideally tokens occurring in the same lexical item elsewhere in the interview.

The first step to creating the minimal pairs was to open a copy of the original excerpt from the interview and adjust the window to include the token to be manipulated. I then opened files containing the alternates, one of the speaker saying *-in* and one of the speaker saying *-ing* in similar phonetic environments as the original. After selecting and opening the three excerpts, the next step was to select exactly the phonetic material to be cut and pasted. Figure 3.1 shows an image of the window used to do this, giving both the spectrogram and the wave form. It was important to

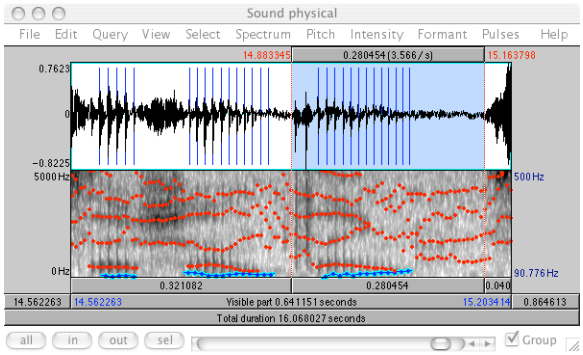

Figure 3.1: Selecting the appropriate material: thing out of something.

ensure that anything which helped to identify the nasal was included. This was useful in making certain that the most important parts of the alternate tokens were substituted in, but much more important for removing any signals which would carry cues to the original token. Apart from that constraint, I selected the minimum amount of material possible, ideally just the vowel and nasal of the token itself. In selecting the point for splicing, I looked for either a pause, a stop closure or a point within a stable sonorant. If it was necessary to make the change point in the middle of a sonorant, I

used Praat's formant tracking feature to find points in each alternate and the original which were similarly located in time and matching roughly in their formant values.

Once the boundaries of the three tokens were selected, I needed to adjust the alternates with respect to pitch, intensity and length in order to match the original as much as possible. As discussed above, the characteristics of spontaneous speech are quite different from that which is read aloud or otherwise recited, in addition to the fact that individual tokens may vary a great deal in any case. As a result, it was usually necessary to adjust the alternate tokens so that their intensity, length and pitch matched the original utterance. To accomplish this, I used Praat's facilities for examining and altering these qualities. Adjusting the intensity was the first step, multiplying the excerpt so as to match the amplitude to the original. After adjusting the intensity to the appropriate level, I altered the pitch. Praat allows a user to create a "pitch tier" from a sound file, a charting of calculated pitch over time, shown in Figure 3.2. It is possible to then apply this sequence to a different sound file, adjusting the pitch of the new file to match the pitch track of the original. I excerpted the pitch track from the original and used it to resynthesize the alternate tokens.

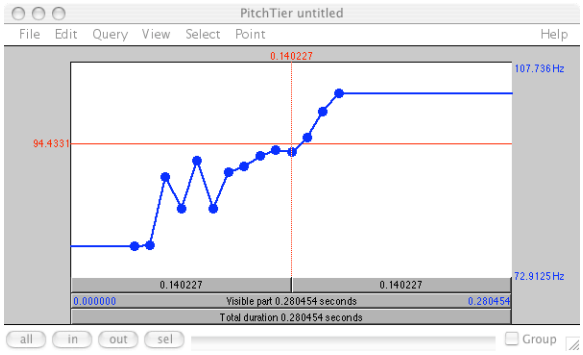

Figure 3.2: The pitch track.

I also altered the length of the alternates, usually to match the length of the original. In most cases, I used a straightforward multiplication provided by Praat, where I gave the ratio of the length change that I wanted and the tokens was evenly recalculated for the new length. In some cases, the relative lengths of the vowel and the nasal were too disparate between the tokens. When this happened, I use Praat's manipulation feature, as shown in Figure 3.3. This has a length track which

allows the user to create change points and adjust individual portions of an excerpt for length. Using this feature, I was able to alter the lengths of the vowel and nasal independently.

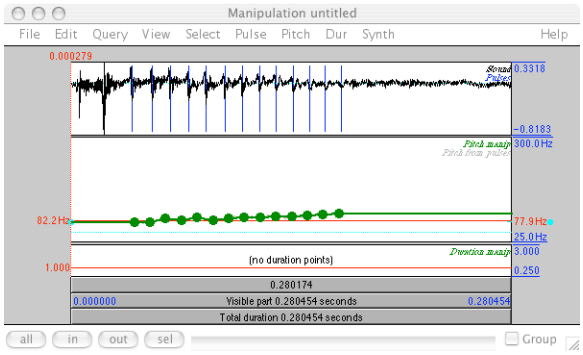

Figure 3.3: The manipulation window.

In some cases, either the length or of the pitch of the two alternate tokens diverged so remarkably from the original that altering them both to match it resulted in a bizarre or impossible utterance. When this happened I placed priority on matching the manipulated alternates to each other and on obtaining a natural sound. In several cases, this meant that the newly manipulated recordings featured (ING) in a more prominent and easily heard setting than the original token from the interview. In a very real way, I was manipulating the social content of the recording. I was careful to maintain concurrence between the two manipulated versions, so that the new alternates would match.

The issue of how similar the two members of the minimal pair needed to be was a tricky one. (ING) has been well studied as a sociolinguistic variable, but little work has been done concerning the specific phonetic attributes of the variants and how they differ, if at all. For example, consider the length of the variant. It is not clear whether under normal circumstances there would be regular differences between the two variants with respect to length. If there are such differences is not immediately clear what a minimal pair would be. On one hand, using the same lengths and pitches would create the most strictly similar tokens. On the other, if the normative length for the two variants differ, using identical lengths shifts the comparison to one between a typical token of one variant and an atypical token of another.

A thorough examination of these issues was beyond the scope of the study. From working with the variables, I suspect that there are no regular pitch differences, but that length may be an important issue. Tokens of *-in* in the interviews and the alternates tended to be shorter than their corresponding *-ing* examples. Problems with obtaining a natural sounding token occurred when examples of *-in* were lengthened too much. I attempted to match the lengths but paid special attention to the influence of length on the naturalness of the recordings, avoiding tokens which sounded emphatic or marked in some way. There also seemed to be some regularities with respect to the quality of the vowels found in the two variants. However, manipulation of this quality was beyond my capability, as a result I left the effect of this for later study.

Through the course of the work, I relied on my own ear to judge naturalness and identifiability. Once all of the recordings had been created, I ran a short pilot to confirm that the tokens were identifiable as the variants intended. I took excerpts from the manipulated recordings, including a couple of words on each side of each token. Listeners were asked to identify whether each token was *-in* or *-ing* and to indicate whether the recording sounded strange. Each token was heard by at least five listeners and tokens with more than two misclassifications or reports of strange sound were remanipulated and repiloted.

3.4 Collecting listener reactions

Earlier in the chapter, I discussed the importance of getting both open-ended reactions in addition to more restricted responses. I used group interviews and a web based survey respectively, to accomplish these. Because I conducted the interviews first, I was able to use them both as data in their own right and as a pilot for the survey. Having information about what terms speakers use spontaneously to describe the speakers helped me to select the terms used in the survey and to design its structure. Likewise, information about the ideologies and beliefs interview participants had regarding (ING) suggested areas of meaning to investigate more rigorously in the survey.

Gathering intuitions: group interviews

Once the manipulated recordings were finished and tested, the next step was to collect open ended responses. In conducting the group interviews I had two goals. The first was to determine what the general reactions were to the speakers in each recording and what words were used spontaneously to describe them. I also wanted to gather native speaker intuitions regarding (ING) and its effect on these particular utterances. In the first part of the interview, listeners heard individual recordings from four of the eight speakers. In the second part, I played the same recordings again but in their minimal pairs, asking the listeners to comment explicitly on how (ING) changed their perceptions.

In order to widen the range of geographic regions among the participants, I conducted interviews at three schools: Stanford, Duke and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The latter two schools were selected for two reasons: their location in North Carolina, the same area where the Southern speakers were from and their relatively high status. In early interviews at Stanford and North Carolina State University, I determined that the evaluations were likely to be influenced by the educational background of the speakers, even (or perhaps particularly) by the prestige of the school they were attending. At all three schools, subjects were solicited through fliers and advertisements in campus newspapers. In the case of the North Carolina schools, the interviews were carried out during the summer, among students who had stayed for summer classes, or who were working on campus.

In order to keep the task to a reasonable length, I divided the recordings by gender and content. One group heard only recordings of men discussing work related topics, another heard men discussing recreational topics and so on. I began by explaining the purpose of the study and going over the consent form. I did not identify the particular variable we would be discussing but explained that I was trying to learn about how small differences in the way we speak influence how we are perceived. I explained that we would be listening to a series of recordings and that I wanted their general impressions as to who the people were. I stressed that I was interested in finding out what they were able to tell about the people from listening to the recordings and what they were not able to say, so they should not invent answers if they had no opinion.

I also emphasized the importance of hearing from everyone. The groups ranged in number from one-on-one interviews up to groups with six participants. The bulk of the interviews were with two or three participants.

For the first portion of the interview, I went through each of the four speakers (all men or all women) one at a time, playing one recording from each. After each recording, I asked the participants to tell me what came to mind in response to the recordings and what they were able to tell me about the speaker. After a round of answers to this question, I asked whether the speaker seemed like he/she was competent, or good at what they did. Next, I asked whether the speaker sounded like someone the participants could see themselves being friends with. After discussing the speakers themselves, I asked what the speaking situation was and who the addressee might be. If no one had already mentioned where the speaker was from, I asked about this last. After having gone through the four speakers once, we listened to a second recording from each speaker in which they said different things on the same kind of topic, either work or recreation. The second recording for each speaker contain a different variant of (ING) than the first, but this was not brought to the attention of the participants. I asked participants to discuss if and how the second recording changed their impression of the speaker and whether the context seemed to be the same as the first recording.

Transitioning to the second half of the interview, I explained the goal of my study in more detail, introducing the variable (ING). I explained that we would be listening to recordings in pairs and that I wanted to know how the change in (ING) influenced their perception of the speaker, if at all. When playing the recording pairs, I identified which speaker we were about to listen to both by name and with a short description identifying which recording we would hear by content. For example, "And now here's Tricia again. She was the one that was talking about growing cucumbers before. In the recording we heard already, she said *-ing*." I played the recording that they had heard originally and explicitly identified which variant they had heard. I introduced the second member of the pair by explaining that it would be the same as the first, only with the other variant, again saying whether it was *-in* or *-ing*. In this way, I went through the pairs for all eight recordings from the first half of the interview. The

whole interview took approximately one hour. Before ending the interview, I asked participants whether they had any further comments about any of the speakers, then asked them if they had questions for me. In all, I conducted and analyzed data from 20 interviews consisting of 55 participants.

Testing intuitions: matched guise survey

The two data collection phases collected very different kinds of information. The interviews elicited explicit ideologies involving (ING) and reactions to the recordings overall. The first portion of the interview provided important information on which aspects of the recordings listeners were likely to focus on and what kinds of social assumptions and deductions they made. The second portion of the interview gave insight into the ideologies that listeners held about the role of variation in general and the meaning of (ING) in particular. The goal of the survey was to investigate covert reactions to (ING), testing which meanings are actually influenced in online interpretation of speakers. Listeners were not directed towards (ING) or any other specific linguistic attribute and each listener heard only one recording from each speaker.

The first step in developing the experimental design for the survey was analyzing the interview data for the descriptions to use in the survey. In selecting terms used in the interviews, I used two primary criteria. I sought the most central characterizations of the speakers, on the basis of which were most frequently mentioned, mentioned early on in the interviews and frequently presupposed. I also selected terms which were frequently referenced in the discussions of (ING), either explicitly or implicitly. Although I drew primarily on the interview data, I also combined these with concepts drawn from the production literature on (ING), discussed in Chapter 2 and terms used in the language attitudes literature.

Listeners in the survey heard one recording each from all eight speakers. The speakers were arranged in random order and each listener was randomly assigned to two possible orders, one the exact reverse of the other. I chose to have only two alternate orders in order to be able to investigate the effect of order, something which

would not be possible if each listener heard a different sequence. Each listener was randomly assigned to one of two (ING) guise conditions, in which they heard one member of each gender/region pair (e.g. Southern women) say *-ing* and the other say *-in*. In condition one, listeners heard Bonnie, one of the Southern women, saying *-ing*, and Tricia, the other Southern woman, saying *-in*. In condition two, the assignments were reversed. There were also four groups based on content, to with work topics and two that were about recreation. These did not change, so for example, Bonnie's recording about playing volleyball was always in the same group as Tricia's recording about hiking. This introduces a confounding variable since the preceding sentences undoubtedly influence the interpretation of a recording. The interactions between individual recordings and those preceding would be interesting but are beyond the scope of the current study. Examining the effect of what order the recordings were played in does begin to address this issue.

At the beginning of the survey, participants filled out a brief demographic questionnaire. It asked for their age, the school they attended, the countries or states they had lived in and their racial or ethnic identity[1].

After this preliminary page, listeners responded to eight survey pages, one for each recording. The survey form had six sections. The first was a set of adjective scales ranging from one to six, shown in Figure 3.4. Note that the last item was labeled either masculine or feminine according to the gender of the speaker. Although these qualities are by no means mirror images of each other, time constraints necessitated that I limit myself to only one per speaker.

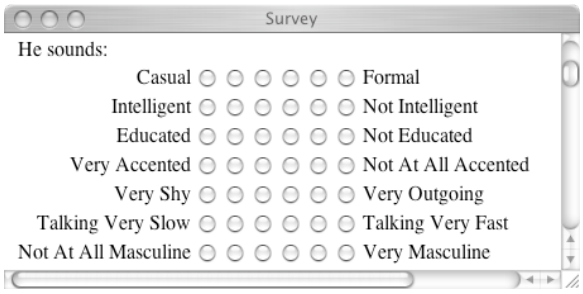

Figure 3.4: Adjective scales.

[1]Appendix B shows examples of the pages used to collect responses to the speakers.

In the second section, listeners were asked to indicate how old the speaker sounded, given the choice of five checkboxes labeled with different age ranges: *teenager*, *college-age*, *under 30*, *in his/her 30's* and *over 40*. This selection of the age categories may seem a bit odd, until one remembers that it was developed after gathering intuitions from a set of college students. Listeners were required to select at least one age description but could select as many as they chose in any combination.

The next section contained an adjective checklist, listing a range of personal qualities, such as *lazy* and *religious* and social categories or professions such as *redneck* and *artist*. After these personal descriptions came questions relating to the context. There was another six point scale, asking how well the speaker knew the addressee, ranging from *best friend* to *stranger*. Another set of checkboxes asked about speech activities such as *joking* and *chatting* and stances such as *bored* and *polite*.

Lastly, the listeners were asked to guess the background of the speaker. Eight options for region were provided: *the South*, *New England*, *the Midwest*, *the West Coast*, *the East Coast*, *the Southwest*, *the North* and *anywhere*. There were also options referring to community type: whether the speaker was from *the city*, *the country* or *the suburbs*. The last set of boxes asked about class background: whether the speaker was from *a working class background*, *a middle class background* or *a wealthy background*. In each of the checkbox sections except for age, one of the boxes labeled *other* provided listeners with the opportunity to add their own descriptors. At the end of the page an open-ended question invited them to add any remaining thoughts they had about the speaker.

The survey itself was administered over the World Wide Web, allowing for a wider geographic distribution on a smaller budget. The length of the survey was adjusted to allow listeners to complete the entire process in approximately 15 minutes. This included reading over the consent form, filling out the demographic questionnaire and completing eight individual web forms, one for each speaker. Lastly, listeners were presented with a page giving options involving incentives and giving them an opportunity to send comments or feedback. Participants were recruited through word of mouth e-mail and classified advertisements in the school papers at Duke and at Stanford. They were offered incentives of $5, sent either through the postal service,

through the electronic payment system of PayPal, or donated to the Make A Wish Foundation. A total of 124 participants completed the study. An additional 36 began it but failed to finish and their data were removed from the analyses.

3.5 Analysis

The data collected by these procedures created a data set of incredible richness. The complexity of the connections being studied was such that, with the number of participants I had, I was able to only scratch the surface of the interactions and connections present.

Different statistical techniques were needed for examining the three different categories of variables involved: independent variables, checkbox variables and rating variables. The independent variables gave information about which recording was being evaluated (the speaker, the recording itself and) the (ING) variant and about the listener (school, gender, regional background and race). The checkbox variables were binary (or nominal) variables indicating which yes/no attributes the listener had selected (e.g. *articulate*, *artist*). The ratings variables were numerical (or interval level) variables, ranging in number from one to six (e.g. *not all educated/very educated*), indicating the listeners' selections on these scales.

I used the Chi Square test to investigate the influence of the independent variables on the checkbox variables, as well as levels of co-occurrence between the checkbox variables. This test reported the degree to which the proportions of listeners selecting, for example, *articulate* were unexpectedly different among listeners hearing *-in* and listeners hearing *-ing*. The resulting small p value (0.037) indicated that there is good reason to believe that speakers using *-ing* are more likely to be heard as articulate than those using *-in*. Likewise, this test told us that listeners are more likely to select the Midwest when they also select the South. In the latter case, it is important to avoid assuming that one of these causes the other. The data can only tell us the degree to which these two responses are associated, not whether one triggers the other.

To analyze the ratings variables, I used ANOVA. These analyses examined both the influence of the independent variables on ratings and the relationship between

checkbox variables and rating variables. I accomplished this latter task by temporarily treating a checkbox variable as an "independent" variable and using it as a term in an ANOVA run. In a handful of cases, I used a different rating variable as a factor, to investigate its relationship to another rating variable.

There are a number of ways to approach ANOVA, specifically relating to the order in which the terms are considered. This order is relevant because as each term is evaluated, the result indicates the degree of variance in the data which it accounts for, after having controlled for those terms already considered. Some techniques consider all terms simultaneously, while others consider each term after controlling for the effects of all others. A third option is a hierarchical approach and this is the one that I used. In this approach, the order of the independent variables (or those being treated as independent for the purposes of the ANOVA) are considered in an order specified by the analyst. Thus, if the variable indicating which recording is being evaluated is listed first, it will be considered first, then its effects will be subtracted out of the analysis for the next term listed. This approach is useful in cases where the variables being examined can (and should) be ranked by a process which is theoretically prior to running the analysis.

The bulk of the variables used in my analysis of variance fell into a hierarchy. The speaker in the recording or the choice of recording itself clearly accounted for the lion's share of variance in nearly all the responses. In other words, listeners were most influenced in their judgments by which speaker they heard talking and what the person said. These two variables were the logical first terms. Because they nest within each other, (i.e. different speakers have different recordings) only one or the other may be used in a given run. When considering the data dealing with a single speaker, the term indicating the recording is used as the first (most influential) factor. When considering the data as a whole, however, I used the speaker, rather than the recording. This is because the data includes 32 recordings, which is too large and unstructured a factor to use on its own. Although there is variation within speakers, in the context of a larger dataset, the speaker is the more comprehensible and thus more useful factor.

The next term in every round was (ING). Although its effects were small compared

to the large impact of the rest of the linguistic material, it still had a larger influence than the listener variables. This relates less to the relative importance of an individual linguistic variable and listener variation and more to the fact that only very general information was collected about each listener, allowing only the most basic of analyses regarding their demographic characteristics.

These listener characteristics make up the next set of terms: gender, race, school and regional background. These variables are much more difficult to rank in a theoretically justifiable way. However, since the size of the data set made it difficult to explore interactions between more than one of these in any case, so only one was included in each round of ANOVA. It is certainly possible that interesting interactions between these factors will emerge in later research, but with the current dataset exploring these issues is beyond this study.

The last possible category of terms is the checkbox variables discussed above. Although these variables are, strictly speaking, dependent variables, it is useful to treat them statistically as independent variables in some cases, to explore the relationship between them and the ratings. By doing so, we can learn that listeners rate speakers as more highly *educated* when they select the term *articulate* to describe them. As with co-occurrence patterns between checkbox variables, it is important to avoid assuming that one of these variables causes changes in the other. Because both are dependent variables, it is impossible to determine what causal relationship, if any, exists between them. Also, it is necessary for the checkbox terms to be considered last in the analysis of variants, so as to avoid attributing such a pattern in a case where, the two descriptions are merely correlated by being used to refer to the same speaker. As a final decision, I limited each analysis of variance to three-way interactions, because the number of data points available could not support more complex interactions.

The following chapters describe the results of the study. Chapter 4 goes over the proposed core meanings of (ING) discussed in Chapter 2 and examines how they relate to (ING) in the data here. Chapter 5 takes a close look at the role of region and accent in the data and how perceptions of region shape the effect of (ING) in the speech of different speakers. Chapter 6 explores how differences between listeners and

their social and emotional reactions to speakers play a part in shaping the meaning of variation. Finally, Chapter 7 discusses the the theoretical implications of these findings, with particular discussion of the concepts of social meaning and style.

Chapter 4

The core meanings of (ING)

The central goal in this study is to explore the meaning of (ING) from the listeners' perspective. This involves both identifying the areas of social meaning influenced by (ING) and understanding how the different meanings are tied to one another. Through this process, we will illuminate the general structure of meaning in sociolinguistic variation. Chapters 5 and 6 will discuss the ways that variation among speakers and listeners influence the development of sociolinguistic meaning. The fact that such variation influences meaning provides support for the idea of indirect indexicality (Silverstein 1976; Ochs 1992) which was discussed in Chapter 1. This theory proposes that some of the social consequences of a given use of linguistic variation result not from a direct connection between the resource and the concept, but rather are mediated by concepts linked to both. For example, Ochs points out that in some communities women may use a form like *please* more often than men. This does not mean that the word itself signifies femininity. This connection is likely to be mediated by a meaning such as politeness which is associated with both the form and with women, at least in specific situations.

In order to explore this structure of linking meanings, we must first identify potential core meanings of the variable. Core meanings are those which are not mediated through other senses but serve as mediators themselves. The crux of indirect indexicality is the existence of partial or contingent meanings: those which are only triggered in certain situations or when used by certain speakers. In the process of

analysis, contingent meanings turn out to be relatively easy to locate. Locating core meanings, those which are not contingent on other aspects of the situation, is a more difficult process.

In a study of this kind, the ideal data indicating a core meaning would be an adjective rating or check box selection which increases based on (ING) across all the speakers and recordings. There are multiple ways in which this standard falls down in actual practice. First, it is likely to be too stringent. There may be meanings which are being triggered by the variable which will not show a difference in the ratings because the rest of the performance dampens the effect. So, for example, even if *-ing* is generally associated with higher estimates of education, this effect may disappear in recordings which explicitly discuss educational background or experiences, since listeners may rely on that information to make their judgments.

Conversely, a consistent effect across all of the data in my study (or any single study) will not necessarily hold up in other contexts. This study focused on region and the Southern/non-Southern divide in particular, so it is likely to have overemphasized associations with regional linguistic differences. The physical and social context of the study also highlighted issues involving education and the standard language market: the tasks involved evaluating speakers explicitly on their language, participants were students at competitive universities and the interviews were carried out in a university setting. All of these factors likely contributed to the large impact of (ING) on perceptions of education and articulateness which I will discuss in Section 4.1.

Various aspects of the recordings themselves were also likely to influence the results. The speakers spoke continuously for 15 seconds, relating primarily personal information or stories. These speech acts were less addressee oriented than, for example, several of the excerpts used in the pilot study described in Chapter 2. This may have served to shift the ways which (ING) was able to change perceptions, restricting situational variability (e.g. how well the speaker knows the addressee) and emphasizing personal qualities (e.g. how educated the speaker is).

Bearing these issues in mind, then, this chapter will explore potential core meanings for (ING). I found only two that were directly influenced by (ING) in all the

data combined: speakers were rated as more *educated*[1] when they used *-ing* than *-in* and were more likely to be described as *articulate*. I will document this first, then go through the list of potential loci of meaning derived from the (ING) literature as discussed in Chapter 2, namely: class, formality, gender, race and age. I will discuss what conclusions may be drawn concerning these topics on the basis of my data and evaluate each as a possible core meaning.

4.1 Education and the standard language market

Listeners believe that speakers who use *-ing* are more educated and more articulate than those who use *-in*. Survey listeners were significantly more likely to describe speakers as *articulate* when they used *-ing*, as Table 4.1 shows[2]). Listeners also rated the *-ing* guises significantly more *educated* than the *-in* guises, as Table 4.2 shows. Not only are these two concepts both influenced by (ING), but they are closely related to each other. In the survey data listeners rated speakers as significantly more educated when they also described them as articulate (2.76/**3.34**, p = 0.000).

	% listeners selecting checkbox	
	-in	*-ing*
articulate	21	*27*

Table 4.1: Articulate selections, by (ING) (p = 0.037).

	-in	*-ing*
educated	3.81	**3.98**

Table 4.2: Educated ratings, by (ING) (p = 0.007).

The two tables give numbers of different types. *Articulate* was one of the check box

[1]Descriptions in italics refer to responses on the matched guise survey, either checkbox or ratings or to exact quotes from respondents.

[2]In this and other tables, numbers in italics indicate the significantly greater value at p = 0.05. The numbers in bold indicate the significantly greater value at p = 0.01.

options on the survey. This meant that listeners could not indicate how articulate a speaker was, they could only select *articulate* or not. The resulting data was a binary variable: for each speaker/listener pair, its value was either yes or no. Table 4.1 shows what percent of the listeners hearing *-ing* selected this box and what percentage of those hearing *-in* did. The significance of this pattern is measured using a Chi Square test.

Educated was one of the qualities on which listeners were asked to rate the speakers. Each listener was asked to rate the speaker on a six point scale ranging from *not at all educated* to *very educated*. The numbers given in Table 4.2 are the mean values for *educated*, broken down by (ING). The degree of significance given in the table comes from an analysis of variance. This result corresponds to the result in the pilot study which also showed an impact of (ING) on how *educated* the speakers sounded. But where the effect size of that result was 0.57, this one has an effect size of only 0.16, which is quite small. This is not surprising, given that the changes in methodology from the pilot to the main study were designed to increase the realism and thus the variability of the listening task.

Interview participants also thought that *-ing* sounds more articulate and that people who use it are more educated. Participants said that *-ing* made a speaker sound more articulate, or as if they were trying to be more articulate, as in (1). This participant also shows the common division whereby sounding articulate is cast as a goal while being casual is simply accomplished. He does not mention whether she is successful at sounding articulate, however. This potential disconnect between what a speaker is trying to do and what they accomplish is an interesting issue that I will be discussing in Chapter 6. Participants also explained that *-ing* sounded more appropriate or natural in the speech of speakers who otherwise sounded articulate, as in (2). The discussions in the interviews concerning education followed very similar lines. Participants like the one in (3) explained that using *-ing* makes a speaker sound more educated than *-in*.

(1) **Adam:** I agree with [other participant] to an extent. Once again, I didn't hear that much more difference, except maybe that, you know, one she was

trying to be more articulate and the other she was being more casual.

Group 14, UNC. In response to Bonnie, recording: classes, comparison phase.

(2) **Sally:** I think she was pretty articulate with everything else she said, so the G, it kind of flowed better, I guess.

Group 14, UNC. In response to Valerie, recording: history, comparison phase.

(3) **Jill:** Yeah, this [recording] definitely, because there's so many words that end like that, it really brings out, like in this case, I agree, it makes her seem like I don't know, maybe less educated.

Group 22, Stanford. In response to Tricia, recording: hiking, comparison phase.

Although these two qualities were the only correlates of (ING) over all the data, this does not mean that they correlate in all contexts or for all speakers or listeners. The study created environments and tasks in which standard language language and education were foregrounded. The setting was a university campus, the task involved explicitly evaluating people based on speech and the population was made up of students at prestigious universities. These factors and others, including the stylistic traits of the moderator, served to highlight education and the standard language market, of which the concept of articulateness is a crucial feature. In addition, the content of the recordings involved speakers talking about themselves and their experiences. It is likely that this selection of content placed a greater emphasis on the qualities and abilities of the speaker as opposed to, for example, the stimuli used in the pilot experiment described in Chapter 2, which were mostly conventional polite phrases. It goes almost without saying that these results would be different had the study been carried out in a different context and with different participants. This is not a methodological problem in this particular study, but a fundamental characteristic of all such work and, indeed, to variation.

This link between (ING) and articulateness is part of a more comprehensive linguistic ideology of careful pronunciation. Listener ideologies of (ING) include an imagined "G", as seen in the written form. The *-ing* variant is produced with this segment, correctly and fully pronouncing the word. The *-in* variant is created by

failing to do so (e.g. "dropping the G") and is linked to other forms of shortening or deletion. Kroch (1978) discusses ideologies which align prestige forms with greater precision and resistance to linguistic change, change which he posits is itself motivated by concerns for ease of articulation.

Because of the connection with other types of reduction, *-in* was also linked ideologically to a general inability or disinclination to make the effort to pronounce words fully and/or properly. Not making the effort to pronounce one's words was ascribed to different factors for different speakers, such as general laziness, as in (4) or a relaxed environment, in (5).

(4) **Abby:** Yeah I agree with you I think the i-n-g puts more emphasis on the- the list that he's talking about and that's what he wants clearly emphasis, it's such a hassle for him to get up

Moderator: So it sort of makes makes his point better about how much work it is or makes it sound like more-

Abby: Yeah.

Mary: I can kinda see that but also in a way since he is kind of a slacker I can kind of picture him just not wanting to do the effort of emphasis.

Group 19, Duke. In response to Ivan, recording: movies, comparison phase.

(5) **Jill:** For me, the -in in this case it really made her seem more laid-back, like she was comfortable talking with maybe her friend or something. Like, yeah. I don't see the laziness, but I think it's more comfortable or laid-back.

Group 22, Stanford. In response to Tricia, recording: hiking, comparison phase.

Education and articulateness are both intertwined with ideologies about accent and region which will be discussed in Chapter 5. These ideologies tie *-in* to the South, Southern accents and rural areas. Participants explicitly linked accent with not being articulate and being from the South with lack of education. In example (6), the listener describes *-in* as strengthening the speaker's Southern accent and connects that phenomenon explicitly with lack of education. She also relates her evaluation of the impact of (ING) to her own Southern identity, implying that her response is potentially disloyal.

(6) **Alice:** There were several places that were um, the *-ings* I thought make- made the accent much less pronounced. So to me, unfortunately as a Southerner, it sou- she sounded more educated in the second [*-ing* guise].

Group 18, Duke. In response to Tricia, recording: work-school, comparison phase.

Her comments tie accent, the South, education and (ING) together into a single complex set of ideologies. Although the complexity of her comment is unusual, each of the individual links within that set were created and recreated throughout the interviews by many participants. The examples above document how listeners connect *-ing* to speakers sounding articulate and educated. It was also common for listeners to say that accents in general and Southern accents in particular caused speakers to sound less articulate and less educated, as (7) and (8) show.

(7) **Brian:** I'm not sure necessarily it's the Southern, but it's also just the having a stronger accent. You know, like the, like you know, not just the Southern but also like you know, Boston, New York, You- I associate with stronger accents sort of less well educated, sort of more regional.

Group 3, Stanford. In response to Tricia, recording: work-school, -in guise.

(8) **Scott:** Sounds like he's from the South

Dan: Obviously

All: (laughter)

Dan: That slower drawl thing going for him.

Laura: He seemed less educated to me just he didn't really explain himself as kind of, you know, sounded like George Bush. (laughter) Sorry.

Scott: I don't think he necessarily like what he was saying was less educated but I think a lot of us that don't aren't from the South, when we hear a person like that we automatically just kinda- that voice makes us think-

Laura: Yeah.

Scott: that they're less educated just cause of the way it sounds.

Kelly: Yeah.

Laura: Yeah.

Dan: Mhmm.

Group 18, Duke. In response to Robert, recording: investing, -in guise.

These two concepts are foregrounded not only with respect to (ING), but also across much of the discussion. The distribution of accents across the recordings brought out issues of education and articulateness, as did the explicit discussion of (ING). Education and articulateness were not only associated with the (ING) but participated in a much larger set of ideologies regarding region, accent and standard language. This topic will be explored in depth in Chapter 5.

4.2 Class and occupation

Recall from Chapter 2 that in most production studies, one of the most consistent and regular correlates of (ING) was the social class of the speaker. In the interviews, however, class was mentioned only sporadically and never directly in association with (ING). When class was mentioned explicitly in the interviews, it usually involved an observation that all of the speakers sounded educated and middle-class, as in (9).

(9) **Alice:** All these, all these women so far sound like White middle class to upper middle class.

Group 18, Duke. In response to Bonnie, recording: classes, -ing guise.

It was not unusual for listeners to discuss some of the speakers in terms that implicated class issues strongly. But as example (10) shows, most participants preferred to make such comments in terms of education or other traits, rather than invoking abstract and sensitive notions of class directly. Even in the discussion in (10), which focuses carefully at the potential skills of the speaker he is describing, Scott shows a fair amount of discomfort with the topic, increasing his use the markers *kinda*, *like* and *you know*. He personalizes the description by linking it to a specific individual close to him, which may be a move to avoid invoking a class discussion.

(10) **Scott:** I think from the first conversation, like, most of us felt he was some type of young professional. But now I kinda get the sense he's some type- he reminds me of my sister's fiance kind of just graduated from high school, didn't go to college, didn't do anything. But got a job like at the local auditorium and really knows what he's doin' there knows how to kind of, you know, he could change the court from ice to, you know, to a basketball

> court in half hour, you know, stuff none of us would have any idea about but he's not formally educated and he's really kinda excited, like, excited about his job.

Group 9, Duke. In response to Ivan, recording: crucial, -in guise.

In the survey, perceptions of class background were measured by three check boxes. Listeners could indicate whether they thought the speaker was from *a working-class background*, *a middle-class background* and *a wealthy background*. Since the three were checkboxes, listeners could select them in any combination and the phrasing of the question as "[The speaker] sounds like he/she might be from" encouraged them to select all appropriate descriptors.

		% listeners selecting checkbox	
		wealthy background	*working-class background*
Southern speakers	Tricia	4.0	34.7
	Robert	5.6	41.1
	Bonnie	10.5	15.3
	Ivan	14.5	16.1
West Coast speakers	Sam	16.1	13.7
	Elizabeth	19.4	5.6
	Valerie	24.2	7.3
	Jason	29.0	5.6

Table 4.3: Class selections, by speaker.

The first thing to note about class distribution is shown in Table 4.3: region was a major determining factor in selections of *a working-class background* and *a wealthy background*. All of the Southerners were less likely to be described as *wealthy* and more likely to be described as *working-class* than all of the West Coast speakers. This may relate to perceptions of the South or it may reflect other differences between the two groups of speakers. The interview site for speakers from California was a more prestigious and also more expensive university than that used to solicit North Carolina speakers and this may have contributed to this effect or interacted with region to do so. It is unlikely that the listeners are successfully reading class background from the recordings, however. Tricia was more likely to be perceived by survey listeners as

working-class than Bonnie was. In reality, Bonnie's background was relatively modest, as the daughter of a hog farmer. Tricia was from a relatively well-off background: she was the daughter of a judge and had a grandmother living in a very large ancestral home.

	% listeners selecting checkbox			
	All Speakers		Jason	
Checkbox label	*-in*	*-ing*	*-in*	*-ing*
wealthy	14.5	16.3	65.5	34.5
middle-class	34.1	38.3	22.4	**51.5**
working-class	18.8	16.1	3.4	7.6

Table 4.4: Class selections for all speakers and for Jason, by (ING). Effect on middle-class for Jason p= 0.001.

I found only one strong effect of (ING) on class perceptions. Jason, one of the West Coast men, is significantly more likely to be described as *middle-class* in his *-ing* guise, as Table 4.4 shows. To understand why, we must look at what other perceptions are decreased when the *middle-class* percept is increased. Descriptions of Jason as *working-class* are minimal and increase with *-ing*. Contrary to what we might predict from the production data, *-ing* seems to be lowering Jason's perceived socioeconomic status rather than raising it. In addition, the proportion of listeners who gave no class evaluation for Jason was greater in his *-in* guise. As a West Coast speaker, Jason was consistently identified by interview participants as someone who would normally say *-ing*. It may be that *-ing* serves to clarify his style, increasing listeners' ability or willingness to assign him to a particular class background.

Although this is the only result which relates directly to (ING) and class, class selections are implicated in a range of interactions throughout the data. In particular, Section 4.3 discusses the ways that (ING) shifts the relationship between perceived class background and perceived level of formality.

4.3 Situational formality

Situational formality is, after socioeconomic status, the other major correlate of (ING) documented by the production literature. The formality of the speech said it is usually controlled in most interview studies using manipulations of the linguistic task the speakers engaged in. These were aligned along a continuum based on how focused the speaker was (or was presumed to be) on his or her linguistic performance. In reading word pairs, speakers were likely to be maximally conscious of their pronunciation and only slightly less so while reading a more complex passage aloud. Answering questions in a formal interview setting is less speech focused still while dramatic narratives or relaxed conversations with friends or family are classed as the most informal speech obtained in the interviews (Labov 1966:90-98).

One of the tasks In the survey was to rate the speakers on a scale of one to six, ranging from *very casual* to *very formal*. Needless to say, listeners are likely to be working with very different notions of formality than that described above. Eckert (pc.) has suggested that formality is in fact the central meaning for (ING), with *-in* signalling a casual stance and *-ing* a more formal one and that its correlation with class is a result of different classes having different orientations towards or stakes in formality. Supporting this point, she points out that well-educated and wealthy people may use the *-in* variant without invoking associations with other classes. Turning to literature as an example of what is possible and felicitous, she reminds us that Lord Peter Wimsey, a character in the mysteries written by Dorothy L. Sayers, routinely uses *-in* (e.g. "I think all that fuss was simply shockin' (Sayers 1927:89)"). His use is made more emphatic by the fact that it is expressed in eye dialect and he uses it to perform a style described as typically aristocratic. In his case, the performance being enhanced by *-in* does not revolve around education (although he is, in fact, highly educated), but rather marks him as relaxed and entitled.

This relationship between class and formality is also a crucial point of inquiry for Finegan and Biber (2001), who contend that register-based variation is a fundamental, based on the different needs of different situations, particularly with respect to degree

of elaborations. Finegan and Biber argue that inter-speaker of variation follows logically from situational variation, given that speakers have different access to various registers. Although their theory is aimed at capturing the full range of variation, their discussion focuses primarily on the linguistic dimension of economy/elaboration. (See Dressler (1975) as well for a treatment of reduction in stylistic and dialectal variation.)

Checkbox label	Checkbox not selected	Checkbox selected	sig.
working-class background	**2.82**	2.49	0.002
middle-class background	2.73	2.82	0.307
wealthy background	2.71	**3.05**	0.002

Table 4.5: Casual/formal ratings, by class selections.

Listener reactions concerning the *casual/formal* dimension are not influenced directly by (ING) in the main study, in contrast to the pilot results. They are significantly tied to the selections of class background. As Eckert might predict, the class selections and *casual/formal* ratings are connected independently of (ING). Table 4.5 shows that listeners rated speakers as less *formal* when they also described them as *working-class* and as more *formal* when they selected *wealthy*.

Selections of *middle-class* bore no relationship to *casual/formal* ratings overall, which could indicate a lack of association between formality and middle-class identity, or more likely reflects the ideological role of the middle-class as a default and thus less socially informative category. Another likely possibility is that listeners are responding based on a cline of formality aligned with one of class, which fails to convey useful information about the middle of the continuum. Whatever the reason, Eckert's point about the relationship of class to formality is strongly confirmed: in the minds of these listeners working class speakers are less formal and wealthy speakers are more formal.

The next step is to place (ING) into this context. Table 4.6 shows that the selections of *working-class* and *middle-class* both changed their relationship to *casual/formal* based on (ING), although (ING) had no impact on the relationship between *casual/formal* ratings and the descriptor *wealthy*.

Checkbox label		Checkbox not selected	Checkbox selected	sig.
working-class background	*-in*	2.84	2.29	0.025
	-ing	2.79	2.71	
middle-class background	*-in*	2.63	2.95	0.022
	-ing	2.83	2.69	
wealthy background	*-in*	2.69	3.03	0.857
	-ing	2.72	3.07	

Table 4.6: Casual/formal ratings, by (ING) and class selections.

The connection between casualness and working class turns out to be primarily driven by responses to the *-in* guises. There is only a minimal difference in *formal* ratings between perceived *working-class* and not *working-class* utterances containing *-ing*. In responding to the *-in* guises, listeners rated *working-class* speakers as significantly less *formal* than speakers they did not think were *working-class*.

The relationship between (ING), *middle-class* and *casual/formal* is more complex: in the *-ing* guise, the *middle-class* speakers are slightly less *formal* than those not described as *middle-class*. In the *-in* responses, the pattern is reversed, with the responses selecting *middle-class* having higher *formal* ratings. The most plausible explanation for this difference is that in the two guises the alternates to middle-class have shifted and with them the relative formality. In other words, the *-in* guise may involve speakers choosing between *middle-class* and *working-class* while the *-ing* guise makes them more likely to choose between *middle-class* and *wealthy*. As a result, associations between middle-class may change based on what it is being opposed to. This idea is merely speculation at this point, however.

Based on these data, we must reject the casual/formal continuum as a core meaning of (ING), at least for the moment. It is possible, however, that listeners are drawing on (ING) for information about class and formality in interaction. These data also definitively establish that class and formality are not independent and unrelated concepts. The production data on (ING) makes this a tempting conclusion, for example from Labov (1966), reproduced in Chapter 2 as Figure 2.3. These graphs showing the stepwise effects of both situational formality and class are compelling evidence that

the two are independently influencing (ING) production (Labov 1966:398). However, this regularity rests on severely elided contextual factors. In most of these graphs, the dimension of formality is restricted to four or five speech activities, aligned around attention paid to speech. Usually a good half of these are reading tasks, completely eliminating the speaker's control over content. The truth is that formality does not live in such a regimented world. My data show that listeners connect class and formality in complex ways. This may be due in part or completely to a disconnect between statistical realities of distribution and human perception. that is, the two factors may influence speech independently but listeners may have skewed perceptions, causing them to describe connections which do not exist to linguistic practice. The perception data may also reflect those realities of distribution, which are created by processes dependent on (among other things) the vagaries of human perception. Listeners' "skewed" beliefs are likely to operate in real situations as well as within a controlled study and influence the course of these linguistic situations. The relative importance of these factors can only be explored adequately by supplementing this perceptual work with the examination of naturally occurring speech, examination which takes into account the complexities of speech acts and the linguistic performances which accomplish them.

4.4 Gender

Gender stands out in the existing literature on (ING) as the correlate which has been addressed with the most attention to social nuance. Researchers have documented gender differences in the use of (ING), most often finding that men tend to use *-in* more than women, as shown in Table 2.8 in Chapter 2. In a few cases, analysts have gone beyond this simple observation to observe that different men seem to use (ING) differently and that this variation relates to particular kinds of masculinity. Fischer (1958) noted that a "typical boy" in his study used more *-in* than did a "model boy". Although he did not himself interrogate these terms, his descriptions are revealing: the model boy "did his school work well, was popular among his peers, reputed to be thoughtful and considerate (Fischer 1958:49)" while the typical boy was described

as "physically strong, dominating, full of mischief but disarmingly frank about his transgressions. (Fischer 1958:49)". Kiesling (1998) pursued this further, observing that in the fraternity he studied, some of the men espoused a form of tough, working-class masculinity. Part of this performance included increasing their use of *-in* in relatively formal fraternity meetings, while other members decreased theirs.

Although it is tempting to limit studies of gender to simple binary comparisons, it is crucially important that we expand our understanding of how different people relate to masculinity and femininity. Recognizing the range of masculinities and femininities (e.g. Connell's (1995) notion of technical and physical masculinity) also allows us to better understand the meaning of gender-linked variation. Since the choice to use a specific variant in English, for example, is unlikely to be a biological or cultural universal sex marker, understanding gendered variation requires a deeper understanding of gender overall.

A focus on different kinds of men and different kinds of women is particularly appropriate when looking at listener perceptions, since listeners are likely to rely on cues like pitch and voice quality when identifying speakers as male or female. Once the identification has been made, other variables are more likely to impact how well or in what ways speakers gender their performances. In keeping with this point about the complexity of kinds of genders, the first fact to note is that I found no patterns which distinguish the four male speakers as a group from the four female speakers. This contrasts with the many patterns which reference either real or perceived regional origin. It also contrasts with some findings which apply to male and female listeners, where they differ in their aggregate responses. It is important to note that this difference between speakers and listeners is an artifact of quantity (eight speakers against 124 listeners). It does not mean that listeners or the process of listening are simpler in general. In Chapters 5 and 6 I will introduce data which shows that the process of listening is as active and individual as speaking. Conversely, if I had conducted such a study with many more speakers, it is likely that some larger patterns would emerge across gendered categories, as greater numbers would allow patterns to emerge from the individual variation.

I will first turn to the role of (ING) in different kinds of masculinity. (ING) does

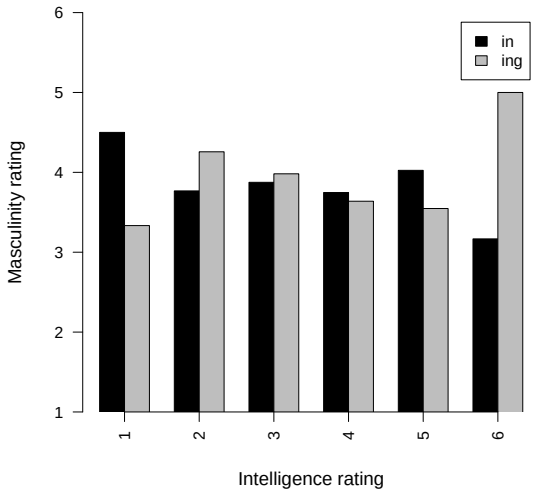

Figure 4.1: Masculine ratings, by intelligent and (ING) (p = 0.001).

not impact how *masculine* the male speakers are perceived to be across the board. This is not surprising, since the male speakers in my study, like Fischer's model boy and typical boy, are different men presenting very different ways of being men. As a result, (ING) affects each differently. Across all the men, (ING) changes the relationship between intelligence and masculinity. Figure 4.1 gives the mean ratings for how *masculine* the male speakers were considered by listeners who selected the different levels for how *intelligent* the speaker was, separated for the *-in* and *-ing* guises.

The graph shows that (ING) shifts the two peaks of ratings for *masculine*. In the *-in* guise, the largest rating for *masculine* comes at the lowest level of ratings for *intelligent*, while in the *-ing* guise, this pattern is reversed, with the highest ratings for *masculine* occurring at the highest level of *intelligent*. (ING) has little impact on the relationship between *masculine* and *intelligent* for the large middle portion of the *intelligent* scale. But when listeners make extreme judgments about intelligence, the (ING) variant used by the speaker shifts the impact of these judgments on masculinity.

A second set of patterns reflect interesting ideas concerning masculinity and language in the Midwest. In the next chapter I will discuss perceptions and ideologies related to region at length, particularly the ways in which many listeners in my study at times connect the Midwest and South into a single cultural region, associated with the country and with farming. Unlike the South, the Midwest lacks specific linguistic cues salient to nonlinguists. As a result, I suspect that listeners turned more towards indirect cues in identifying potential Midwesterners. (ING), particularly in the case of men, provides just such a linguistically triggered social cue, indicating the type of masculinity related to this cultural region.

	% listeners selecting checkbox					
	Male Speakers			Female Speakers		
Checkbox label	*-in*	*-ing*	sig.	*-in*	*-ing*	sig.
South	29.8	25.4	0.269	37.9	36.3	0.710
Midwest	**21.0**	12.1	0.008	19.0	19.8	0.820
Southwest	8.1	8.5	0.871	9.3	9.7	0.878
North	7.7	8.1	0.868	9.3	10.9	0.551
New England	8.1	9.3	0.632	10.5	10.1	0.881
East Coast	16.5	21.4	0.169	14.1	14.5	0.898
West Coast	21.4	28.2	0.077	11.7	16.9	0.096
Anywhere	22.6	23.8	0.750	21.0	25.4	0.242

Table 4.7: Region selections, by (ING) and speaker gender.

	% listeners selecting checkbox					
	Male Speakers			Female Speakers		
Checkbox label	*-in*	*-ing*	sig.	*-in*	*-ing*	sig.
Country	*22.6*	15.3	0.039	18.5	18.1	0.908
Suburbs	24.6	23.4	0.752	22.2	26.2	0.294
City	25.0	25.0	1.000	21.4	16.9	0.209

Table 4.8: Community type selections, by (ING) and speaker gender.

This connection between (ING), the Midwest and masculinity may be seen in Table 4.7, which shows that (ING) has an impact on how likely men were to be described as being from the Midwest. This occurs across all four of the men, while

only one female speaker (Bonnie, one of the Southern women) had any strong trend in that direction. The connection between this region and *-in* is reinforced by Table 4.8, which shows that *-in* also increases the likelihood of male speakers being identified as from the *country*, although it has no such effect on female speakers or on either men or women with respect to the other two community types.

The discussion above suggests that *-in* forms part of an image of rural masculinity, a finding which supports the existing literature which connects *-in* to working-class (Kiesling 1998) or rebellious masculinities (Fischer 1958), all associated with the notion of "physical masculinity" as developed by Connell (1995). This is not to suggest that all of these masculinities are the same. They do, however, have similar associations with toughness, physical strength, class and a casual stance.

The production literature on (ING) has little to say on the relationship of femininity to (ING). In cases where gender differences have been observed, women tend to show more frequent use of *-ing*. However, we have just demonstrated that the relationship of (ING) to masculinity is a good deal more complex than such a difference would predict, so it islikely that the relationship of (ING) to femininity will be similarly complex. in this case, the relationship seems to be influenced by the school attended by the listener.

As Table 4.9 shows, listeners attending Duke rate women as more *feminine* in their *-ing* guises. Stanford listeners, in contrast, tend to rate women as less *feminine* for using *-ing*, although this trend is reversed in the cases of Elizabeth and Valerie (the West Coast female speakers) when listeners describe them as *articulate*. This

	-in	*-ing*
Duke	4.13	4.26
Stanford	4.13	3.91

Table 4.9: Feminine ratings, by (ING) and listener school (p = 0.031).

suggests that different types of femininity may have different relationships to (ING). It is possible, for example, that the students at Duke associate *-ing* with culture or status which they viewed as more feminine, while Stanford students find the relaxed quality of *-in* to be more feminine, as in Trudgill (1974). The exception made in the

case of Elizabeth and Valerie is particularly interesting. It suggests that Stanford students recognize a particular style of articulate and educated speech, in which *-ing* is a helpful part. In the case of this particular performance of educated femininity, *-ing* enhances the femininity of their speech.

Gender, like the other meanings discussed here, has a set a fascinating interconnections to (ING) but little in the way of straightforward answers. There are clear points of contact at which (ING) has a significant impact on how or how successfully a given speaker performs gender, but exactly which points these are depend on a range of other aspects of the performance and listener.

4.5 Race

In constructing the study, I did not include speaker race as a factor. As discussed in Chapter 2, there is evidence of differences in (ING) use based on race in that Black respondents typically use more *-in* than White respondents do (Anshen 1969; Labov 1966). There have not, to my knowledge, been any studies examining other aspects of race or ethnicity. Because I could not adequately investigate this factor, all the speakers in my study were White. The first two group interviews were conducted with an Asian-American woman as one of the West Coast speakers. California interview participants easily identified her as Asian (needless to say, she was a native speaker of American English). I became concerned about the effect of this difference and replaced the speaker with Valerie for the remainder of the study. This phenomenon in itself is worthy of study at a later point, as is the larger question of the role of race and ethnicity in the interpretation of (ING) and other widely used variables.

In the interviews, participants generally identified the speakers as White when they mentioned race at all. Because of this consistency, I felt comfortable leaving questions concerning perceived race or ethnicity off of the survey in order to allow room for other, more central questions. Listeners were asked to indicate their own ethnic identifications at the beginning of the survey. The distribution of listener race and ethnicity identifications is given in Table 4.10. It shows that the majority of respondents were White, followed by Asian and then Black.

White	67
Asian	35
Black	10
Other	7
Latino	4
Native American	1

Table 4.10: Distribution of listener ethnic identifications.

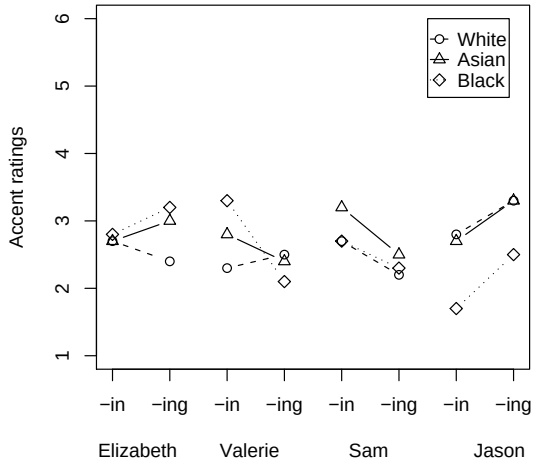

Figure 4.2: Accented ratings, by listener race and (ING), West Coast speakers (Interaction across all speakers significant at $p = 0.005$).

There was only one significant finding tying race and (ING), which influenced how *accented* each speaker sounded. There was an effect on the *accented* ratings based on a three-way interaction between the speaker, the race of the listener and (ING). The breakdown (including only the White, Asian and Black listeners) is given in Figures 4.2 and 4.3.

The meaning or meanings of this interaction are not immediately apparent. It is possible that it reflects real differences in backgrounds of the listeners, which are being influenced by idiosyncrasies of the individual speakers. The pattern is complex and lacks supporting data from elsewhere in the survey or the interviews, making

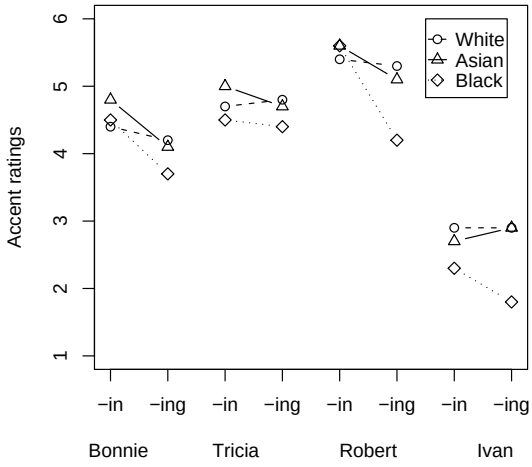

Figure 4.3: Accented ratings, by listener race and (ING), Southern speakers (Interaction across all speakers significant at $p = 0.005$).

it impossible to interpret without more data. Other effects involving race are not forthcoming given the data available. From the interviews, there was some suggestion that Black listeners were more conscious of the effects of (ING), particularly seeing *-in* as more stigmatized than the White or Asian participants did. Two of the Black participants were the only ones to report having been explicitly warned against using *-in* by school teachers, although this question was not an explicit part of the interview process so it is possible that others had also experienced such warnings and not mentioned them. These topics, both the effect of race in general, and the potential for an increased awareness on the part of Black speakers and listeners, are a crucial area for future study.

4.6 Age

The production literature has reported that younger speakers tend to use more *-in* than older speakers. As noted in Chapter 2, it is not clear whether this reflects age grading or linguistic change, but the former seems more likely, given the long history

of stable variation documented for (ING).

The actual age range of my speakers was quite limited; seven of the eight were college students between the ages of 18 and 23. Elizabeth was a graduate student in her early 30s. The perceived age range was a bit broader. Robert, Tricia and Elizabeth all were frequently taken to be in their 30s or over 40.

The age selections, like those for class, were provided as individual yes/no check-boxes: *teenager*, *college-aged*, *under 30*, *in his/her 30s* and *over 40*. Listeners were required to select at least one option. Using check boxes instead of a forced choice system allowed listeners more freedom in indicating exactly the age categories they felt described each speaker. This freedom could potentially have negative consequences, for example, if listeners selected unusual combinations of age categories it could be difficult to interpret exactly what cues they were responding to. On the other hand, if listeners were likely to select discontinuous categories (for example, selecting both *over 40* and *teenager*, but none in between), it would be useful to find this out rather than assuming a more conventional pattern without verification. Despite this flexibility, almost all responses were selections of a single age categories or two adjacent categories (for example *college-aged* and *under 30*). Also, as Figures 4.4 and 4.5 show, the distributions for each individual speaker fell in roughly a normal curve, suggesting that each speaker has a reasonably intelligible perceived age.

(ING) had different effects on the perceived ages of different speakers. The two extremes are represented by Valerie, who is described as younger when she uses *-ing*, as shown in Figure 4.4 and Robert, shown in Figure 4.5, who is heard as older in his *-ing* guise. The other six speakers show smaller differences. Bonnie and Sam matched Robert in sounding older with *-ing*, while Ivan, Jason and Tricia follow Valerie and sound older with *-in*. Elisabeth shows a less consistent set of changes, with *-ing* favoring descriptions of *in her 30s* and *-in* favoring the other four.

The meaning were behind the effect of (ING) on the perceived age of speakers is not clear. I suspect that it relates to the connection between age and other social meanings. It is tempting to see age as a great leveller, since people of all backgrounds go through different ages. Nonetheless, the age categories in my data are tied to other meanings, such as class. The descriptions *college-aged* and *middle-class* favored each

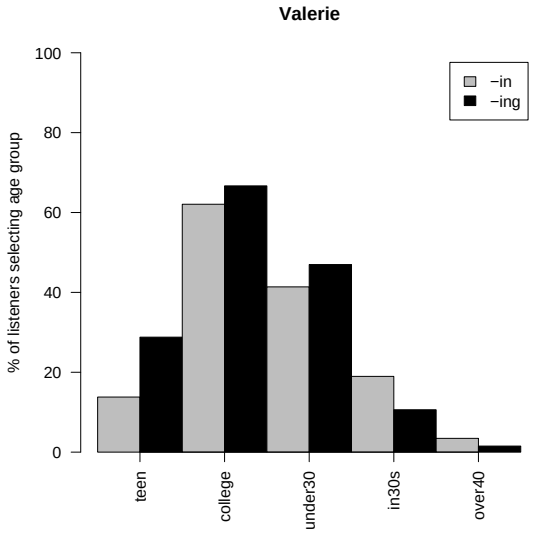

Figure 4.4: Age distribution for Valerie, by (ING).

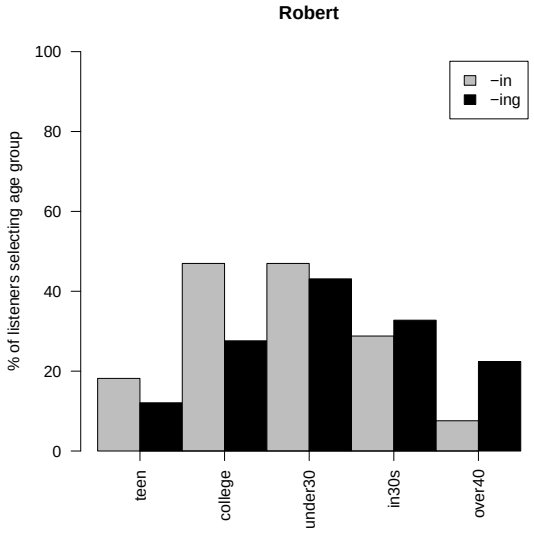

Figure 4.5: Age distribution for Robert, by (ING).

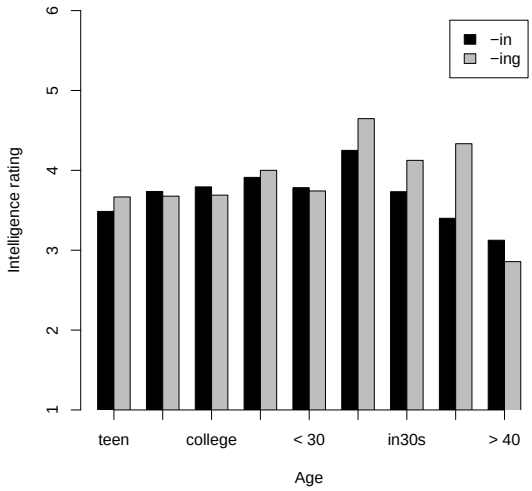

Figure 4.6: Intelligent ratings, by age and (ING) (p = 0.000).

other (p = 0.000). This is not particularly surprising, given the class implications of college attendance. It is quite possible that this relationship is triggered were strengthened by the phrasing. Given the educational backgrounds of the listeners and their assumptions regarding most of the speakers, it is also possible that the effect comes from a more general pattern. Support for this latter suggestion comes from the fact that descriptions of the speaker being *in his/her 30s* interact positively with the speaker being described as *working-class* (p = 0.006).

Digging deeper into this latter pattern, we find that (ING) influences the relationship between *in his/her 30s* and *intelligent* as well as the relationship between both of these qualities and *working-class*. Figure 4.6 shows the relationship between age and *intelligence*, broken down by (ING). The scale for age shown in this graph was made by combining the individual age variables into a single factor. Because nearly all responses involved a single age category or two adjacent ones, they made nine categories: the five checkboxes, interspersed with instances where the listener selected two adjacent boxes. The graph shows that the interaction between (ING) and the descriptor *in his/her 30s* is unique to this description and not a result of a more general pattern involving age. The three categories that include this selection

stand out by having higher intelligence ratings in both guises, but most remarkably so in the *-ing* guise.

	-in	*-ing*
not *in his/her 30s*	3.75	3.73
in his/her 30s	3.88	**4.24**

Table 4.11: Intelligent ratings by (ING) and in his/her 30s (p =0.006).

		-in	*-ing*
not *in his/her 30s*	not *working-class*	3.86	3.73
	working-class	3.22	3.74
in his/her 30s	not *working-class*	4.00	4.45
	working-class	3.50	3.65

Table 4.12: Intelligent ratings by (ING) and in his/her 30s and working-class (Interaction p = 0.023).

Table 4.11 shows this pattern in more detail, demonstrating that the *-ing* guise strengthens the positive relationship between the age category *in his/her 30s* and perceived intelligence. Breaking this pattern down further, Table 4.12 shows the interaction between (ING) and *in his/her 30s*. In this table we can see that (ING), *working-class* and *in his/her 30's* all have independent relationships with *intelligence*: for the most part, *-ing* ratings are higher than *-in* ratings; ratings for speakers described as *working class* are lower than others; and ratings for speakers described as *in his/her 30s* are higher than others. Each of these effects combines to enhance the others when the three come together, however. The two highest and lowest values stand out as much further from their closest neighbors than the rest of the means. When the speaker uses *-in* and is described as *working class* and is not described as *in his/her 30s*, their intelligence rating is remarkably lower. Likewise, when the speaker uses *-ing* and is not described as *working class* and is described as *in his/her 30s*, their intelligence rating is remarkably higher than all other categories.

This pattern has important implications regarding the nature of variation. Linguists tend to examine variables individually, but there meanings are not simply

added up in practice. While each of these effects exists to at least a small degree, the three in combination highlight particular styles or areas of social meaning. At these points, the combination of the three qualities is much more than the sum of its parts.

4.7 Looking for a place to stand

Looking over these potential candidates for central core meanings, it is impossible to seize upon one (or even two) and name it "the meaning of (ING)". We do have two (closely linked) meanings which show a broad influence in the current study. Listening to these speakers, in these contexts, both the interview participants and the matched guise survey listeners thought that *-ing* made speakers sound more articulate and more educated. As noted earlier, however, the setting of the study was one that brought education to the fore and this connection may not hold up in other contexts.

I have more confidence in the finding concerning articulateness than inthe one concerning education. The ease with which participants recognized the variable in my description confirms that (ING) functions as a stereotype— a linguistic variable which has become so salient that its use is a subject of overt comment and discussion (Labov 2001:196). In other words, speakers and listeners are aware of it *as a linguistic trait* and they craft their performances and interpret those of others accordingly. Articulate is the only meaning discussed here which relates to listeners' consciousness of speech as a performance. Due in part to this connection, I hypothesize that it may be a true candidate for (ING)'s central meaning. This meaning would include both "articulate", a quality describing people over the long term which focuses on ability and perhaps habit, as well as "being articulate", a quality describing people in the short term which focuses on effort or a performance in a given situation.

This is not to dismiss these other factors under discussion. In privileging meaning, I do not reject "social significance" (Labov 1966). The distribution of variation with respect to large social categories is a fact of language and speakers are aware of this. The point of this theoretical reframe toward social meaning is that speakers in different categories use language differently because they learn it differently but also because they use it in different situations, to different interlocutors and for different

purposes. Further, speakers (and listeners) are aware of *this* too. Speaker/listener knowledge concerning these parts of language do not take the same form as that of professional linguists. Speaker/listeners, as they engage in their regular social business, observe language in different settings than linguists. They also attend to different aspects, put their knowledge to different uses and structure it relative to different ideologies. Social significance, the distribution of language across the social world, is a critical fact of variation. It is just not the only fact. It forms a piece of a complex system linguistic equation influencing how, among other things, listeners interpret tokens of a specific variable such as (ING).

The distribution of (ING) across different regions of the United States is a case in point. Interview participants in my study showed a robust belief that Southern speakers use *-in* more than those in other regions, a distributional theory which is unproven, although plausible. The effect of this ideology on the responses is quite intricate and tied to myriad other bits of ideology, knowledge and opinions. the next chapter explores this relationship between (ING) and ideologies concerning region, particularly its connection to accented speech and the rural/urban divide.

Chapter 5

Accent, region and the rural/urban divide

The previous chapter investigated a range of possible meanings for (ING), drawing on the social correlates uncovered by the production literature. While many of these topics showed connections to (ING), most of them were influenced by various aspects of context. This chapter explores the role of context in more detail, specifically that contributed by the speaker. One construct, accent, emerged in the data as the most salient quality distinguishing the speakers from one another. The idea of marked, potentially nonstandard speech was a recurring theme in the interviews and interacted in the survey with a wealth of other responses and with (ING). This chapter will explore the ways in which the concept of accent is constructed in my data and how it structures the role of (ING).

In the process, I will also explore language ideologies which structure the concept of accent in the U.S. and tie it to specific regions and to the divisions between the city, country and suburbs, a Division I will refer to as "community type". Although each of these concepts (accent, region and community type) refer to different aspects of a person, they are ideologically intertwined. Listeners associate accents primarily with the South and with rural areas. These concepts are then tied into the larger social matrix in a variety of ways, for example by linking both accented speakers and Southerners with lower intelligence or lack of education, as shown in Section 4.1.

(ING) is also implicated in this ideological network. Participants in both the interviews and the survey associated *-in* with Southern accents and rural residents. This association led to a complex relationship between (ING) and the overall conception of accent. Perceptions of how accented speakers were emerged in a variety of ways, including from (ING) use. Further, overall evaluations of accent shaped the role that (ING) played, including how and how much it influenced the strength of the perceived accent. In the case of Southern speakers, *-in* increased the percept of accent while in the case of the cosmopolitan bicoastal speaker, it is *-ing* which made him sound more accented. The role of (ING) in constructing or dampening an accent depended on the particular conception of accent at play, specifically in what direction a performance deviates from the cultural image of unmarked speech.

It is worth taking a moment to note what accent is. I do not use this term in any linguistic sense or to characterize a way of speaking. Rather, it refers to a social construct by which some speakers are marked as speaking non-normatively. The term accented in this chapter refers to the percept of listeners and the degree to which they feel a speaker differs from their own speech, from an imagined norm or both. By referring to a speaker as more or less accented, I mean that the listeners in my study heard him or her as having a stronger accent, a description which conveys no direct linguistic information as to the speaker, but instead references the social categories which these listeners assign that speaker to.

The listeners in my study conceptualize the South as the prototypical home of accent, a belief which results both from general language ideologies, documented by work in perceptual dialectology such as Preston (1999a); Preston (1999b); Long (2002), and from the structure of my study, which emphasized the contrast between Southern speakers (heard as accented) and West Coast speakers (heard as aregional and non-accented), while neglecting other recognized accents such as New York. Despite locating of accent primarily in the South, listeners did hear one of the non-Southern speakers, Jason, as moderately accented, albeit in a very different way. His accent was related to sounding like a city dweller, a wealthy New England resident or most often, gay. His accent is intensified by *-ing* rather than *-in*. This is not surprising, since he elicited responses closely tied to *-ing* (e.g. being articulate, well

educated, less casual and less masculine). The participants in my study recognize both of these styles (gay and wealthy/New England) as departing from the norm in a way which defines them ideologically as accents. As a result, in Jason's speech *-ing* increases his level of accentedness, although it dampens the accents of the Southern speakers.

In order to understand the role of (ING) in the perception of accent, I must first explain the overarching ideological framework of accent in use. Although the division between accent and non-accent implies an imagined norm, not every deviation from a "normal" way of speaking is labeled an accent. Accent is socially defined, rather than a linguistic object with social consequences. After describing the construction of accent in general and Southern accents in particular, I show where the speakers in my study fall on this landscape. The use of *-in* increases the percept of a Southern accent when used by a speaker who already is considered to have one, although it does not have this effect across all of the speakers. In addition, *-in* and Southern accents share an ideological link. In interviews, participants uniformly felt that *-in* belonged in the speech of the Southerners while *-ing* was natural to the West Coast speakers. This connection between *-in* and Southern accent was one of the most commonly discussed meanings of (ING) in the interview portion of the study.

Lastly, I describe the role of (ING) in the speech of Jason, the urban bicoastal Speaker and show that *-ing* enhances perceptions of him as gay, metrosexual and urban and that these perceptions are linked to how accented listeners think he is. *-ing* also produces an association between listeners finding him accented and listeners thinking he is wealthy and from New England, although it does not increase how often they select these descriptions overall. This complex tapestry of responses shows the flexibility of variation, allowing resources to aid in the construction of extremely different concepts, depending on the other linguistic and social information available.

5.1 The geographic landscape of accent

Perceptual dialectology, as discussed in Chapter 3, is the study of the conceptual boundaries that speakers form regarding regional linguistic variation. One of the

major techniques used to collect data in this field is to give speakers a blank map of, for example, the United States and ask them to indicate which areas contain people who talk the same way. This kind of project has been carried out by a number of researchers in many different areas and in studies in the U.S., the South has been consistently the region most often indicated by participants (Hartley 1999; Preston 1999a; Preston 1999b; Fought 2002; Lance 1999).

The interview data confirms this perceptual salience of the South, not only in contrast to other regions but also to other qualities more generally. Three of the speakers (Bonnie, Tricia and Robert) are consistently recognized as Southern. In the case of these three speakers it was overwhelmingly likely for participants to identify them as Southern immediately after hearing the recording. (11) gives a typical example. The excerpt comes immediately following a recording of Robert and follows the typical pattern in that the first response consists of the description "Southern" or "from the South". This description is then confirmed by all or most of the other participants. It is also often greeted by laughter, which may mark the comment as self-evident, as sensitive or possibly both.

(11) **Moderator:** Any sense about Robert?
Tamika: From the south.
Abby: Definitely.
Tamika: Below North Carolina and far west as Texas, probably.
Abby: Yeah, anywhere from the South or from Texas.
Group 19, Duke. In response to Robert, recording: tailgating, -ing guise.

This exchange is somewhat unusual in the degree of detail that one of the listeners offered regarding what constituted the South. Not only did listeners not offer geographic detail as a rule, they did not seem to feel it was expected. When unable to guess the location of origin for a speaker who was not from the South, listeners would explain their inability by referring to their lack of lack of skill in identifying accents or the generic sound of the voice. For Southern speakers, listeners made no such apologies for giving only the description "from the South", turning instead to other topics, for example the level of education or the degree of dynamism of the speaker.

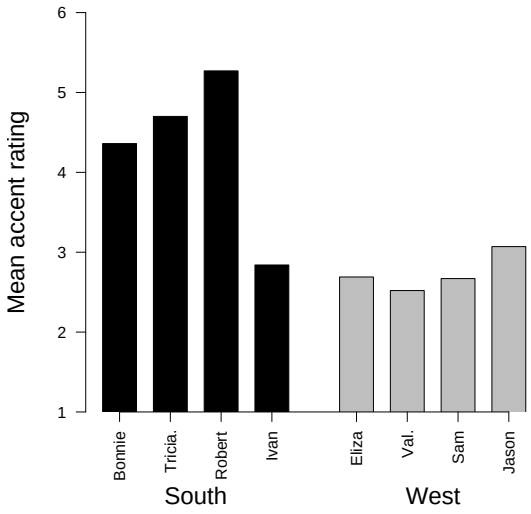

Figure 5.1: Accented ratings, by speaker (p = 0.000).

This pattern coincides with that found in work in perceptual dialectology, which has documented that not only is the South the most linguistically salient region for most Americans speakers, but that it tends to be conceptualized as a single monolithic region (Preston 1989).

Figures 5.1 and 5.2 showed the ratings for how accented listeners found each speaker and how often they were described as being from the South. The speakers most often identified as being from the South were also those described as most *accented*. One of the speakers, Ivan, was from the South but listeners in both the interviews and the survey did not perceive him as having a Southern accent. This is reflected in both his low accent ratings and his lack of Southern identifications. The link between accent and the South is further supported by a direct effect: listeners rated speakers as significantly more accented if they also marked them as being from the South (2.91/**4.79**, p = 0.000). No other region was positively associated with accent.

The salience of the South stood in contrast to the lack of regional identification for the non-Southern speakers. Participants only very rarely volunteered guesses about where a West Coast speaker was from. After asking other questions, I asked where

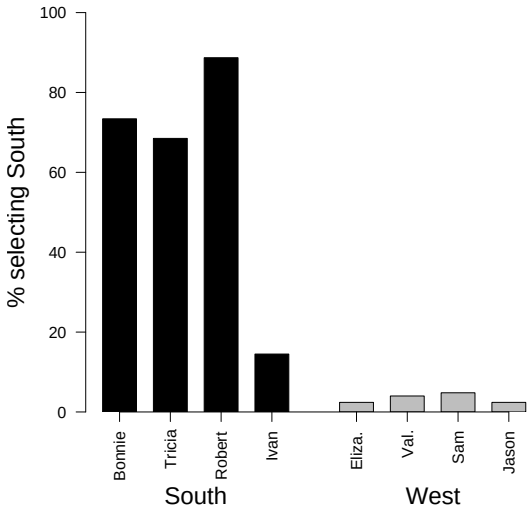

Figure 5.2: South selections, by speaker.

they thought the speaker might be from if it had not been mentioned. In (12), the participants from (11) give answered this question about Sam, one of the California men. The recording they heard deals with Sam's habit of going to parking garages late at night to skateboard down the ramps.

(12) **Moderator:** And any sense on where Sam might be from?

(pause)

Tamika: I'd say somewhere urban. As far as parking garages.

Abby: I have no idea. There are malls everywhere.

Mary: Wasn't a very distinct voice.

Group 19, Duke. In response to Sam, recording: skateboarding, -in guise.

This excerpt is typical of the general inability to identify a region and also typical in that they explicitly link the issue to voice. Lacking linguistic cues, one participant drew on the content of the recording, speculating that since the speaker refers to "going to parking structures late at night" to skateboard, he might be living in an urban area. Other participants occasionally drew on content for pinpointing location. One man from Detroit who heard Elizabeth discuss her close-knit family suggested

that she too was from the Midwest because "we have a strong sense of family". These instances were unusual, however and most listeners seemed to feel that judging where a speaker was from was appropriately done on the basis of linguistic evidence, not message content. This contrasts with other kinds of information, such as profession or conversational context which were routinely "deduced" by listeners citing particular aspects of the recordings' content in explaining their theories.

So why do listeners believe for the most part that region is best identified linguistically, unlike other information? And how does this relate to the salience of the South? These questions revolve around the beliefs that these listeners and others have regarding the nature of accent and what Lippi-Green (1997) calls **the myth of the non-accent**. One of the core tenets of standard language ideology is that some speech is marked by the region, ethnicity or lack of education of the speaker, while other speech is simply regular or standard. Region is particularly implicated in accent:

> Accent falls into the domain of uneducated, sloppy, language anarchists. Those areas of the country which embody these characteristics most in the minds of a good many U.S. English speakers (the south, New York City), are the natural home of accent. Everybody else speaks standard English and as such, has no accent. (Lippi-Green 1997:58)

Among the speakers in my study, the Southerners were the only representatives of such "language anarchists" and represented the domain of accent juxtaposed against the unaccented, regionally unmarked speakers from the West Coast. The durability of the myth of the non-accent may be seen in (13), where one participant responds to another's challenge of the ideology, the only time any listener described a non-Southerner as having an accent. It is worth noting here that Linda, the one issuing the challenge, was the only linguistics major in the interviews.

(13) **Linda:** I don't know, I felt like she had a very distinct, like, accent, like the kind that I've heard here at Stanford.

???: California.

Linda: or like when I [??] like at Stanford.

Megan: What is-

Karen: It's a non-accent.

Group 5, Stanford. In response to Elizabeth, recording: hair, -in guise.

Region is a central feature in the ideology of accented English but many other social structures are connected as well. Prominent among these is the idea I am calling community type, referring to the social baggage associated with living in the city, country or suburbs. Preston (1989) reports with some surprise that his respondents not only failed to distinguish Appalachia and the upper South from the rest of the South, but some applied the terms *hillbilly* and *hick* to the South as a whole. This kind of labeling not only erases (Irvine and Gal 2000) regional divisions within the South, it indicates an alignment of Southern accents overall with inhabitants of rural areas and the stereotypes associated with them. The data from my study reflected this alignment as well. In example (14), an interview participant explains the effect of (ING) by saying that *-in* enhances Bonnie's Southern accent and thus makes her sound more *country*.

(14) **Rob:** And as soon as she, also, it seems like after she said mixin', uh, "with the guys" seemed even more, like, country. Or more with the Southern accent. But when she said mixing with the guys it didn't seem as bad.

Group 10, Duke. In response to Bonnie, recording: seniors, comparison phase.

Survey participants were given the opportunity to indicate whether the speaker sounded like he/she might be from the *country*, from the *city* or from the *suburbs* by checking one or more boxes. Few listeners selected more than one box, although it was not unusual for them to select none of the three. Among those that did make a choice, there was an extremely strong pattern linking the country with both the South and high *accented* ratings. The Southern sounding speakers were also those most described as being from the *country*, while the others were overwhelmingly said to be from the *city* or the *suburbs*, a pattern we will see in more detail in Section 5.2. Table 5.1 gives the relationships across all of the speakers. If a listener thought the speaker was from the South, they were much more likely to describe the speaker as

being from the *country* and less likely to describe them as being from the *suburbs* or the *city*.

	% listeners selecting checkbox		
	South	South	sig.
Checkbox label	not selected	selected	
country	6.7	**43.6**	0.000
suburbs	**27.0**	18.1	0.002
city	**30.0**	5.6	0.000

Table 5.1: Community type selections, by the South.

Community type had a similar relationship to perceptions of accent. When listeners thought a speaker was from the *country*, they rated them as more *accented* than when they did not. Conversely, when speakers were thought to be from the *suburbs* and the *city*, they received lower *accented* ratings. Table 5.2 gives these ratings. The relationship between *country* and *accent* seems to stem from the previously

	Checkbox	Checkbox	
Checkbox label	not selected	selected	sig.
country	3.23	**4.76**	0.000
suburbs	*3.66*	3.07	0.037
city	3.70	2.87	0.334

Table 5.2: Accented ratings, by community type.

mentioned alignment between *country* and the South. I have already demonstrated that the South represents the strongest axis of accent in this data. The negative relationship between the *suburbs* and *accented* could result from a general opposition between the country and the suburbs. It could also reflect an association of the suburbs with sameness and lack of accent. Montgomery (1997) invokes this association when he speculates that "Among suburban teenagers in the South today there is evidence of both the Northern Cities shift and the low back vowel merger and there may be a good case for a modern day "suburbanization" or "genericization" or even "McDonaldization" of American speech, just as suburban life everywhere is becoming

indistinguishable in ways commercial and otherwise. (p. 17)" There is moderate support for that connection in a weak effect linking being from the *suburbs* with being from *anywhere* ($p = 0.042$) while being from the *country* had a negative relationship to *anywhere* ($p = 0.000$).

The experiment was not designed to explore stereotypes about city dwellers in any great depth. As a result, I can only speculate as to the reason for the lack of a straightforward relationship between being from the city and having an accent. I suspect that it relates to the more flexible visions of class involved in images of the city. The city may conjure up images of cosmopolitan or urbane "people of the world", in the context of more wealthy city dwellers. In this case, they would be participating in an opposition against rural and therefore regional speakers, an opposition which would align the city with lack of accent. Interview participants often suggested that speakers lacking a Southern accent could still be from the South, if they were from a city. Working-class city dwellers, however, may be associated with accents, even strongly so. It is likely that the speakers in this study simply were not, for the most part, perceived as a working-class city residents. Selections of the speakers being from the *city* favored with them being described as from a *wealthy background* ($p = 0.000$) and from a *middle-class background* ($p= 0.000$) and correlated negatively with the speaker being described as from a *working-class background* ($p = 0.040$). Nonetheless, this class complexity may have led to conflicting associations with cities in the minds of listeners, increasing the variability of the responses regarding the relationship between accent and the city.

Instead of, or in addition to, these class issues, the lack of pattern may be explained by the fact that different cities also have very different relationships to accent. New York and Boston were both mentioned in the interviews as possible loci for accent, even though none of the speakers in my study were ever identified as being from either of those places. The hypothesis that the relationship between city and accent is complicated rather than nonexistent is supported by the fact that although there is no direct relationship between the two, there is an interaction indicating that the relationship between the two is different for different speakers ($p = 0.035$).

So far we have linked accent to community type and the constructed image of the

South. Other regions are also implicated in this set of ideologies. The participants in my study linked the South to the Midwest and also somewhat to the Southwest. The literature on perceptual dialectology shows disagreement among participants at different times and places regarding the Midwest. Preston (1989) documents his participants projecting an image of standardness on to the Midwest as a whole. Michigan residents especially are remarkable for the force of their conviction that speech of their area perfectly reflects standard American English (Niedzielski 1999). Fought (2002), however, working with students in Southern California, found a very different picture of the Midwest. Unlike Preston and Niedzielski's participants, Fought's informants disagreed about the status of the Midwest as a linguistically marked area. While two described it as heavily accented, two others said Midwesterners had no distinguishable accent. The bulk of the participants indicated it as a separate regional dialect, with little to no explicit linguistic characterization. Most of the descriptions centered around social images rather than linguistic ones, primarily revolving around the rural, such as *down-home*, *earthy*, *country*, *laid-back*, *hick* and *more rural pronunciation* (Fought 2002). These participants also had areas where they lacked specific images of accent. These tended to be more located in the mountain states and their lack of image did not result in a characterization of the speech as standard. Instead, respondents merely indicated their lack of knowledge through comments such as *unknown* or *do these people even speak?*.

The participants in my study shared a view of the Midwest closer to that reported by Fought than those documented by Preston and Niedzielski. Recall that the *Midwest* was one of the yes/no checkboxes that listeners could select indicating whether or not they thought the speaker was likely to be from that region. Survey listeners associated the *Midwest* with being from the *country* ($p = 0.000$). Characterizing a speaker as from the *Midwest* also favored (and was favored by) characterizing that speaker as being a *farmer* ($p = 0.000$), although not surprisingly, listeners who were themselves from the Midwest did not share the stereotype. The Midwest is also linked to the South: listeners were significantly more likely to describe a speaker as from the *Midwest* if they also selected the *South* ($p = 0.001$). Interview participants connected the South and the Midwest in social terms and even linguistic ones. Example (15)

shows a listener making reference to an imagined shared accent across both regions.

(15) **Mario:** I kinda like, I don't know, the Midwestern Southern type accent I generally associate with farms and sort like that I usually think about that. Not necessarily because people are actually living in farms but just because like a lot of movies, things like that you see.

Group 3, Stanford. In response to Tricia, recording: work-school, -in guise.

The survey and interview data suggest that the listeners in my study have a dichotomy concerning region, whereby the Midwest and the South are aligned with each other and with the country, against other regions, particularly the coasts, and the suburbs and city. This opposition connects to a range of other social phenomena, including religion, politics and a variety of lifestyle assumptions. It has also been attracting increasing attention in the media and public discourse in recent years. The American Dialect Society annual meeting selected the phrase *red states* verses *blue states* as its 2004 Word Of The Year encapsulating this very phenomenon.

My data suggest that among these young, well-educated informants, this sociopolitical division involves a perceived linguistic connection between the South and Midwest. In example (16), one listener discusses his own reactions linking the Midwest and the South through rural images, in this case farming. He also reports others mistaking his own speech patterns for a Southern accent although he is from Nebraska.

(16) **Scott:** I just felt like with this one I think of farms and what he talked about the second time, I think of the Midwest and not the South. Kind of, I take offense to when people tell me that- I'm from Nebraska -that I sound like a Southerner so (laughter) still think he's from the South but this conversation there, maybe picture something in the Midwest.

Group 9, Duke. In response to Robert, recording: small-farms, -in guise.

Even though my participants frequently linked the Midwest to the South, it lacked the linguistic markers that help to make the South "the Touchstone" as Preston (1997) calls it. I have already described the strong link between the South and the concept of accent. Interview participants occasionally referenced specific linguistic cues, most of them vowels, which distinguished the Southern speakers. There were no such displays of linguistic awareness regarding the Midwest, indeed no reference to a Midwestern

accent which did not also involve the South. It seems that while my listeners, like Fought's participants, did not think of the Midwest as standard, they had no clear idea of what is entailed linguistically in the region's distinctiveness. This lack of linguistic character may relate to *-in*'s ability to increase selections of the *Midwest* in response to male speakers, as discussed in Chapter 4. Without direct cues, listeners may increase their reliance on social information (e.g. toughness, casualness) to make these identifications.

The Southwest as a region was not mentioned in the interviews, although occasionally participants refer to Texas, explicitly distinguishing it from the South. In the survey the Southwest was linked loosely with the South and the Midwest. Listeners who described a given speaker as from the *South* were more likely to also select the *Southwest* ($p = 0.000$) and from the *Midwest* ($p = 0.000$). The *Southwest* also had a positive relationship with being from the *country* ($p = 0.001$), but none with the identity *farmer*.

The picture is much less clear concerning the other side of this opposition, the regions and communities which are opposed to the rural South, Midwest and Southwest. It's possible that this is because my listeners are less certain of or more diverse in their conceptions of the city, the suburbs and these other regions. It's more likely that my study simply did not draw the kinds of distinctions that would easily shed light on these questions. Because the structure of the study drew attention to Southern accents, already an extremely salient linguistic phenomenon, it is likely that it erased variability elsewhere, both geographically and sociolinguistically. Despite this, it is possible to gather some information on other regions.

Table 5.3 gives mean accent ratings and significance values for all of the regions. Speakers were described as more *accented* when they were also described as being from the *South*. But although selections of the *South* favored selections of the *Midwest* and *Southwest*, neither of these two regions were connected to *accented* ratings. All of the rest of the regions showed decreased accent ratings, although only those for *New England* and the *East Coast* are significant.

The relationship between region and community type is more complicated. While the South, the Midwest and the Southwest are all related to the country, there is not a

	Accented ratings		
Checkbox label	Checkbox not selected	Checkbox selected	sig.
South	2.91	**4.79**	0.000
Midwest	3.48	3.70	0.719
Southwest	3.48	3.93	0.110
North	3.59	2.70	0.054
New England	**3.62**	2.53	0.000
East Coast	**3.68**	2.69	0.001
West Coast	3.68	2.82	0.138
Anywhere	3.73	2.81	0.150

Table 5.3: Accented ratings, by region.

clear relationship between particular regions and the suburbs or the city. Indeed, the relationships between the three concepts themselves are not straightforward. Listeners were much less likely to describe a speaker as being from the *city* if they described them as being from the *country* ($p = 0.000$), a finding which is not particularly surprising given that these two concepts represent a fundamental opposition. Selections of the *suburbs* and the *city* favor each other ($p = 0.000$). There was no relationship, either positive or negative, between the *suburbs* and the *country*.

Table 5.4 shows the relationship between all of the regions and the three community type labels. Each region is represented by two lines. The first line, labeled "no", gives the percentages of listeners who selected each community type out of all the listeners who did not select that region. The second line, labeled "yes", gives the percentage of listeners selecting each community type out of listeners who did select the region. So, for example, out of all of the instances where a listener did not think the speaker was from the South, in 30 percent of those cases the listener thought the speaker might be from the city. In the cases where the listener **did** think the speaker was from the South, only 5.6 percent of them thought the speaker might be from the city. Using the Chi Square test, these two proportions were significantly different at $p < 0.01$ and this is indicated by the bold font on the larger value.

Overall, the evidence supports the observations made earlier that the South stands alone in its linguistic salience. It also shows a ideological divide in which the South,

		Community type		
Region		city	suburbs	country
South	no	**30.0**	**27.0**	6.7
	yes	5.6	18.1	**43.6**
Midwest	no	22.7	23.1	15.0
	yes	19.1	28.7	**35.4**
Southwest	no	22.1	23.5	17.4
	yes	21.6	30.7	**31.8**
North	no	19.9	23.5	**19.8**
	yes	**43.8**	30.3	6.7
New England	no	19.2	22.3	**20.3**
	yes	**50.0**	**41.5**	3.2
East Coast	no	17.3	21.2	**21.9**
	yes	**46.1**	**38.8**	2.4
West Coast	no	17.4	19.5	**22.6**
	yes	**41.2**	**42.8**	2.6
Anywhere	no	23.4	22.6	**23.0**
	yes	17.8	*29.1*	4.3

Table 5.4: Region selections, by community type. Numbers give percent of listeners selecting that community type out of listeners selecting or not selecting that region. Italics indicate significance at $p < 0.05$, bold indicates significance at $p < 0.01$.

Southwest and Midwest are aligned with each other and the country. Against them stands both the coasts and an aregional anywhere or standard/general American way of speaking and being. Both of these are tied to both the city and the suburbs, although the relationships at this end of the divide have yet to be teased out in detail. Some of those relationships will be explored in Section 5.3, but for the most part, this study has only skimmed the surface of the issues in that domain.

Understanding the interplay of region, accent and the rural/urban divide is important groundwork in understanding the role of (ING) in the speech of Americans. As we will see, (ING)'s meanings depend on the position of the speaker in this landscape. The next section will go over the speakers in my study, how they fit into this picture and the impact of (ING) on the speech of each of them.

5.2 Placing the speakers and (ING)

The previous section laid out the patterns that emerged in my data concerning region, accent and the rural/urban divide. In this section, I will move from this abstract discussion to one grounded in the actual variable and speakers under discussion. (ING) is intimately tied to the regional divide which constructs the South as a region of rural and accented speakers. Many linguists and non-linguists believe that Southerners use *-in* more than other speakers, which is plausible but has not been formally established. This belief creates expectations that Southern speakers will use *-in* and "non-accented" speakers will use *-ing*. Those expectations combine with perceptions of specific speakers to give meaning to (ING) in context. While (ING) does have some impact on the deductions listeners make about region, for the most part region and accent function as part of the context which frames a given use of (ING). I will first discuss the overall relationship of (ING) to region, accent and the rural/urban divide, then describe where the speakers in my study fall with respect to these questions.

I noted in Chapter 2 that although no studies have explicitly compared (ING) use across U.S. regions, the literature holds many suggestions that Southern speakers use higher levels of *-in* than other Americans. My own experience collecting the recordings used for the main study also supports this. In the six hourlong interviews on the West Coast, there were only two tokens of *-in*, both from the same speaker in the same clause, clearly used for specific effect (the tokens were *sitting* and *watching* in the last line of Elizabeth's recording "theme-park", in which she says "and you're just sittin' there watchin' it all go by"). In contrast, the Southern speakers all used sizeable percentages of *-in*, though it was by no means categorical. Although there is not really any clear data on the question, it does seem probable that at least some Southern speakers use more *-in* than comparable non-Southern speakers. It is also possible, however, that (ING) is tied to a more general concept of accent, of which the South is a subset but which also implicates other regions, as well as class and community type.

Regardless of the actual distribution of (ING), the participants in my study associate *-in* with the South. Interview participants said that they associated *-in* with

accents in general and Southern accents in particular and with people who live in the country. This pattern held independent of where they themselves were from or what school they attended. Despite these associations, listeners did not base their region judgments on (ING). Interview participants did not change their guesses about region when presented with alternate (ING) versions of the recordings. This is due in part to discourse constraints; once participants have committed to an evaluation they may be reluctant to change their assessment on the basis of a single variable. However, survey participants also showed no consistent impact of (ING) on their guesses as to which region a speaker might be from. Some patterns were visible regarding individual speakers but no effect appeared across all of the data. Instead of (ING) influencing listener perceptions about region, the connection between the two was usually phrased in terms of fit or naturalness. The Southern speakers were described as sounding more natural when they use *-in*. In example (17), several listeners work together to explain how natural *-in* was in the speech of the two Southern speakers they heard. This opinion, including the word "natural", was reiterated throughout the interviews. Conversely, the *-ing* variant was consistently described as belonging naturally in the speech of the non-Southerners.

(17) **Sally:** The second one sounded more natural.

Moderator: Okay.

???: Yeah.

Sarah: I agree.

Tom: It was kind of like the same situation as Tricia. Just went with how she speaks better.

Moderator: Okay.

Tom: It's natural.

Group 14, UNC Chapel Hill. In response to Bonnie, recording: classes, comparison phase.

Because listeners have a sense of which variant is more appropriate for certain speakers, region is important in influencing the ultimate role of (ING). Listeners make their judgments regarding accent based on other cues and these judgments

build expectations as to which variant of (ING) the speaker is likely to say regularly. These expectations then help to structure listener reactions to the variant a speaker actually uses. Example (18) is an unusually explicit discussion of this, where a listener explains Valerie's anomalous use of *-in* by suggesting that she is accommodating to a Southern audience.

(18) **Greg:** So I think it sounds more natural for her to say *-ing*. Hiking. Hikin' just- it just doesn't mesh well with the rest of the sentence. But I mean if she did, if she were, if I did have a true situation in which she was saying- which she was saying hiking or sorry hikin' with i-n on the end of it? It would sound as though she's trying she's maybe around somebody Southern and she's trying to be Southern or trying to be a little bit too laidback relaxed linguistically.

Group 21, Duke. In response to Valerie, recording: backpacking, comparison phase.

Valerie has other aspects of her speech that reveal information about her background, regional and otherwise. Although Valerie is from California, Greg had previously guessed that she was from Colorado. From this estimate and other evaluations of her linguistic performance, he determined (as did the other listeners who heard Valerie) that she was someone who would normally say *-ing*. Knowing this, he looked for possible interpretation of *-in* in her speech. He drew on the connection between *-in* and the South to suggest that she is trying to invoke or adapt to a Southern norm.

A crucial message of this study, then, is that listeners conceptualize some speakers as naturally saying *-in* and others naturally saying *-ing*. This forms part of the structure within which the meaning of (ING) is evaluated. The impact of a given use of (ING) will depend, among other things, on where listeners think a speaker is from and how accented they think the speaker is. In order to understand why the results regarding (ING) differ for these particular speakers, we must examine how the speakers fall within this landscape. The role of (ING) in the performance depends on (among other factors) the overall place of the speaker along the three bundled topics discussed above: region, accent and the rural/urban divide. The speakers in my study may be broken down on the basis of region into two groups of three and two individuals. I will go through these in turn: Southern speakers, anywhere speakers,

Ivan and Jason. For each I will describe listener impressions with respect to region, accent and community type, then note where (ING) has an impact.

As discussed in Chapter 3, survey participants were asked to select one or more possible regions of origin for each speaker. They were given the options of the South, New England, the Midwest, the West Coast, the East Coast, the Southwest, the North and *anywhere*. The structure of the survey was intended to contrast four speakers with identifiable Southern accents (Bonnie, Tricia, Robert and Ivan) against four with accents from the West Coast (Valerie, Sam and Jason are from California and Elizabeth is from Seattle). In practice, Ivan, one of the speakers from North Carolina, was not perceived as having a Southern accent. Instead, the regional assessments divide the speakers into two groups of three and two individuals. Bonnie, Tricia and Robert are Southern speakers, both in fact and in perception. Elizabeth, Valerie and Sam, from Seattle and California, are most often described as being "from anywhere". Ivan, who is in fact from North Carolina, is primarily identified as being from the West Coast, while Jason, the remaining Californian, exhibits a pattern of his own. I will address each group in turn.

The three Southerners (Bonnie, Tricia and Robert) were described as being from the South well over 60% of the time. They were also the three speakers with the highest accent ratings, as shown in Figure 5.1. Figure 5.3 shows the frequency with which listeners selected each region or community type for each of these three speakers. All three were most likely to be described as sounding as though they were from the *country* and not from the *city*. Tricia and Robert also had low levels of being identified as from the *suburbs*. Bonnie was more likely than the other two to be described as being from the *suburbs* and although her (ING) guise may have some impact on those attributions, the trend does not reach significance ($p = 0.095$). Tricia was marginally more likely to be described as being from *anywhere* in her *-ing* than her *-in* guise ($p = 0.046$).

I discussed above that in the data overall (ING) had no effect on how accented the speaker sounded. However, these three speakers were rated as more *accented* in their *-in* than their *-ing* guises ($p = 0.012$). This suggests that although (ING) does not consistently influence perceived region across all of the speakers, *-in* does, in fact,

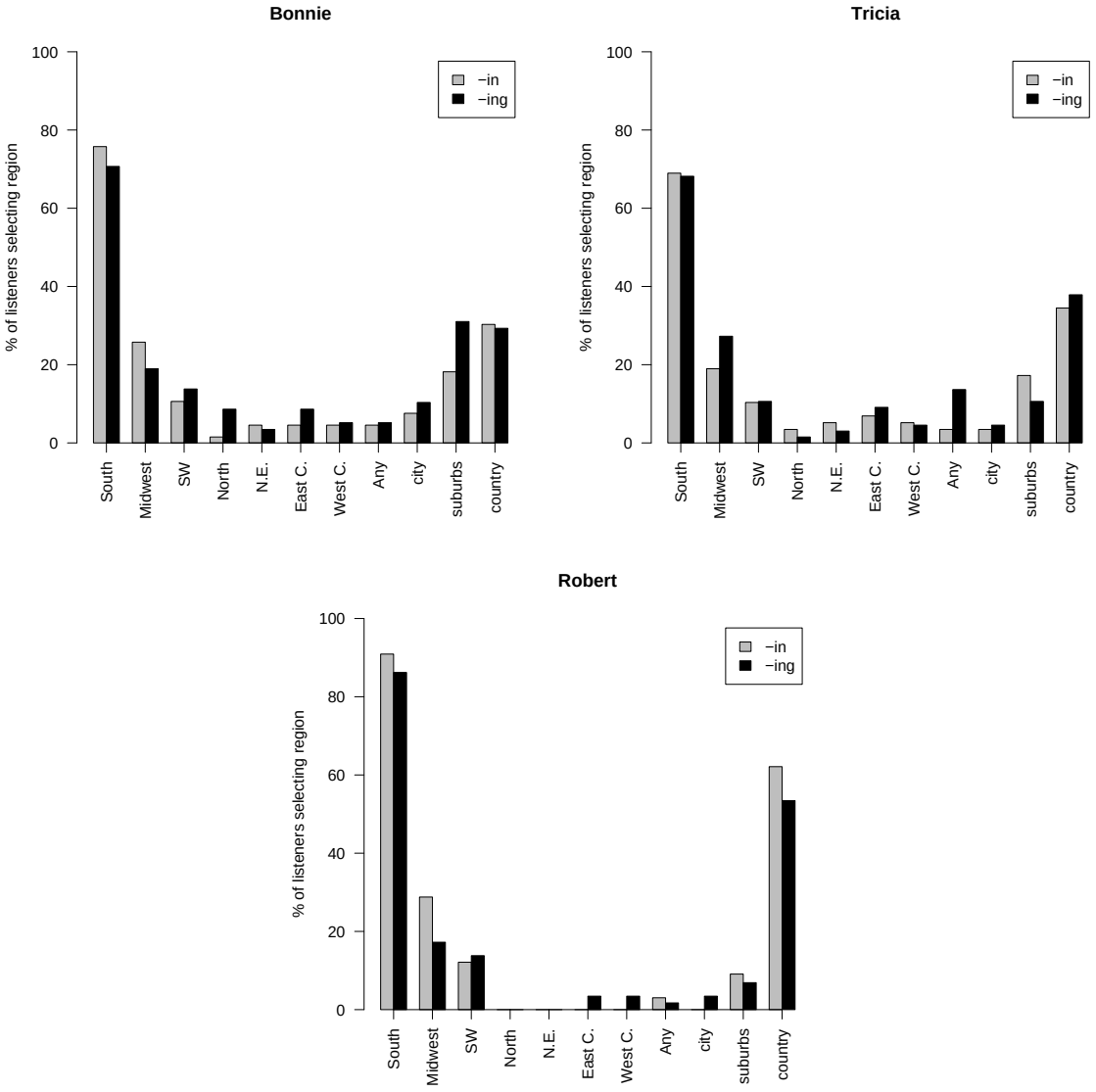

Figure 5.3: Region and community type selections for the Southern speakers, by (ING)

perceptually enhance (some) Southern accents. Even in this restricted set, however, (ING) has no influence on the likelihood of a speaker being described as being from the South. Although it may influence how Southern the speaker sounds, that effect is apparently no where near the threshold level for identification.

I refer to the next three speakers as the "anywhere speakers" and their regional profiles can be seen in figure 5.4. Elizabeth, Sam and Valerie are from the West Coast. For all three, selections of the descriptor *anywhere* top 35% and all other regional descriptions are under 30%. All three have relatively low ratings for *accented*. They are only rarely described as being from the *country* but are more frequently said to be from the *suburbs* or *city*, the opposite pattern from the Southerners. Elizabethmay be more likely to be described as being from the *city* in her *-in* guise than in her *-ing* guise ($p = 0.070$). Sam was significantly more likely to be described as being from New England ($p = 0.004$) and from the East Coast ($p = 0.037$) in his *-ing* guise.

The remaining two male speakers show individual patterns. Figure 5.5 shows that Ivan, the North Carolina speaker with low accent ratings, is most often described as being from the West Coast. This is followed closely by the East Coast, followed by the Midwest and *anywhere*. Like the anywhere speakers, Ivan is described more often as being from *suburbs* or the *city* and less often from the *country*. Ivan also shows an effect of (ING) on how rural he sounds. He is significantly more likely to be described as being from the *country* when he uses *-in* ($p = 0.021$), although even so this attribute lags behind the other two.

The remaining speaker, Jason, also is primarily identified as being from the West Coast and secondarily either the East Coast or *anywhere*, as seen in Figure 5.6. When he uses *-in*, it is the East Coast. In his *-ing* guise, his East Coast ratings drop slightly and he is more often described as being from *anywhere*. The effect on how likely Jason is to be described as from the East Coast is not significant ($p = 0.099$). He is significantly more likely to be described as being from New England in his *-in* guise of ($p = 0.003$), a pattern which is the opposite of that shown by Sam. Jason is unique in being overwhelmingly identified as an urban person: he is more likely to be described as being from the *city* than either of the other two options. Jason also has higher accent ratings in his *-ing* guise than his *-in* guise. This seems

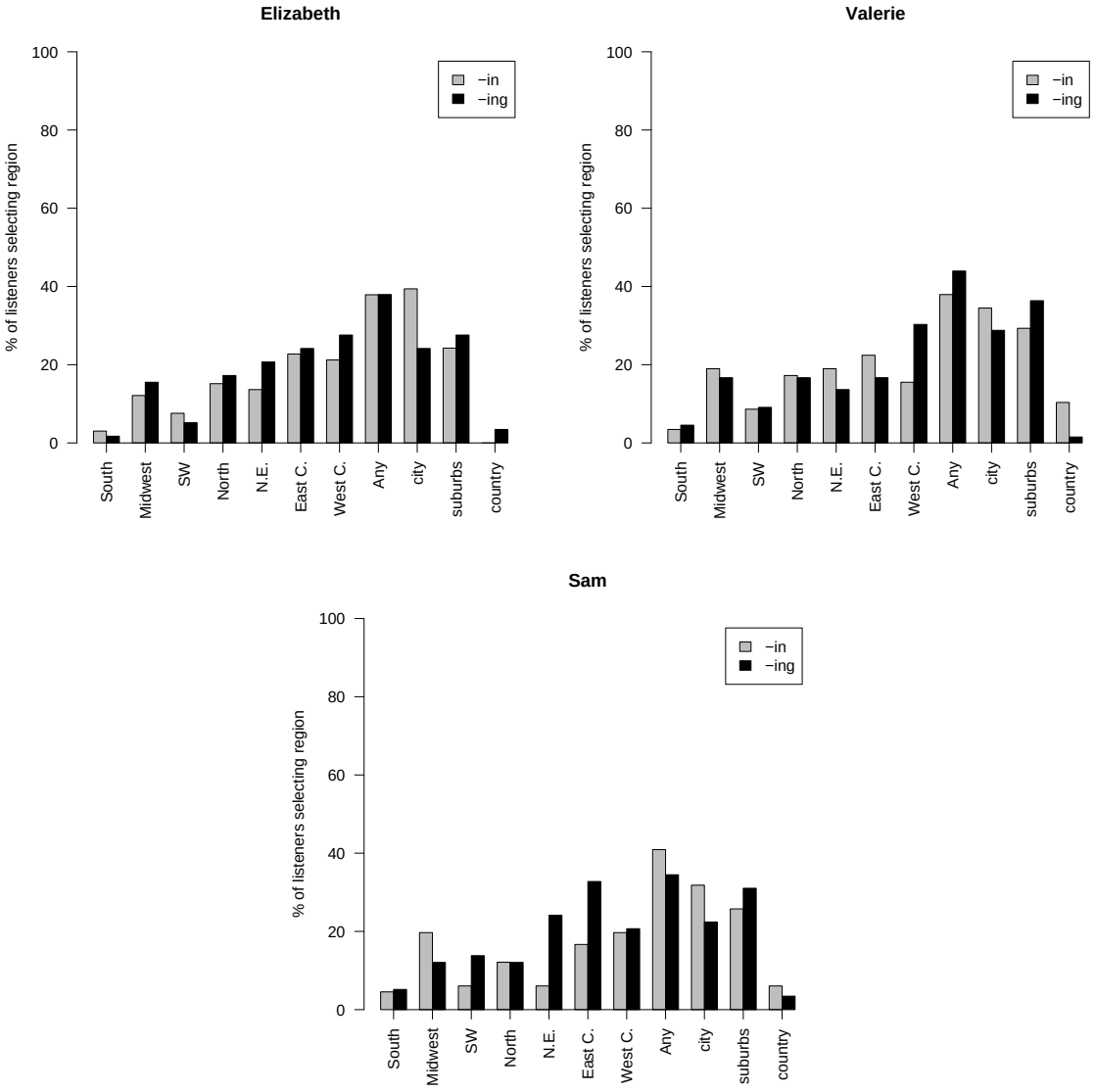

Figure 5.4: Region and community type selections for the anywhere speakers, by (ING)

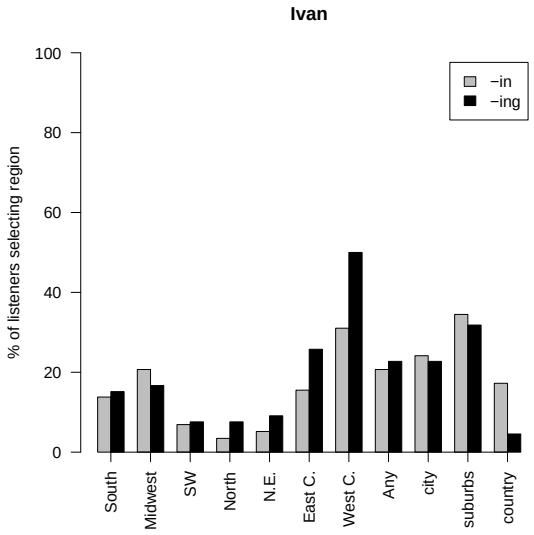

Figure 5.5: Region selections for Ivan, by (ING)

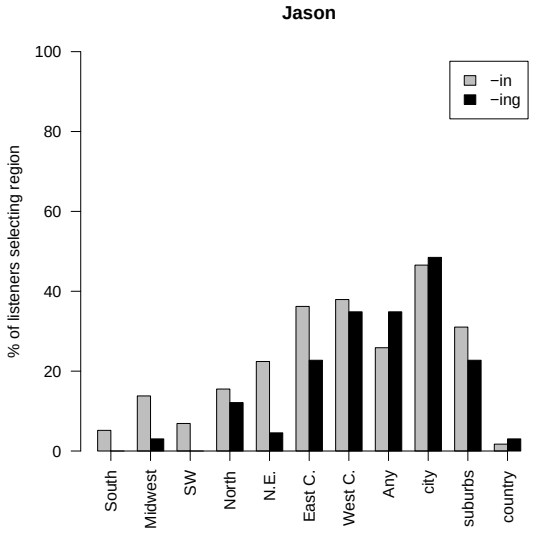

Figure 5.6: Region selections for Jason, by (ING)

to be because Jason's accent is associated with has little to do with the South or the country. Instead, listeners perceive him as having either a gay accent, an urban accent (although only of a relatively high social class) or a New England accent (also associated with wealth). Section 5.3 will explore all of these issues in more detail.

Geography is a rich site for both language variation and social meaning and concepts like region and community type are fraught with sociolinguistic meaning. Regional labels in particular are crucial markers that people use to understand linguistic diversity. These and other social divisions helped to structure language ideologies which influence which speakers are considered accented or unaccented. All of these pieces form the background into which specific linguistic resources are embedded.

5.3 Different speakers, different accents

In the previous section, we saw that the Southern speakers were overwhelmingly seen as more accented than the others, suggesting that in the context of the study, the Southern accent serves as a canonical accent. For these speakers, their accents were considered stronger when they use *-in*. For one speaker, however, the relationship between (ING) and accent was quite different. Jason, the urban bicoastal speaker, is the only speaker to be rated as more accented in his *-ing* guise than in his *-in* guise, as Table 5.5 shows.

	-in	*-ing*
accented	1.83	*2.29*

Table 5.5: Accented ratings for Jason, by (ING) ($p = 0.039$).

The explanation for this difference lies in Jason's individual style and the type of accent he has. Although Jason's (ING) pattern is in itself a surprise, given the pattern in the overall data, it is not surprising that in his case *-in* is not associated with a Southern accent. He is perceived generally as being from the coasts and from a city, as (19) demonstrates. Interview participants did not seem to consider a Southern identity as a likely possibility for Jason, although Molly points out that

urban residents of the South could have "voices like that".

(19) **Moderator:** Any sense of where he might be from?

Shantell: I'd say New England or somewhere on the East Coast. Definitely not the South. Or um, like, Minnesota, Colorado.

Janis: I wouldn't think he was from like Boston, East Coast cause he doesn't really have that accent at all. So.

Shantell: Oh, no.

Shantell: I've never been there so I really couldn't tell ya but I know he's not from where I'm from.

Molly: Um, I think he could be actually from where I'm from. I'm from San Antonio.

Shantell: No way! I think I've met you before!

Molly: Yes, you have.

Shantell: Where are you from? [town name]

Molly: [??] Every- If you- the closer you get to the city in the South the more likely you are to um, [??] voices like that. Could be.

Moderator: So, you're saying he could be from the South but he'd be in the city?

Molly: Ah yeah. I mean I think he-

Bill: I- he seemed from New England but like a city not- yeah, I agree not Boston. Maybe like New York and he didn't grow up there.

???: yeah mhmm

Janis: I like, The first thing I thought of was New York but I also think he could be from San Francisco or Seattle or something because those like cities like that on the west coast are known for being pretty like artistic and cool and like

Bill: mhmm

Bill: I think that's what I [? no regionalisms?] like

Janis: yeah

Janis: Watch he's from like, Idaho.

All: (laughter)

Janis: Rural [???].

Bill: Yeah.

Molly: If he is he was made fun of as a child.

All: (laughter)

Group 8, Stanford. In response to Jason, recording: clocks (variant), -ing guise.

Survey listeners agreed with this assessment, only rarely selecting the *South* or *country* for Jason. Given this, it is apparent that for most people the percept of "Southern accent" simply did not apply to Jason. But even though Jason clearly does not have a Southern accent, he has the potential for one or more other accents which connect to (ING) in very different ways than Southern accents do. The social meanings associated with Jason's speech seem to vary for different listeners. For many, he sounded gay, while for others he seemed like a wealthy New Englander. Most heard him as urban.

Although Jason clearly contrasts with the Southern speakers, for at least some listeners, he still has an accent. Not only are his *accented* ratings increased by *-ing*, overall they are higher than the other West Coast speakers. It is not entirely clear what constitutes accent to these listeners but whatever it is, Jason seems to have some of it. That something also turns the usual paradigm of markedness of (ING) on its head. Although listeners explicitly conceptualize the *-ing* variant as "correct" or unmarked, this status is dependent on the overall linguistic context. Different speakers may diverge from the norms in different directions. As a result, the ways in which their speech is affected by (ING) may take them either towards or away from that norm. In Jason's case, it is the *-ing* variant which moves him away from the unmarked towards the realm of accent.

A gay accent?

The first pattern involving Jason and accent revolves around how often listeners described him as gay. This pattern turns out to be correlated with perceptions of Jason being from the city, as well. Perceptions of gayness are linked explicitly to language and accent in special ways, tying into the concept of "gay speech" which has been investigated off and on for many years.

Not only does Jason sound gay to many listeners but he may be more likely to sound gay when he uses *-ing*. There was a trend approaching significance suggesting that Jason was more likely to be described as *gay* in his *-ing* guise, as shown in Table 5.6.

	% listeners selecting checkbox	
Checkbox label	*-in*	*-ing*
gay	36.5	63.5

Table 5.6: Gay selections for Jason, by (ING) (p = 0.052).

Listeners also associated being gay with having an accent. As Table 5.7 shows, those listeners who describe Jason as *gay* rated him as more *accented* than those who did not. We can be very confident that this pattern is not due to an association between being gay and being from the South. Only three people said that Jason was possibly from the South and none of those three selected *gay* as a descriptor. It is

	gay not selected	*gay* selected
accent	1.71	**2.58**

Table 5.7: Accented ratings for Jason, by gay. (p = 0.000)

likely, instead, that my listeners share the widespread and well documented ideology of the "Gay Accent" (Gaudio 1994; Podesva *et al.* 2001; Levon 2005a). It has long been a source of discussion among linguists and nonlinguists alike that some gay men seem to signal their sexual identity in their speech patterns. Some work has sought to find consistent differences in speech production between gay and straight men, however more consistent results have been found in looking at acoustic correlates to the percept of "sounding gay", rather than looking for correlates to sexual orientation. Kulick (2000) gives a thorough critique of the sexual identity literature, particularly that which seeks linguistic correlates to sexual orientation. Researchers into the percept of gay speech have investigated a range of acoustic cues, with somewhat uneven results.

Early work took a speech pathology approach, identifying effeminate speech in men (or masculine speech in women) as a problem to be fixed. Terango (1966) found that men perceived as feminine had higher median pitch than those described as masculine and a higher rate of pitch change. Travis (1981) found that men identified by listeners as feminine had higher pitch and a greater variation of intensity than other men. Initiating a new chapter in the topic, one with a greater focus on identity, Gaudio (1994) presented a small group of undergraduate subjects with recordings from four gay and four straight men, reading both a passage about accounting and a portion of a play with a gay theme. He found that his listeners were able to judge the sexual orientation of the speakers with reasonable accuracy. He also acoustically analyzed the recordings for pitch but was not able to find any clear predictors. Crist (1997) introduced an element of performance and drew out the notion of stereotype more explicitly by having speakers read a passage in both their ordinary voices and in an exaggerated "queeny" voice. He found that in performing the stereotyped gay voice, speakers lengthened /l/ and word initial /s/ before /p/ and /k/. This pattern held for five of his six speakers, but not for the final one, suggesting unsurprising variation in how individual speakers conceptualize a stereotyped voice in relation to their regular speaking style. Linville (1998) found a reliable correlation between actual and perceived sexual orientation, but only found reliable two acoustic correlates: the duration and peak frequency of /s/. She also examined F0, speech rate and long-term average speech spectra, but found no relationship between these and either actual or perceived sexual orientation.

More recently, Smyth *et al.* (2003) assembled a set of recordings of 25 speakers in three different situations, spanning a range of perceived sexual orientation. Their results also indicate some intriguing complexities in the judgments their listeners were making. In two different experiments, they asked listeners to judge the voices either as gay/straight or masculine/feminine. Although for the most part the two sets of results correlated with each other, lower pitched voices showed a larger discrepancy between the two tasks than did voices with higher pitch. This was despite the fact that pitch had no direct predictive power for either real or perceived sexual orientation. They also found an interesting effect from message content. Before carrying out

the experiment, Smyth and his colleagues took pains to remove information which explicitly marked sexual identification from the recordings of spontaneous speech. Despite this, judgments based on transcripts correlated strongly with those based on the actual recordings, indicating that a large portion of the judgments related to content rather than acoustic cues. It also indicates that content, lexical choice and discourse structure may be loaded in terms of sexual orientation in much more subtle ways than they had anticipated. Shifting the focus back to correlates of actual sexual orientation, or at least self identification, Pierrehumbert *et al.* (2004) reported that the gay men in their study exhibited an expanded vowel space relative to the straight men. They suggested that this resulted from the men adopting "aspects of female speech that convey social engagement and emotional expressiveness" (p. 1908).

Only one study to date has explored sexual orientation and the use of (ING). Unfortunately, Fai (1988) is marred by methodological issues. She started with the hypothesis that gay men would use more *-ing* than straight men, due to their marginalized status among men. Her results, however, actually indicate higher use of *-in* among the gay men, a finding which is apparently due to the interview with the gay speaker being more casual than those involving the straight men. This study does not seem to shed much light on either the real or imagined connection between sexual orientation among men and (ING).

More satisfying work relevant to the current project is the recent research of Levon (2004, 2005) . As in the research presented here, he takes a crucially important step away from looking for correlates across different speakers and instead uses digital manipulation to investigate the impact of specific variables directly. Drawing on the existing body of work, his research investigates the effect of changes in pitch and silibant duration on listeners' estimates of sexual orientation in a single speaker. Beginning with a recording judged to be extremely effeminate and extremely gay sounding, Levon created alternate recordings by compressing the pitch range and reducing the length of the silibants. He found that both of these manipulations significantly reduced the percept of gayness and effeminacy. However, when he carried out the opposite procedure using recordings made by a masculine sounding male speaker, no effect resulted from lengthening the pitch range or the silibants.

My results show a possible impact of (ING) on sounding gay, but as in Levon's data only in the speech of the speaker who is already identified as *gay* relatively frequently. The other speakers, who are not particularly heard as gay, shown no suggestion of (ING) influencing how often they are described as gay. Similarly, Levon's listeners were only influenced by pitch and silibant duration in the context of an overall a feminine or gay performance. This suggests that all three of these resources do not necessarily bear a direct meaning of sexual identity, but rather are able to form part of a package style, helping to enhance a performance which encompasses a range of linguistic and extralinguistic features. This observation builds on a point made by myself and my co-authors in Podesva *et al.* (2001), that a performance which is perceptibly gay may be built using resources which are widely available and form part of the stylistic repertoire of many speakers. In that study, we documented a gay activist lawyer using increased frequency of word final /t/ release as compared to his straight interlocutor. We emphasized that although the overall impact of the lawyer's style was extremely gay, he was also performing the persona of a competent lawyer who could speak knowledgeably about a legal case as well as represent the gay community. The crux of our claim was that individual styles are built out of a range of available resources, many of which do not relate solely to that style.

Understanding the processes of stylistic construction naturally requires understanding stylistic comprehension. Jason was the only speaker who was heard as gay a significant portion of the time. Sam, the other West Coast male speaker, also had some incidence of being marked as gay, about 10 percent of the time. Responses to Sam show no effect of (ING), although this may be due to the infrequency of the selection overall. In Jason's case, his *-ing* guise favors attributions of being gay across all four recordings individually, although each recording has a different overall likelihood of *gay* being selected, as shown in Figure 5.7.

Jason's overall style is one which a significant portion of the listeners interpret as gay. The manipulation of a single variable, in this case (ING), may either enhance or dampen it. This does not mean that *-ing* carries any "gay meaning". Indeed, this seems very unlikely given that Jason is the only speaker to exhibit any influence of (ING) on listener impressions of his sexuality. In the context of Jason's speech,

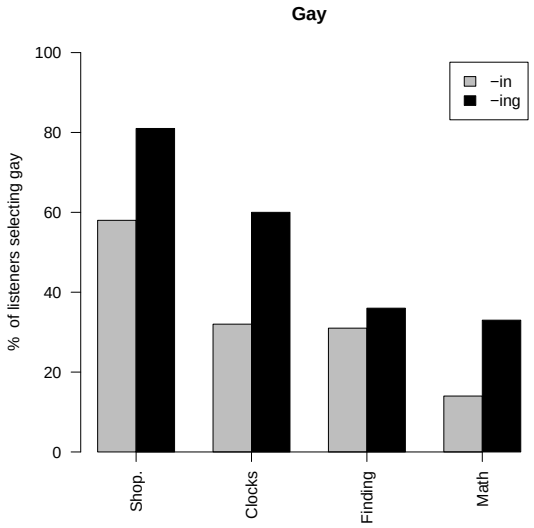

Figure 5.7: Gay selections for Jason, by recording and (ING)

impressions of his sexual orientation are manipulated by (ING), possibly through the medium of the relationship of (ING) to masculinity. This relationship, in turn, may either be direct or, more likely, be itself mediated through formality and engagement in the standard language market.

The function of masculinity in connecting (ING) in Jason's speech to a percept of gayness may be seen in the relationship of both of these to listener ratings of masculinity and to the concept "metrosexual". I included the term *metrosexual* in the survey materials in response to a couple of instances in the interview data where listeners commented on the potential that Jason might belong to this category, as shown in (20).

(20) **Tamika:** At risk of sounding like everybody else with this whole metrosexual thing.

All: (laughter)

Tamika: I mean for lack of a better term I'd use that for what I'd think he, like, the kind of person he was.

Abby: He could be gay. (laughter)

Mary: That too.

Abby: I mean a, well, guy who likes to shop and buy expensive things. Well, it could be electronics but he could be talking about Banana Republic or something. (laughter)

Mary: Or Structure. (laughter)

Abby: Structure (laughter)

Moderator: () So, is Banana Republic a particularly meaningful store? To like, to shop at?

Abby: Um, for guys who like expensive clothing and really pay a lot of attention to how they dress, yes.

Mary: (laughter)

Moderator: And Structure is same type?

Abby: And Structure, yeah. It's sort of the metrosexual look, urban chic thing going on.

Group 19, Duke. In response to Jason, recording: shopping, -ing guise.

In this conversation, the interview participants focus on the content of Jason's recording in their reactions concerning his sexuality. The recording under discussion in (20), which discusses his love of shopping, is more often described as gay than of any of other recording. Nonetheless, all of his recordings outstrip those of any of the other speakers in ratings of gay or metrosexual, suggesting that there is more to this pattern than this obvious content cue.

Although it is not clear to what extent the term (or the concept) metrosexual has spread through different populations in the country, for this listener population it was closely connected with being gay, although it seemed less loaded. Table 5.8 shows that in Jason's speech, the two terms heavily favor each other. But although the two are conceptually linked, metrosexual is not linked to speech in the same way that gay is. Jason's *gay* attributions are possibly influenced by (ING), while his attributions of *metrosexual* show no consistent pattern in response to (ING) across the different recordings, as shown in Figure 5.8.

The interaction of these two qualities with accent confirms this picture: there is an extremely robust connection between perceptions of Jason being *gay* and ratings of him as *accented*. Once this association is accounted for, however, there is no connection between perceptions of him as *metrosexual* and *accented*. There is, however,

	% listeners selecting checkbox	
	gay	*gay*
Checkbox label	not selected	selected
metrosexual	26.4	69.2

Table 5.8: Metrosexual selections for Jason, by gay (p = 0.000).

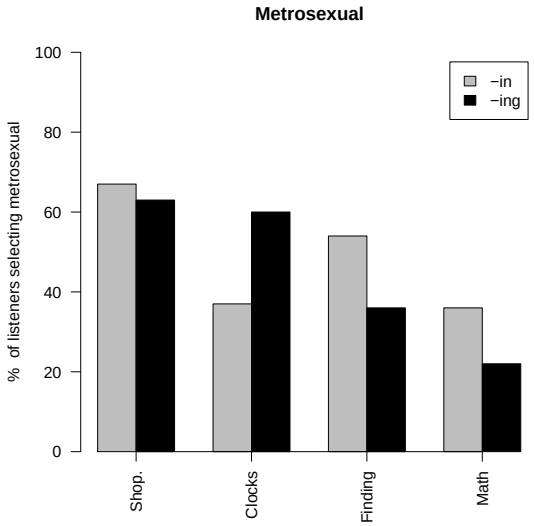

Figure 5.8: Metrosexual selections for Jason, by recording and (ING)

a robust interaction through which (ING) changes the relationship between these two percepts. Specifically, listeners who selected *metrosexual* and heard Jason's *-ing* guise rated him as more accented than others.

	-in	*-ing*
not *metrosexual*	1.90	1.87
metrosexual	1.74	**2.86**

Table 5.9: Accented ratings for Jason, by (ING) and metrosexual (p = 0.003).

The social image of urban centers forms another important piece to this puzzle. In example (19), we saw the suggestion that listeners associate part of Jason's style with living in, but not necessarily being from, a city. Much of the time people associate

sexual minority groups themselves with cities, exaggerating the real tendency of the members of such groups to move to metropolitan areas in order to join existing communities. Given all of this, it is not surprising that this interplay between sexuality, stylistic identity and accent also is intertwined with the city. Table 5.10 shows that listeners who thought that Jason was from a *city* rated him as more *accented* than those who thought he was not, suggesting that the quality of Jason's accent is of a sort associated with city dwellers, rather than country dwellers. This contrasts with the overall data on the urban-rural divide, in which the Southern accented speakers had higher accent ratings when they were seen as being from the country.

	city not selected	*city* selected
accent	1.86	*2.31*

Table 5.10: Accented ratings for Jason, by city. (p = 0.043)

Table 5.11 shows that perceptions of being from the city and (ING) may serve to magnify each other's relationship to accent, a trend which does not reach significance. In Jason's *-ing* guise, not only is he rated as more *accented* overall, but the difference in accent ratings based on urban identity may be increased.

	-in	*-ing*
city not selected	1.81	1.91
city selected	1.85	2.69

Table 5.11: Accented ratings for Jason, by (ING) and city (p = 0.100).

The interplay between accent, (ING) and the city is also tied to the perceptions around Jason's sexuality. In addition to having similar relationships to *accent* and (ING), perceptions of Jason as being from the *city* and *gay* tend to co-occur, as Table 5.12 shows, while *suburbs* tend to disfavor *gay*, shown in Table 5.13. No connection between *gay* and the *country* is visible, due to the extremely low occurrence of *country*.

Table 5.14 shows the interaction between listeners' perceptions of Jason as *gay* and how *masculine* they rated him. When listeners described Jason as *gay*, they rated him as significantly less *masculine* than otherwise, as Smyth *et al.* found in

	% listeners selecting checkbox	
	city	*city*
Checkbox label	not selected	selected
gay	32.3	52.5

Table 5.12: Gay selections, by city (p = 0.023).

	% listeners selecting checkbox	
	suburbs	*suburbs*
Checkbox label	not selected	selected
gay	47.3	27.3

Table 5.13: Gay selections for Jason, by suburbs (p = 0.046).

their study. Although *metrosexual* is also associated with lower *masculine* scores, this association is entirely accounted for by the connection between *gay* and *metrosexual*, leaving no association between *metrosexual* and *masculine* once the variance related to *gay* is accounted for.

	not *gay*	*gay*
masculine	**3.67**	2.23

Table 5.14: Masculine ratings for Jason, by gay (p = 0.000).

Given the relationship between sexual orientation and masculinity and the relationship between his sexuality and (ING), it is reasonable to inquire as to the effect of (ING) on listeners' perceptions of Jason's masculinity. It turns out that this relationship is dependent on the gender of the listener. Female listeners hear Jason as equally *masculine* in either guise, if anything favoring his *-ing* guise as more *masculine*. Male listeners, on the other hand, rate his *-in* guise as quite a bit more *masculine* than his *-ing* guise. None of the groups' ratings reaches the halfway point of 3.5, showing that even in his *-ing* guise listeners found Jason less masculine than "average".

	-in	*-ing*
Female listeners	2.91	3.26
Male listeners	3.36	2.71

Table 5.15: Masculine ratings for Jason, by (ING) and listener gender (p = 0.039).

A New England accent?

Not all of the listeners turned to Jason's sexuality for an explanation of his speech patterns. Two other qualities which interacted with (ING) and ratings of accent were being *wealthy* and being from *New England*. These strongly favor each other (p = 0.010) and share identical patterns in interacting with (ING). The description "wealthy New Englander" provides an alternate explanation for Jason's speech patterns not related to sexuality. There is no interaction between these and ratings for gay or metrosexual; they neither favor nor disfavor each other but occur independently.

The somewhat complicated relationship of *wealthy* to (ING) and accent is given in Table 5.16. In Jason's *-ing* guise, those listeners who thought that he might be *wealthy* rated him as more *accented* then those who did not think so. In contrast, in his *-in* guise, listeners who selected *wealthy* rated him as less *accented* than those who did not. In other words, *-ing* led to a positive relationship of sounding *wealthy* and sounding *accented*, while *-in* led to a negative relationship between these two perceptions. Table 5.17 shows that a trend of a similar interaction exists between (ING), accent and New England. Because of the connection between *wealthy* and *New England*, it is likely that the perceived accent in these two tables is the same one.

	-in	*-ing*
not *wealthy*	1.92	2.20
wealthy	1.65	2.56

Table 5.16: Accented ratings for Jason, by (ING) and wealthy (p = 0.038).

Looking at this relationship, it is tempting to claim that *-ing* is increasing the

	-in	*-ing*
not *New England*	1.95	2.25
New England	1.38	3.00

Table 5.17: Accented ratings for Jason, by (ING) and New England (p =0.126).

	% listeners selecting checkbox		
Checkbox label	*-in*	*-ing*	sig.
wealthy	34.5	24.2	0.210
New England	**22.4**	4.5	0.003

Table 5.18: Wealthy and New England selections, by (ING).

appropriateness of the terms *wealthy* and *New England*. This is not so, however. When accent is taken out of the picture, it is *-in* which is associated with the qualities of *a wealthy background* and being from *New England*. Table 5.18 demonstrates that selections describing Jason as being from *a wealthy background* and from *New England* are both greater in his *-in* guise than his *-ing* guise. This pattern is significant in the case of *New England*, but not for *wealthy*. The exact meaning of this divergence is not clear, although it opens up a fascinating realm of possibilities involving the relationship of linguistic styles to the concept of accent.

All of these patterns combine to make a crucial point: accent is not perceived by the participants in my study as a continuum, but rather as a multi dimensional landscape arrayed around a central norm. Although listeners may share an idea of what constitutes a lack of accent (i.e. the standard), they recognize a range of ways in which a speaker may diverge from this norm and be accented. In speakers with Southern accents, *-in* is perceived as "matching" that accent and enhancing its performance. Jason's non-normativity occupies a different portion of the social space and the minor adjustments made by the use of (ING) relate differently to the norm. Listeners associate Jason's accent with that of gay men and wealthy New Englanders. In all of these cases, it is the *-ing* variant which moves Jason further away from the norm and increases his accent.

5.4 Summary

The data presented in this chapter show that listeners shift their associations of (ING) based on surrounding linguistic and social context. The relationship of (ING) to the concept of accented speech is different depending on the context and which kinds of accent are relevant. This is helpful in understanding the flexibility of linguistic meaning but also the role of accent and overall personal style in framing individual tokens of a variable.

Listeners draw on several levels in assigning meaning to a particular token of a variable. They have a general impression of the variable itself and its associations (e.g. (ING) and education). They also have wide-ranging linguistic and social ideologies which structure how different meanings may connect with each other. For example, it is infelicitous to describe an unaccented speaker as a rural resident of the South, but intelligible to use an urban origin to explain the lack of accent in a Southern speaker. Listeners use a speaker's individual style to gather social information, which they may use in turn to deduce other social information. For example, linguistic aspects of Jason's style trigger a percept of gayness, which may increase the association with the city and/or the coasts as listeners associate alternative sexualities with urban residents or "blue state" residents. Because listeners are operating on all of these levels at once, the context in which a variable is deployed crucially influences how it contributes to the meaning of the utterance.

Chapter 6

The role of listener variation

One of the important distinctions between a social meaning approach to variation and one which focuses more on social address is the degree of agency attributed to the speaker. One of the dangers of privileging the speaker's role in the construction of meaning is the risk of overemphasizing the agency that any one individual speaker has to construct their social performances. Critics this approach may protest that it leads down a path of anarchy, predicting that any speaker can combine any resources to produce any effect he or she desires. Because we know this is not true, we must develop our theoretical tools to capture the limitations operating on this process.

6.1 Understanding the importance of the listener

One central answer to this problem lies in the reactions of listeners, which provide a brake on speaker agency, limiting speakers to performances that others can interpret. This is not to say that speakers may not choose the resources they wish to employ, but that they may not choose the interpretation that others assign to them. The process of constructing linguistic performance is not like encoding a secret message but more like choosing a name for a child. In designing a performance, one must consider not only the best case scenarios, but also the worst. Because listeners have agency as well, they are not required to interpret variation in exactly the ways intended by speakers. This give-and-take is what is referred to by the term intersubjectivity, the process by

which social structures are constructed between social actors rather than within any single one.

Butler (1993) discusses the role of the audience under the term **intelligibility**, which refers to the degree that listeners are able to understand a given style. If listeners had no agency of their own, speakers would be free to combine linguistic and extralinguistic resources in any combination, with the intent of producing any meaning they wish. In the real social world, there are many consequences to presenting a style which is not intelligible to others, ranging from the light to the severe. These consequences may the direct, such as verbal mocking or physical attack. They may also be less overt, for example inappropriately gendered speakers may find themselves less attended to, or less successful in accomplishing their social goals.

A concept which goes hand-in-hand with intelligibility is that of **access** (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003:92-97). In order to deploy a particular resource with a particular meaning, one must have access to it. Access comes in a range of forms. Different people have differential access to particular kinds of settings or conversations in which specific styles are performed and decisions made. To adopt a new style, one must witness it enough to learn how to use it felicitously. Even if a speaker learns the mechanisms of the style, however, in order for the performance to be successful, observers must accept their right to deploy that resource. An excellent example of the issues around learning and performing a style may be seen by watching young children attempt to learn to use the markers of authority employed by their parents (e.g. raised voice, emphatic diction, intonation indicating reprimand). On the one hand, they are likely to misunderstand certain aspects of the performance or circumstances for its felicitous use. On the other, even when they put together a performance that would in theory be felicitous, it is almost certain to fail. Because they lack the authority itself, they are not capable, by definition, of successfully taking an authoritative stance. Even if they have the ability to employ the linguistic resources associated with authority (as they learn them), they are unable to take an authoritative stance itself.

This limitation then has implications for their future linguistic choices. Children are likely to learn that attempting such a stance produces poor results in terms of

accomplishing the desired social goal (e.g. obtaining the wished-for item, delaying a departure, etc.). Some children will also learn that requests or demands which take a stance more appropriate to their powerless state are likely to be more successful, for example whining or crying. The choices they make about which activities to engage in and what resources to employ are shaped by the views of the world around them regarding what behaviors are appropriate to them.

These two notions, access and intelligibility, are ways of understanding the crucial role of the audience in the development of stylistic variation. Because they focus on the speaker and the influence of listener choices on the speaker, they do not place a great deal of emphasis on differences between listeners. However, these differences are very much present. The structured feedback from listeners helps shape the process of construction and this feedback is informed by the listeners' previous experiences, language ideologies, linguistic knowledge and emotional outlook.

6.2 Cognitive variation among listeners

Because we are typically more interested in differences based on broad linguistic or sociocultural divisions, linguists tend to discount more individualistic forms of variation, those which might be termed cognitive or personality based. Work on the psychology of attitudes has revealed a range of individual differences, not only in what attitudes people may hold but how they are structured. As discussed in Chapter 3, the construct attitude is considered to have three basic components: **cognitive** (a person's thoughts or beliefs about object), **affective** (a person's feelings towards an object) and **behavioral** (how they have behaved towards the object or experienced it in the past). While all of these components are intertwined, different people tend to favor different combinations. Haddock and Huskinson (2004) investigated the relationships across different people between their attitudes, beliefs and feelings about a varied set of topics. The overall attitude construct was measured by a semantic differential task rating the object or issue on scales labeled with antonym pairs (e.g. important/unimportant). The affect responses were measured by asking participants to list feelings related to the object, then rate their own responses as positive or

negative and how strongly. Cognitive stances were measured the same way, with participants listing beliefs instead of feelings. They found that some people are likely to have strong correlations between the attitude measures and either their affective or cognitive reactions to it (people who might be termed "feelers" or "thinkers" respectively) while others report a strong correlation between all three and still others have little relationship between any.

A different body of work has shown that certain individuals with a high need for affect (i.e. those who enjoy and seek out strong emotions) are more likely to hold strong attitudes towards a range of objects or issues (Maio *et al.* 2004). Similarly, some people, described as having a high need to evaluate, respond faster to questions about attitudes or are more likely to form judgments about other people (see discussion in Haddock and Huskinson (2004)).

Differences in evaluation are not limited to differences between individuals. A great deal of work has shown that a person's mood influences the process of evaluation, both in what evaluations are given and how they are formed (see Isen (1984) for a review). Inducing positive moods can substantially improve people's abilities to remember positive words from a memorized list but not others (Isen *et al.* 1978). Mood changes people's evaluations of objects like consumer goods (Isen *et al.* 1978) and pictures (Isen and Shalker 1982) (particularly those judged to be evaluatively neutral). Good moods also seem to influence general beliefs about the world, for example opinions about social issues and willingness to place blame and assign punishment in hypothetical situations (Forgas and Moylan 1988). Mood has also been shown to influence how we view other people, affecting overall judgment (Gouaux 1971) and increasing our ability to remember characteristics consistent with our moods, so that people in good moods are better at remembering positive characteristics and people in bad moods better at negative ones (Forgas and Bower 1987).

Work looking specifically at language has confirmed the importance of mood, finding that altering tapes to include white noise which interfered with a comprehension task causes listeners to downgrade the speakers on ratings for competence (Ryan and Laurie 1990) as well as the usual matched guise axes of status, solidarity and social class (Sebastian *et al.* 1980). These effects held even though listeners explicitly

identified the tape and not the speaker as the source of the difficulty.

Mood can also impact how people form attitudes. Being in a good mood functions similarly to a distraction task in causing people to respond solely to the affective, emotion-based persuasion and not the cognitive "rational arguments" of a persuasive message. In the same study, people placed in a negative mood attended to both the affective and logical aspects of the message (Bless *et al.* 1990).

None of this work specifically addresses how individuals respond to linguistic variation. Indeed, most of it does not deal with language explicitly. What it does establish clearly is that both evaluative responses and the thought processes which produce them are affected by the quirks and moods of those performing the evaluations. The present research does not look at the impact of mood and personality traits of listener evaluations, but it does reveal patterned differences in evaluative responses between listeners. This chapter discusses differences in listener reactions to (ING) which are attributable to some listeners responding in generous or positive ways to a given speaker while others are more critical. The psychology literature suggests that mood at the time of evaluation is one possible contributor to these differences. Observations from the interview phase of the study suggests another reason, based on stylistic differences. Some interview participants showed themselves to be sensitive to social norms restricting overt negative judgments of others. Other participants actively embraced the critic's role as part of a catty or "tell it like it is" style. The goal of this chapter is to show that differences in listener reactions to speakers change the role that (ING) plays in their evaluations.

In a study of this kind, the usual role of participant variation is as noise, random variation to be minimized and generalized over. Up until now, I have followed this approach, emphasizing what was similar across the listeners in order to capture other patterns regarding (ING) in general or differences between speakers. Now I will turn my attention to the topic of variation between listeners and how interpretation contributes to the development of linguistic variation.

Excerpts from the interviews document differences in listener reaction based on stylistic and personality factors. These examples demonstrate that different listeners

respond to speakers differently and that this variation may be linked to their personalities and beliefs. Section 6.3 shows how different interview participants orient to the task of evaluation, in particular the socially awkward situation involved in sharing negative opinions.

After showing that listeners differ in their reactions to speakers and in their social strategies for dealing with negative reactions, I turn to the survey data to show that these differences impact the interpretation of (ING). Because many of the terms available to survey listeners had positive or negative connotations, we can examine how different effects of (ING) for the same speaker are attributable to listeners attending to more or less positive aspects of a single token.

6.3 On being nice

I will first consider the issue of niceness. The activity of explicitly evaluating another person is a socially loaded one. Although listeners form judgments of their interlocutors constantly as they move through the social world, it is relatively rare to articulate these reactions fully and explicitly, particularly in the presence of strangers. The novelty of this situation highlights different personality responses that exist generally in the social world, namely, that some people are more or less comfortable expressing negative opinions. Those who were uncomfortable expressing negative reactions employed different strategies to avoid doing so or to minimize the social impact. While some people might feel constraint generally over expressing negative evaluations, others may be more selective, perhaps uncomfortable calling someone dumb but comfortable saying they are annoying.

One of the questions during the interviews was whether or not the speaker was someone the participants would be likely to be friends with. This question was awkward for many participants and they used a range of strategies to address this awkwardness. (21) shows Tamika, who had responded to each speaker positively, saying she could see spending time with any of them if they were neighbors. By the fourth and final speaker, Abby, who had been less welcoming, commented on this pattern, exclaiming "you're so nice!". Her comment highlighted the divergent styles of the

two women, visible throughout the interview as Tamika responded positively and softened potentially negative or harsh judgments while Abby was quite comfortable with making critical comments, even enjoying it. This dynamic between these two is seen again in (29), discussed further on.

(21) **Moderator:** Is he the kind of person you might hang out with? Does he seem fun to be around?

Mary: Well, if it wasn't [?] most of my friends I had in college did skateboard a while or they used to. I do like the sport.

Abby: Not for me. Not my type.

Tamika: If he was college-age and the guy down the hall.

Moderator: (laughter)

Tamika: Not with him being well sounding as young as he could possibly be.

Abby: You're so nice. You talk to everyone on your hall.

All: (laughter)

Tamika: Why not?

Group 19, Duke. In response to Sam, recording: skateboarding,-in guise.

Other participants were more ambivalent than either of these two. In (22), both people in the interview are put on the spot by the question about socializing with the speaker. Apparently both value the social norm of being nice and wish to avoid seeming critical. However, both are disinclined to feel social connection to the speaker in question. Each takes a different approach, the first responding with a gentle negative while marking her discomfort verbally. Her interlocutor gives a vacuous positive response. The final effect of both responses is that the two work together to build an ambivalent but largely negative response to the speaker while also conveying an awareness of norms against criticism.

(22) **Moderator:** And does she seem like she'd be fun to hang out with, be around?

Alice: You kinda feel bad saying she wouldn't, but there again there were no evidence of that.

Moderator: Mhmm.

Alice: For me.

Moderator: Uhuh.

Sandeep: I, yeah I don't see her a reason that I wouldn't hang out with her so I'd say yes.

Alice: The glass is half full?

All: (laughter)

Group 18, Duke. In response to Bonnie, recording: classes, -ing guise.

In contrast to this careful maneuvering, in some groups a small but vocal (and expressive) minority took pleasure in expressing creatively negative opinions. Without examining the pattern formally, I noted that when this behavior did emerge, it tended to be among participants who had come to the interview with friends rather than alone. Example (23) is an excerpt from the most colorful group in this respect, an interview with five participants, of whom four were friends who arrived together. Unlike (21) and (22), example (23) does not occur in response to an explicit question. This negativity is spontaneously produced, as the participants explain that (ING) makes no difference in their evaluations of the speaker (Elizabeth), because they dislike her too much to attend to such a subtle factor.

(23) **Jeremy:** So, it doesn't matter, because I'm disliking what she's saying. (laughter)

Tom: I don't like hearing her talk. (laughter)

Sarah: It makes blood come out of my ears.

Group 14, UNC. In response to Elizabeth, recording: discussion, comparison phase.

The social question was not the only one which potentially put participants on the spot. They were also asked whether the speaker seemed competent or smart. This question invoke similar social norms, in that is not nice to say that someone is dumb. Participants found it somewhat more difficult to adopt a universally positive response to this question, although "she/he seems fine" or other noncommittal responses were not uncommon. In (24), the same participants from (22) give negative responses. Note that in this excerpt (which is actually from directly before (22)) they show a great deal less discomfort in sharing this evaluation, although they do provide some mitigation and in fact avoid ever explicitly saying no in response to the question.

(24) **Moderator:** And does Bonnie seem like she'd be smart, good at the classes that she's talking about, does she kinda know what she's doing?

Sandeep: Not as much as the other-

Alice: Yeah.

Sandeep: -two or even as much as the second one.

Alice: There was just like less evidence of that.

Sandeep: Yeah.

Group 18, Duke. In response to Bonnie, recording: classes, -ing guise.

Questions regarding intelligence provide the possibility of another strategy, that of distinguishing between different forms of or uses for intelligence. In (25), a woman avoids explicitly characterizing Tricia as unintelligent by shifting the discussion to how much knowledge she was likely to "need". While avoiding a socially awkward criticism, Marsha creates a statement with much more far-reaching consequences, invoking class divisions by juxtaposing "the type that reads books" (a type including everyone in the room where she was speaking) against those who only need "enough knowledge to get by in life". this comment also underlines the limited exposure listeners had to the speakers. Tricia herself was entering law school a few months after her interview—an environment where she was likely to need knowledge from books, to say the least.

(25) **Marsha:** I don't think she's the type that reads books, but I'm sure she has enough knowledge to get by in life and that's really all that counts sometimes.

Group 16, Duke. In response to Tricia, recording: cucumbers,-in guise.

Of course, for those who enjoy sharing negative opinions, intelligence provides as good a topic as general likability, although for different targets. In (26), the same participants seen in (23) share their negative opinion of Valerie's intelligence. As in the previous discussion, this example does not result from a direct question regarding how intelligent they think Valerie is, but rather comes up in a general discussion of the role of (ING) in her speech.

(26) **Adam:** I think with her dropping the g, it also goes with my statement I said earlier where she's kind of dumb.

Several: (laughter)

Adam: She just sounded dumb to me. But then when she adds the , when she adds the g, she sounds more trying to be impressive. But she's still dumb. She's just now...

Several: (laughter)

Sarah: She's not as dumb, she doesn't hide her dumb-

Adam: Like, she's not trying to hide her dumbness.

Several: (laughter)

Adam: I don't know her.

Sarah: That's great.

Adam: I should stop. Sorry.

Several: (laughter)

Sally: [too many comments?]

Tom: I mean, I agree, I'm not gonna call her dumb, but, I agree, it sounds like she's not trying to cover it up when she drops the g.

Group 14, UNC. In response to Valerie, recording: history, comparison phase.

In considering such negative comments, it is important to remember the extremely impoverished stimuli to which the participants are reacting. They are positing entire personalities and situations which these excerpts could have been taken but these imagined scenarios have little relationship to the real experiences and personalities of the speakers who generated the utterances.

The process of responding to recordings in interviews does not involve only "pure" social evaluation. Participants drew on a range of social structures, ideologies and stereotypes in explaining or elaborating their responses. Different people have different stakes in supporting or undermining specific social discourses and the stakes lead to differences in the way they respond to the speakers and their linguistic choices.

Discussions of region and accent in earlier chapters demonstrated examples of listeners distancing themselves from or sharing their discomfort with stereotypes about

Southern speakers. Throughout all of the interviews, listeners demonstrated knowledge of the stereotypes linking Southern accents to lack of education and lower intelligence.

These stereotypes were omnipresent in the interviews, either referenced directly or presupposed in various ways. But while some listeners were uncomfortable with the stereotypes and attempted to minimize their impact on the discussion, others embraced it. In (27), a participant grapples with these stereotypes. The previous discussion in the interview had dealt with the relatively low opinions that several participants held concerning the speaker's intelligence.

(27) **Brian:** The stereotype comes to mind when you hear like a Southern accent this is not somebody who's particularly well-educated. And the way she's talking about her work somewhat reinforces that. But it's not, I mean it's like a self-conscious stereotype that comes up because I know as soon as [???] not necessarily true.

Group 3, Stanford. In response to Tricia, recording: work-school, -in guise.

He responds by introducing the stereotypes explicitly as a potential explanation for these poor opinions. In so doing, he disavows the stereotypes, while suggesting that other aspects of her performance may support the negative evaluation. Reading his comment, it is difficult to determine what his actual opinion of the speaker's intelligence is. The major purpose of his contribution appears to be to mention these stereotypes and distance himself from them.

Not everyone has an interest in disavowing such stereotypes. The interview participant in (28) draws on these same stereotypes as a source of humor, explaining that he would enjoy spending time with one of the Southern speakers, because he likes making fun of Southern accents.

(28) **Matt:** I like people with Southern accents. So, I'd probably hang out with her and laugh at her.

Group 10, Duke. In response to Bonnie, recording: seniors, -in guise.

The ways that people engage with stereotypes are frequently much more complex. Abby, in (29), has multiple conflicting goals. On the one hand, throughout the entire

interview she enjoyed sharing critical judgments of the speakers, as we saw earlier in (21). She was particularly humorous and inclined to present a "not politically correct" persona during the interview. In this particular exchange, she maintains this persona by supporting and strengthening the description of "redneck" tentatively advanced by Tamika, the "nice one" discussed earlier. Not only did she support the description as a valid and acceptable one, but she embroiders on the theme, emphasizing the message content which matches the description and performing a stylized accent on the word "whiskey".

(29) **Moderator:** Anything else?

Tamika: May be a redneck.

???: (laughter)

Tamika: Possibly.

(pause)

Tamika: That's such a bad term.

Abby: No, it's not. Perfectly acceptable to (laughter) call someone a redneck.

All: (laughter)

Abby: But he likes his football and tailgating.

Mary: And whiskey

Abby: And whiskeyyyy!! Yeah, he's a redneck

???: (laughter)

Tamika: aw.

Abby: And no, I wouldn't hang out with him. Although I will tell you since this is a linguistic study that, um people do like to say that once you hear Southern accent you have to subtract several intelligence points just because of the accent which is unfortunate cause there are a lot of, um smart Southern people and they have accent but people think of the Southern accent as being dumb. It just sounds dumb to a lot of people.

(pause)

Moderator: So leading into that how smart or not smart does Robert sound?

(pause)

Tamika: Well he didn't sound like didn't sound I guess super-intelligent but I wouldn't say that he would be dumb.

Abby: I'm not gonna base it on the accent but the whiskey and the tailgating, football I mean I would say just average intelligence, average.

Mary: Yeah I would probably say average below average i mean slightly below average

Group 19, Duke. In response to Robert, recording: tailgate, -ing guise.

After this performance, she switches gears and addresses stereotypes around the South from a different point of view. She is herself Southern and takes this opportunity to discuss the ways in which many listeners are biased against Southern accents. Responding to an explicit question regarding the speaker's intelligence, she brings the two points of view together, claiming to base her description of the qualities she had linked to being a redneck, but explicitly disclaiming any association of lower intelligence with the Southern accent.

6.4 Listener variation in interpreting (ING)

As the preceding discussion shows, some listeners are reluctant to give negative judgments while others enjoy inventing creatively harsh comments; some disavow stereotypes while others embrace them or joke about them. This variation represents only a small fraction of the variation among listeners. This section ties this phenomenon to linguistic variation by showing how different listeners assign different meanings to the same tokens of (ING) in the same context.

One obvious way for listener variation to translate into differences in perception is for listeners to have different meanings for the variable. This is the case when, for example, speakers of different varieties disagree as to the meaning of specific features.

But even if two listeners have exactly the same sociolinguistic knowledge of a variable, their interpretations may differ if they disagree about the speaker using it or the situation it is found in. Even when their factual knowledge and assumptions about a speaker agree, they may have divergent emotional reactions. These differences can cause them to interpret things in a more or less positive light, just as participants who are in bad moods are less generous in their evaluations of others.

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003:130) explain the process employing linguistic meaning in interaction with the concept of **social moves**. A social interaction may be likened to a game such as chess. Each socially meaningful aspect of an utterance constitutes a move in this game. Moves may introduce meanings, proposed relevant ideologies and/or put forward a personal style. Interlocutors may or may not assign the same meanings to a move that the speaker intended to convey. Such disconnect may result from actual misunderstanding, for example differences in linguistic and social experiences leading different people to understand similar resources in different ways. It may also result from a listener accurately identifying the intended meaning of a move but applying their own interpretation to it nonetheless. For example, a listener may discount the speaker's access to a particular resource or their ability to employ it effectively. In this case, a listener may understand perfectly the meaning a speaker was hoping to convey by using a particular resource, but not accept it as a credible performance. Even if the move is understood, that is no guarantee that it will be successful.

In this section I examine three instances where listeners disagree about the impact of (ING) on their image of a given speaker. In all cases, the disagreement does not center around (ING) itself or its overall meaning, but around the right of the speaker to use it or what its use reveals about them. Each of these instances involves listeners who agree on the basic nature of the move, but disagree in their responses to it.

The first example concerns Elizabeth. In two of her recordings, her *-in* guise is more likely to be described as *condescending* and also more likely to be described as *compassionate* than her *-ing* guise. Not surprisingly, however, the sets of listeners selecting these two qualities were virtually disjoint. Table 6.1 shows the breakdown of *compassionate* and *condescending* by (ING). This data is drawn from only two

	% listeners selecting checkbox		
Checkbox label	*-in*	*-ing*	sig.
compassionate	*30.0*	7.4	0.026
condescending	*17.5*	0.0	0.022

Table 6.1: Compassionate and condescending selections for Elizabeth, by (ING). (N = 67)

of Elizabeth's recordings, the two which account for all but one of her selections of *condescending*. Both recordings involve her setting herself apart from the group of people primarily under discussion. (30) and (31) gives the transcripts of these two recordings.

(30) And I don't think a lot of the people who were sort of at this lower level who were doing the data entry and who were actually ordering the things got involved in the discussions of what kind of effect this new system would have on the work and how the system could be structured to redesign the work.

(31) And you go there and you might ride one ride and then you sit somewhere and you have a nice restaurant meal. And they're, you know, they're the family and this is the one time they're ever going to make it there and they're trying to bulldoze through the park and stand in line and dash around. And you're just kind of sitting there watching it all go by.

The topics, dealing with the behavior and feelings of others, open the door for Elizabeth to be heard as either compassionate or condescending. However, she is much more likely to be heard as either one if she uses *-in*, as shown above. To understand why this is, we need to understand a few things about Elizabeth and how she sounds to these listeners. Elizabeth inspired a range of reactions, including some of the most positive and the most negative comments found in all the interviews. She was universally described as the most dynamic of all the speakers and in the survey she was rated the most *outgoing*, with a mean of 5.21 on a six point scale. Example (23) from Section 6.3, repeated here as (32), shows a colorful example of listeners responding negatively to Elizabeth. (33), in contrast, is an extremely positive response, a listener explaining how he finds Elizabeth's animation so interesting and appealing that he does not distinguish between her (ING) guises.

(32) **Jeremy:** So, it doesn't matter, because I'm disliking what she's saying. (laughter)

Tom: I don't like hearing her talk. (laughter)

Sarah: It makes blood come out of my ears.

Group 14, UNC. In response to Elizabeth, recording: discussion, comparison phase.

(33) **Matt:** Because of the passion that she's talking about, like, her, you know, excitement. You really can't, you know, hear- differentiate between the first and the second. You know, to me. So she's very, you're not necessarily hearing what she's saying just looking at the way she's saying. I can just envision her, just, arms moving her animation, or (laughter) I wouldn't necessarily- (laughter) Yeah, exactly.

Group 10, Duke. In response to Elizabeth, recording: family, comparison phase.

Elizabeth was also universally understood as someone who would "normally" say *-ing*. (34) shows a typical sample of listeners agreeing that *-ing* belongs in Elizabeth's speech.

(34) **Carlos:** The *-ing* sounds more natural.

Amy: Yeah

Tracey: mhmm

Group 7, Stanford. In response to Elizabeth, recording: hair, comparison phase.

As a "natural" *-ing* speaker, Elizabeth's use of-*in* stands out to listeners as a perceptible linguistic move. Given the ingroup/outgroup theme in these recordings, some listeners interpret that move in relation to the "others" that she is discussing. Out of these listeners, some are going to be well disposed to Elizabeth and some are going to dislike her. Depending on the listeners' opinion of the speaker and/or how generous they're feeling, they will interpret this as either condescending or compassionate. The meaning of (ING) in this context is not fixed, but varies for different listeners.

The next example of disagreement comes from Valerie. Valerie was more likely to be described as *annoying* in her *-ing* guise. Listeners were also more likely to think that she was *trying to impress* her addressee when she used *-ing*. These two descriptions also favored each other, but only in her *-ing* guise. Table 6.2 shows the three-way interaction between these two perceptions and (ING) for Valerie. All three interactions are significant, using the Chi squared test.

From these data, it seems that in her *-ing* guise, some listeners think Valerie is trying to impress her audience and are annoyed by this. This raises the question,

	% listeners selecting checkbox					
	-in			*-ing*		
Checkbox label	not *annoying*	*annoying*	Total	not *annoying*	*annoying*	Total
not *trying*	74.0	6.9	80.9	54.5	3.0	57.5
trying	19.0	0.0	19.0	28.8	**13.6**	42.4
Total	93.0	6.9	100.0	83.3	16.6	100.0

Table 6.2: Annoying and trying to impress selections for Valerie, by (ING).

then, in what ways they think she is trying to impress people. The evidence suggests that they hear her as trying to sound smarter than she actually is. Listeners who thought that Valerie was *annoying* rated her as less *intelligent* than those who did not and this tendency may be increased in the case of those who heard her *-ing* guise, as Table 6.3 demonstrates.

	-in	*-ing*
not *annoying*	3.35	3.53
annoying	**3.00**	**2.36**

Table 6.3: Intelligent ratings for Valerie, by (ING) and annoying (Interaction p = 0.068, main effect p = 0.000).

These data suggest that some listeners hearing Valerie's *-ing* guise thought that she was an unintelligent young woman who was trying to impress her listeners and sound more intelligent. Further, these listeners were annoyed by this performance. This range of reactions is also reflected in the comments about her in the interviews. We saw this already in (26) above. Example (35) shows another participant responding to one of Valerie's recordings, the one labeled "history". In this recording, she describes some aspects of getting a history major, commenting that, unlike other fields, each time you begin study of a new area "you are starting from scratch". She does not say in the recording whether she sees this as an asset or drawback.

(35) **Amy:** Well I, even if she does have a degree I don't think it was very rigorous or if it was [at a difficult?] school [??]

Moderator: Anything in particular that gave you that impression?

Amy: Oh it was just that she stammered after she was talking about the different types majors and how you people [??] different cultures and [??] it was just kind of disjointed.

Amelia: Yeah, I don't think she's very smart. (laughter)

Several: (laughter)

Group 7, Stanford. In response to Valerie, recording: history, -ing guise.

As discussed above, when participants responded to Elizabeth described her as usually saying *-ing*, casting the *-in* variant as the one which constituted the social move. Valerie's case is somewhat different in that the divergent reactions are elicited by her *-ing* guise, the variant which most listeners "assigned" to her in the interviews as the more natural one for her speech. This raises the question whether *-ing* can be a social move for Valerie, since listeners seem to expect her to use it. I do not think that the *-ing* is the social move which is eliciting their reactions. Rather, I think that listeners hearing her *-ing* guise are perceiving an entire style and responding to it. While it is difficult to pinpoint other specific variables, the overall impression that Valerie gives is of a very young woman who is projecting a strong core of confidence, even presenting herself as an expert on several of the topics in the recordings.

Some listeners accept this confidence and read her as an interesting and vibrant person, as in (36). Greg was very impressed with Valerie and felt that she was knowledgeable about the topics of her discussions. He did not see her as making an effort to impress, as (36) shows.

(36) **Greg:** She does seem smart actually. Smart in a humble, she seems like a very humble person. I like that. and uh, doesn't sound too, uh you know, eager to impress or please or anything like that just kinda being herself and I really I really like that. It's definitely what I'm attracted to. In terms of a friend or something.

Group 21, Duke. In response to Valerie, recording: backpacking,-in guise.

Others see her confidence as a result of her racial or class background. In (37), two participants identified her as belonging to a familiar type at Duke. They are less

interested in Valerie's personal qualities and more focused on her background and what it conveys about her. Later in the discussion they note that such women are not dumb, but merely "smart enough", for example smart enough to get good grades so that her father will take her to Norway.

(37) **Matt:** Oh, that is so like the Duke girls here.

All: (laughter)

Matt: It's just the Duke White girls, is just what it screams.

Moderator: Okay, tell me more about why she sounds like them.

Matt: Um, the use of like. Um, Using Daddy's money and backpacking.

Rob: The context of Daddy's little girl, you know.

Matt: Yeah.

Rob: Not just the White, in college. But lot of girls who are just just Daddy's little girl.

Matt: Backpacking through Norway.

Group 10, Duke. In response to Valerie, recording: backpacking, -ing guise.

Still others see her as at a disadvantage. The listeners in (38) interpret her explanations regarding the history major as compensating for a poor performance in her classes. These participants are the same ones from (26), a conversation which takes place later in the interview, as they explain how *-ing* does not improve the Valerie's apparent intelligence, but simply makes her sound "like she's trying to cover [her lack of intelligence] up".

(38) **Jeremy:** It's like she's trying to explain the history major and why it's difficult to somebody. So you get the impression that that's her major. And she's having trouble with it. She's kind of defending why, I think.

Sarah: To build on that, probably not so smart because she's saying the obvious. Or she just, or she may be in a situation where she's not comfortable so she kind of just says whatever comes to mind.

Adam: Yeah, I agree. It sounded like she really didn't know what to say. And just kind of spat something out.

Moderator: Okay.

Jeremy: Yeah, it's definitely, like I get the impression that she's not doing well in history.

Group 14, UNC. In response to Valerie, recording: history, -ing guise.

As for Elizabeth, *-in*, the unexpected form, is the one that can be most reasonably seen as its own social move. In Valerie's speech the effect of the move is to disrupt an existing style. For some listeners, Valerie's self presentation reads as someone who is trying too hard to sound smart. Because *-in* is an out-of-place and thus noticeable marker of not being articulate or not trying to be articulate, it disrupts this style, reducing or eliminating this subset of listener reactions.

The last example of listener divergence I will be discussing concerns Sam, one of the West Coast men. Like Valerie, Sam comes across as extremely young but he also sounds somewhat hesitant, with many long pauses in his speech. Two of Sam's recordings discuss his hobbies. In the one labeled "skateboarding", he describes going to parking structures at night to skateboard down the ramps. In "physical", he talks about how physical activity is enjoyable and relaxing for him. In the responses to these two recordings, listeners who heard Sam's *-in* guise were significantly more likely to mark him as *annoying* and as *trying to impress* his audience. Table 6.4 gives the percentages and significance (using the Chi squared test) for these two descriptions.

	-in	*-ing*	sig.
annoying	**15.15**	1.72	0.009
trying to impress	*39.5*	16.0	0.047

Table 6.4: Annoying and trying to impress selections for Sam, by (ING).

As one of the non-Southern speakers, Sam was generally expected to use *-ing* by interview participants. It seems likely, then, that or as for the other two,*-in* is the noticeable choice, the one it makes more sense to think of as a social move. The question is, what is the move and why are some listeners annoyed by it? The explanation may be found in Sam's masculinity ratings.

Table 6.5 shows that listeners who were annoyed by Sam thought that he was less masculine than others did. This table does not include (ING) as a factor because

	not *annoying*	*annoying*
masculine	**3.62**	2.85

Table 6.5: Masculine ratings for Sam, by annoying. Recordings "skateboarding" and "physical" only ($p = 0.004$).

there is only one listener who selected annoying in response to Sam's *-ing* guise, making it impossible to test the interaction of the two factors. However, the ratings of masculinity among those who did not find Sam annoying are the same regardless of (ING), making the interaction for Sambetween (ING), *annoying* and *masculine* essentially the same as Valerie's interaction between *annoying* and *intelligent*, although the variant of (ING) is switched.

Based on these numbers, I think that when listeners heard Sam in his *-in* guise, talking about skateboarding and physical activity, a subset of them heard him as making an unsuccessful bid to sound more masculine, in much the way some listeners heard Valerie as trying to sound smart. Unlike with Valerie, there was no significant relationship between listeners finding him annoying and those thinking he was trying to impress, although I suspect that this is a result of insufficient data and that they are actually part of the same larger phenomenon.

In each of these three examples, the overall performance is set up in such a way as to allow (ING) to constitute or help to construct a social move. Because listeners are more or less positively inclined to the speaker, they interpret that move differently. This is variation in perceptions stemming not solely from linguistic differences but based in the social traits and interactions of the people involved. These reactions do have linguistic repercussions, however, as speakers learn over time how different categories and personalities of listener respond to particular moves. Likewise, a portion of the reactions in question are embedded in language and language ideologies. The perception that these speakers, being "from anywhere", would naturally say *-ing* is fundamental to the logic of these reactions.

It is notable that the clearest examples of this behavior come from data concerning West Coast speakers. This does not mean that these listeners did not disagree about the Southerners. This data set is extremely rich and there is much more to explore

in it. Nonetheless, the West Coast speakers seem to have elicited more or perhaps clearer forms of disagreement, regardless of where the listeners were from themselves. This may relate to the unmarked status of their speech, allowing the more marked form *-in* to stand out as a more salient move. The Southern speakers have less of a clear division of markedness between the two forms, as *-ing* is unmarked generally for these listeners but somewhat marked by being unexpected in the speech of Southern speakers. Conversely, *-in* is unmarked in seeming "natural" in the context of Southerners speech but marked in the more general paradigm.

6.5 Summary

Listeners' social and emotional orientations, both generally and towards specific speakers, play a role in the development of an evaluation and the place of individual variables in it. As linguists, we are apt to dismiss the sociolinguistic work accomplished by listening and reacting to linguistic performances. Even when we do consider the listener, it tends to be as an idealized, abstract figure, posited in order to make the theoretical point about speaking.

If we are to understand how and why linguistic variation can operate in a range of complex and interlinked ways, we must let go of this idealization. Just as we struggle to an awareness of speakers as messy, contradictory social beings with multiple agendas and imperfect knowledge, we must do the same for listeners. They are active participants in the process of interpretation, not passive receivers decoding the information as transmitted by the speaker.

This research begins this process by taking the most basic of social reactions: positive or negative disposition and documenting how it shapes the contribution of a single variable in the perception of linguistic performance. This process can be confusing, as the variable being studied necessarily forms part of the larger performance, inspiring the positive and negative reaction. It is, however, only a small portion of it, whose influence is combined with a multitude of other sources of information.

There are many other reactions a listener might have and many of them may be more complicated than simple positive or negative. As our understanding of these

processes deepens, we will be able to examine more and more complex ways that the reactions and assumptions of listeners impact the reception of day-to-day linguistic performances.

Chapter 7

Conclusions: Style and meaning

This dissertation set out to address a broad research question fundamental to the study of linguistic variation: how is the relationship between linguistic variation and social meanings structured? Within the rich literature on socially marked variation there are insights which begin to answer this question and allow us to make it more specific. The insight fundamental to the field is that at least some variation is patterned relative to social space. Instead of variation being the unpredictable, random portion of language, Labov (1963, 1966) and those that followed him demonstrated that speakers' linguistic behavior correlates with their backgrounds, beliefs and speaking situations.

More recent work has emphasized that variation does not merely reflect social structures but in fact helps to create them (Eckert 2001b; Ochs 1992). Because variation carries social meanings, speakers may use socially loaded linguistic resources to construct the interactions in which they are engaged, their own identities or other social objects. This approach suggests that both speakers and listeners are engaged in the project of construction together (although not necessarily cooperatively). As a result, both of the speaking and listening processes emerge as crucially important for the construction of a specific interaction as well as for the long term shape of socially significant linguistic variation.

Although this theoretical turn places a portion of the burden of social structuring on listeners, it does not explore their task in any depth. Work in the social psychology

of language, on the other hand, has addressed how listeners interpret a variety of linguistic choices, primarily at the level of languages and language varieties (Lambert *et al.* 1965) or paralinguistic cues (Smith *et al.* 1975) and defined sets of features (Erickson *et al.* 1978). Other work has documented the degree to which speakers take their audiences into account when putting together a linguistic performance (Giles and Powesland 1975; Giles and Smith 1979; Bell 1984). This body of work has established the complexity and importance of the listener's task, but very little of it has addressed sociolinguistic variation as such (exceptions include Labov (1966); Plichta and Preston (2005)). This background helps to narrow the previous research question to a more specific one: how does the use of variation influence listener reactions and what factors shape this process?

To address this more specific question, I selected a single variable, the English variable (ING) and investigated its impact on listener perceptions. Drawing on the existing tools in the literature on language attitudes, I used the Matched Guise Technique to examine the influence of (ING) on listener reactions to eight speakers, four men and four women, four from the South and four from the West Coast.

The results showed that (ING) affects perceptions in comprehensible but complicated ways. It changed some perceptions across the board. Speakers were described as more educated when the used *-ing* and were more likely to be described as articulate in those guises as well. (ING) also shifted how two aspects of evaluation interacted with each other. For example, *-in* strengthened the relationship between perceptions of the speaker being casual and being working class. The results also demonstrated the influence of context on the role of (ING), including the speaker, the message content and listener characteristics.

The rest of this chapter will discuss the theoretical impact of these results in more depth. First, I will describe some of the implications of these results for our understanding of the social structuring of linguistic variation. One of these implications concerns how listeners use groupings of features to make sense of linguistic performances by shifting their expectations concerning a single feature on the basis of other linguistic behaviors. This suggests that the construct of individual style is not only a useful way for analysts to consider patterns of co-occurrence but a cognitive reality

that listeners use in interpreting variation. The central portion of the chapter expands this idea, first discussing the theoretical status of style. I will discuss the reactions of the interview participants which show a layered system of markedness and explain its relationship to the notion of individual style. After describing this evidence for the role of style in listening, I will discuss other ways in which this research shed light on the concept of style and describe some of the many questions yet to be answered. This discussion will lead into a broader final discussion of the future work which could build on the beginning represented by the present project.

7.1 Theoretical Implications

This section synthesizes the specific results discussed in earlier chapters into more abstract theoretical lessons. The first is that the process of interpreting a linguistic performance is more complex and involves more agency than is frequently acknowledged. As Chapter 6 showed, listeners are not simple decoding machines recovering meanings encoded by speakers. Instead, listeners engage agentively with their task, attending to different aspects of a performance and interpreting them differently.

Linguists have long marked the potential for disconnect between the impression a speaker wishes to give and the one that a listener actually forms. Laver and Trudgill (1979) adopt the division developed in Lyons (1977) between communicative and informative speech markers. In this terminology **communicative** markers are those which the speaker intends to use, markers which are "meaningful to the sender". **Informative** markers, on the other hand, are those which are "meaningful to the receiver", those which give the listener information whether not the speaker intended to convey it (Laver and Trudgill 1979:4). The evidence for and implications of this agency on the part of the listener are explored in depth in Chapter 6.

The other results, primarily reported in Chapters 4 and 5, centered around the influence of other aspects of context, those related to the speaker and the speech situation. Social structures co-occur with each other, not only with linguistic structures. As analysts, we tend to treat this fact as a methodological difficulty rather than a theoretical insight. When two social structures co-occur with each other (for

example speaker identity and speech situation) and with a linguistic feature, it is part of the linguist's job to tease out the relationships between the linguistic content and the two social structures as much as possible. We wish to determine which aspects of the variable use derive from the speakers background and which from the speech situation. In doing so, it is easy to focus too heavily on disentangling the relative influences of social structures on language and lose sight of the other relationships involved. It is important to take these into account, both because such structural connections form a part of the larger picture and because speakers and listeners are aware of them. Information about the speaking situation is likely to lead listeners to make deductions regarding the speaker. Conversely, images of particular groups of people include expectations about the kind of speech situations they are likely to engage in.

In this and other ways, listener perceptions are structured by their expectations. Previous work has demonstrated that in some cases expectations may overwhelm direct evidence, such as when visual cues to ethnicity lead listeners to perceive accents they do not otherwise hear (Rubin and Smith 1990; Williams *et al.* 1976). Other expectations may have effects not yet explored. Expectations lead to different arrangements of markedness for different speakers, as less expected forms are more marked than predicted ones. This pattern, which will be discussed in more detail shortly, suggests that the concept of individual style is not only a useful theoretical tool but may reflect an actual cognitive construct used by listeners to help structure their understandings of an utterance.

7.2 Developing an understanding of style

I use the term style to refer to a cluster of linguistic and nonlinguistic resources found in a given performance or across multiple performances and perceived by speaker and/or listener to be a socially coherent set.

This use has little to no relation to that used in Labov (1966), which equates style with the amount of attention the speaker is devoting to standardizing his or her speech. As discussed in Chapter 4, I think that this definition is too restrictive for such

a useful concept as style. Instead, I refer to that as situational formality. There are common themes between that use and my own. The notion of attention paid to speech is one way of capturing the idea that people speak differently in different situations. While I believe that the notion of style must be expanded beyond this, this insight into the influence of situation is an important precursor to flexibly incorporating both inter- and intra-speaker variation into a comprehensive theory of style.

Style is also one of the words frequently used for the more general concept of situation-based variation, as contrasted with speaker-based variation, a phenomenon for which the term **register** is also frequently used (Halliday *et al.* 1964). Whether called register, genre or style, intra-speaker variation is a crucial aspect of linguistic variation. The importance of situational variability may be seen in the discussion of Ochs's model of indirect indexicality in Chapter 1. While some aspects of gender or other identities may be directly linked to language, far more are constituted by particular stances, acts and activities, all of which are given meaning only within specific situations. Conversely, situation-based variation cannot be fully understood with acknowledging the fact that different situations are usually populated (and/or expected to be populated) by different speakers. For this reason it is important to remove the speaker/situation distinction as a primitive of the classification system of style, although not from our awareness as we move forward.

Inter-speaker variation has also been examined under the rubric of style (Sebeok 1960). Much of this work has been done in connection to literary studies, examining the stylistic variations of different authors or schools of literature. In this context, style may be seen in terms of the norm or set of norms and deviations from it, or alternatively as the choices speakers or writers make between equal sets of norms (Hymes 1960; Osgood 1960).

Although issues of style and language have received the most attention from literary studies, sociolinguists have also devoted time and thought to issues involving style. I discussed Bell's work on style as audience design in Chapter 1, which adapts the central ideas of Accomodation Theory into a framework with a greater focus on style as such (Bell 2001; Bell 1984). Coupland (1985); Coupland (2001) uses an understanding of style to connect situational variation with dialect-related variation

and the notion of identity. His approach emphasizes the importance of connecting the sociolinguistic work to current work in social theory and the role of linguistic choices in the production of self.

Irvine (2001) discusses style as a system of distinction, in which speakers use linguistic and other resources to distinguish their identity categories from others. She also emphasizes the importance of language ideologies in mediating these processes of identity construction and distinction. Her discussion underlines the fact that while not all sociolinguistic computations need to take place at the conscious level, speaker/listeners beliefs and ideologies regarding language and social structures largely inform their linguistic behaviors.

The definition used here is inherited from a school of style begun by the California Style Collective (1993), who defined style as "a clustering of linguistic resources and an association of that clustering with an identifiable aspect of social practice" (California Style Collective 1993:14). This clustering may take place over a range of dimensions, although that paper tackled what is perhaps the most difficult one, time. By examining the speech of a single individual over the course of an interview, they sought to identify points at which tokens of multiple different variables co-occurred together to create an intensification of a particular kind of "California white girl" style. This definition of style embodies a claim which has yet to be fully tested: that such clusters exist, may be empirically established and correspond in a meaningful way to socially coherent stylistic packages. In speaking of style, then, I am not referring to a predetermined theoretical construct, but rather to a field of inquiry—one whose investigation is only beginning.

Up until this point, this notion of style as a cluster of resources has existed as an observation made by linguists and other scholars. Researchers into language and social structure, particularly variation, have engaged with style as a way of capturing the distribution of meaningful variation. Results from my study, however, suggest that style may exist as a way for listeners (and therefore speakers) to understand variation and organize its social baggage. The support for this lies in the layered nature of the markedness divisions exhibited by the interview participants. The next section documents this system of markedness.

7.3 Markedness

As discussed in Chapter 1, part of the structure of linguistic variation is the assignment of markedness to the variants of a given variable. Listeners may believe one variant is less noticeable overall or more natural for a particular speaker or in a particular situation. This belief will influence the ways in which listeners build stories around a speaker's motivations and thus how they ultimately interpret a performance. It is important to note that the type of markedness I am discussing is an ideological phenomenon, rather than a linguistic one. There may, in fact, be ways in which it affects actual linguistic choices, but the data here do not address that. This data comes exclusively from qualitative results and deals with how listeners conceptualize the use of (ING). It does not necessarily reflect how of the variable might be used or perceived. What it does reflect is the ideologies listeners bring to the task of language use and interpretation.

The most widespread ideology of markedness was a basic privileging of *-ing* as the normal form of the variable, casting *-in* as the marked version. This may be seen in the ways that participants in the group interviews conceptualized my questions regarding the effect of (ING). It was common for listeners to interpret the question in terms of their opinions of the *-in* form, assuming that the *-ing* form, being the correct one, had no intrinsic meaning. Another form of this ideology was the most common articulation of the variable by participants in the interviews, "dropping one's G's", in which the *-ing* variant reflects the true pronunciation of the word in question, including a necessary segment, the "G". Both of these phenomena construct *-ing* as a natural or normal way of talking and *-in* as an unusual variation. The phrase itself was extremely common in the group interviews, as in (39). In addition, listeners at times associated the *-in* variant with other forms of variation that involve deletions or failure to "pronounce all of the words", as shown in (40).

(39) **Jill:** Well the thing is, in my own experience sometimes we drop the G just because we're so comfortable, we're laid-back and relaxed, that's why we don't say the G, so it doesn't really indicate anything like that about education.

Group 22, Stanford. In response to Bonnie, recording: seniors, comparison phase.

(40) **Karen:** Right right it's not like she usually goes around saying you know I'm tearin' stuff. You know (laughter) well what are you doing? I'm tearing.

???: (laughter)

Karen: She would say the G usually. So then it was ok. Cause it was the context- it was- it was the right context to leave it out.

(pause)

Karen: Yeah, part of the rest of her speech just she kind of sounds um she yeah just the way she spoke. She pretty much pronounced every single word fully usually. Um, and then this was just, I seriously think it was just like the situation the story she was telling she was just going so fast you know if I get really excited and tell a story I'll leave off the ends of some words and stuff.

Group 5, Stanford. In response to Elizabeth, recording: hair, comparison phase.

Not only does this structure the interpretations of actual instances of use of (ING), but it has implications for how listeners interpret the speech of speakers for whom they feel *-in* is more appropriate or natural. For these speakers, there is no truly unmarked variant, since they must choose between an inherently marked option and one which is at odds with the rest of their linguistic performance.

The most basic level at which we can see markedness is the degree to which each variant is considered open for comment or discussion. The structure of the interview emphasized the variable as composed of two equally possible variants. The order in which the variants were presented changed from speaker to speaker and in conducting the interviews, I took care to present a relatively neutral stance on the variants, although in an effort to be understandable, I was myself guilty of referencing the description "dropping one's G's" in many of my explanations. In many cases, the participants responded in kind, comparing the two options presented and discussing the differences between them. In other cases participants responded in ways that presupposed that *-ing* was the natural form and *-in* the variation, as in (41). These kinds of responses did not appear in the other direction.

In this interchange about one of the Southern speakers, the first speaker signals a gentle assumption that she expected the *-ing* guise to be the more appropriate sounding one, by marking her first sentence with "actually". The second speaker

takes it further, in both of his turns indicating his surprise that the *-in* version was not in fact objectionable. In the final line, his use of "if anything" gives a sense of the strength of his assumption, even in the midst of a conversation in which all four listeners agreed that the *-in* variant was more natural to the speech of the speaker, he still marked that variant as the deviant one.

(41) **Tracey:** It seems like actually, the second one seems more natural to her the rest of her, you know, speech. Because the *-ing* sounds really forced. And the rest of the converesation.

Carlos: Yeah. I didn't, um, really it didn't sound that bad. The second recording. It wasn't like [startling?] it was like it was pretty moderate.

(pause)

Amy: I think the *-in* marched her, the *-in* matched her [??]. I thought it was more natural.

Amelia: Well I think her accent's so heavy that the one thing doesn't make that big of a difference.

Carlos: Yeah, if anything it would just make it sound weird.

Group 7, Stanford. In response to Tricia, recording: work-school, comparison phase.

Later in that same interview, Amelia became more explicit about her assignment of markedness for (ING). She refers to the use of *-in* as a "speech quirk". After some discussion, she produced *yeah* as another example of such a quirk. This example underlines the fact that this assignment is more a matter of ideology than linguistic distribution. "Yeah" is an extremely common word and not one limited to a small group of speakers. Nonetheless, as an "incorrect" variant, for Amelia, at least, it occupies a marked position ideologically.

(42) **Amelia:** Um, the *-in* didn't sound to weird but I wouldn't, like if I were talking to her I would just think that she had that one speech quirk. But it wouldn't sound like too weird.

Moderator: If you were talking to her would it- the other speech quirks that she doesn't have, if that makes any -

Amelia: She doesn't have any

Moderator: What kinds of things like one might expect to go with that that you're not- I'm curious what you're contrast it with.

Amelia: Oh, um, she's just got that one speech quirk.

Moderator: Like what are the other things that you're noticing that she doesn't have or what kinds of things would you associate with-

Amelia: Well I guess I'd expect to hear (pause) like yeah instead of yes.

Group 7, Stanford. In response to Elizabeth, recording: discussion, comparison phase.

As a result of being the more marked variant, *-in* also qualifies as a linguistic behavior for which explanations can be offered. It was extremely common for participants to identify a given variant as more natural or appropriate to the speech of the given speaker. However, in the cases where speakers used *-in* although they might be expected to use *-ing*, participants were able to offer mitigating circumstances or explanations for why they might have done so, as (40) above shows.

It is impossible to disentangle the assumptions marking *-in* as the more marked of the two variants from the ideologies which mark it as the incorrect one. Many of the listeners who participated in my study seemed to honestly feel that *-ing* was the normal pronunciation of such words. Others may have been aligning more towards an ideology that *-ing* was the correct pronunciation, regardless of their own usage patterns. Some of the strategies that speakers use to explain uses of *-in* reflects this. Although the ideology establishing *-ing* as the default is highly prevalent, this does not mean that all listeners subscribe to it. The context of the interviews is likely to have had an important influence on the relative strengths with which the various ideologies were presented. Nearly all of the contextual factors present the interviews favored *-ing* as the more appropriate variant: the interviews were being conducted by a linguist, on university campuses, in a situation where listeners were asked to explicitly evaluate speakers on the basis of their speech. Although I was careful to present the task as a general one, steering away from questions of correctness, many listeners were likely to interpret it in that light.

There are also indications of a competing ideology, in which *-ing* is aligned with effort and so is more marked than in the other scheme. This does not result in *-in* becoming unmarked, but rather a choice of least resistance, contrasting with the formality and effort of *-ing*. In this case, listeners may discuss reasons which might cause speakers to make the effort to pronounce things properly. In example

(43), two listeners speculate on the rationale of the laid-back sounding speaker using *-ing*, drawing on both issues of discourse construction and social motivations. (44) aligns *-ing* explicitly with "making an effort". This ideology is also likely to have regional associations, as reflected in one respondent in Fought (2002) who labeled the Northeast United States as having *more pronunciation*.

(43) **Tamika:** When he was describing- I guess, well, yeah, when he was describing all the actions he has to do when going to the movies that's sort of when you want to make a list and you want it to have it I guess when you're talking to somebody [??] you seem to enunicate your ideas better getting up, leaving, and whatnot so I could see him saying the i-n-g in that context.

Abby: Yeah I agree with you I think the i-n-g puts more emphasis on the the list that he's talking about and that's what he wants clearly emphasized, it's such a hassle for him to get up.

Group 19, Duke. In response to Ivan, recording: movies, comparison phase.

(44) **Rachel:** It was harder to tell the difference for her because for the first case, you could tell the difference more because she had a Southern accent, but at the same time, she was saying *-ing* so you could tell that she was, it sounded more like she was making an effort, even though she still had that accent.

Group 15, Duke. In response to Elizabeth, recording: family, comparison phase.

There are a number of ways in which these two systems of ideology may coexist. First of all, comments regarding the effort required to produce *-ing* tend to occur for a limited set of speakers, namely those for whom the listener describes *-in* as the more natural one. This suggests that listeners are not solely bringing their own ideologies regarding the structure of (ING) to the task, but also using various cues from speakers to deduce what forms they might be likely to use. This context then helps them determine the social meaning of the forms that they do actually employ. These ideologies may also be unevenly distributed across listeners, so that listeners who themselves favor one or the other variant in most of their everyday speech are more likely to see that variant as normal.

Despite this alternative, for the most part the listeners in my study overwhelmingly marked *-ing* as the default or more natural variant of (ING) and saw *-in* as

deviating from both normal and correct modes of speech. This overall impression of markedness contrasts with more specific expectations regarding individual speakers. In particular, as discussed in Chapter 5, interview participants displayed extremely consistent expectations regarding what speakers used *-ing* and which used *-in*, on the basis of their regional accents.

Despite the wording of my questions, many listeners interpreted the discussion of the (ING) to be a question of which variant sounded most natural in the context of a given speaker's performance. The responses to this unasked question were extraordinarily consistent. Interview participants almost universally described the West Coast speakers as likely to use *-ing* in their everyday speech, while they described *-in* as the more natural form for the Southerners. This pattern held regardless of whether the participants were describing a given Southern speaker as educated or uneducated. This ideology of naturalness was explored in more detail in Chapter 5 and may be seen in example (17), repeated here as (45).

(45) **Sally:** The second one sounded more natural.

Moderator: Okay.

???: Yeah.

Sarah: I agree.

Tom: It was kind of like the same situation as Tricia. Just went with how she speaks better.

Moderator: Okay.

Tom: It's natural.

Group 14, UNC Chapel Hill. In response to Bonnie, recording: classes, comparison phase.

The concept of markedness refers to a system of expectations. Most of the interview participants in my study maintained different expectations regarding the use of (ING) at different levels. As university students engaged in the standard language market, they shared ideologies that *-ing* was the correct pronunciation for the variable and that as the correct way of speaking it was also the normal one. They also maintained expectations regarding specific speakers, which in some cases were

diametrically opposite to the general ones. In the case of speakers with audible Southern accents, interview participants saw *-in* as the expected and therefore unmarked version.

This pattern has both practical and theoretical repercussions. On the practical side, it speaks to the sociolinguistic quandary nonstandard speakers may find themselves in. The Southern speakers in my study, speaking to their peers, are faced with the choice of either employing a variant seen as natural to their speech but marked as incorrect and uneducated. Alternatively, they could use another variant which is generally seen as correct but unusual (and potentially inappropriate) in their speech. These conflicting expectations create a difficult situation, without even taking into account issues such as ability or personal attachment.

The theoretical repercussions of this markedness pattern go to the heart of the discussions in this chapter. Not only do the interview participants have general expectations regarding which variant of (ING) is more worthy of notice, they have a set of specific expectations related to regional accent. This behavior shows that listeners take the entirety of a speaker's performance into account at least when ideologically contemplating the meaning of a given variant. The statistical results from the survey data discussed in the previous chapters suggests that this behavior is not limited to ideological speculation, but in fact reflects actual methods of interpretation as well.

7.4 What we know about style

The discussion above indicates that style may be a cognitive construct, in addition to being a useful analytical tool for understanding the distribution of linguistic features. This section briefly touches on each of the pieces of information regarding the nature of style that can be drawn from the results of this study. The recurring question in this discussion is how, exactly, listeners form or update a social model of an individual and a speaking situation on the basis of a linguistic performance. One possibility

would be for them to take each linguistic and extralinguistic trait (or each trait above a certain threshold level of salience) and "translate" it into its social meaning. Under such a model, listeners would then combine the social meanings derived from each resource into an overall package, coming up with an evaluation of the speaker.

In such a scenario, one would expect that the meaning of individual traits, such as (ING), would remain the same at least across speakers and different utterances, although not necessarily across listeners. The results presented in this dissertation show that the contribution of a single variable is not constant but is influenced by other aspects of a linguistic performance. In other words, this simple additive model is not adequate.

The discussion of listener agency in Chapter 6 supports the notion that style and other aspects of sociolinguistic meaning are constructed intersubjectively. While speakers have an intended style, listeners are in no way bound to limit their interpretations to this image, even if they were capable of reproducing it exactly. Conversely, as listeners form these interpretations and reflect them (to some extent) back, speakers need not wholly adopt the views of others regarding their own performances. At no point is the social value of a given style fixed. Speakers and listeners continue to contest each other's interpretations and performances as they pursue their social goals.

Another important point is that sociolinguistic meaning cannot be divorced from the content of the linguistic utterances it is attached to. It is common for sociolinguistic variation to be described as the ways in which speakers may say "the same thing" in different ways. But much of the time different linguistic resources are used precisely because they enhance the effect of saying different things. In addition, different people are likely to say different things and speakers make choices not only about how to say something but also what to say. What someone says and how they say it are intimately linked and it is impossible to study one without the other. Any conception of style must include not only an accounting of linguistic resources and their social correlates but also the linguistic and nonlinguistic aspects of content to which they are attached.

7.5 Questions to be answered

At this point in the study of style, the open questions vastly outnumber the things that are known. This section highlights some important questions in the hopes of encouraging work which seeks their answers. My interest is in the social, linguistic and cognitive structures involved in evaluating social meaning and the role that style plays within them. At most, the work described in this dissertation has succeeded in establishing that such structures exist and that style is implicated in them. This leaves virtually the entire task of tracing these structures and the processes that maintain them as an open field for exciting new work.

The first such question concerns the granularity of stylistic clustering. The patterns displayed by the listeners in my study suggests that they are making reference to some linguistic structures while assigning meaning to others. It is not clear whether all linguistic qualities have the ability to influence the impact of all others or whether there is a ranking based on salience, perceived immutability or other factors. I have suggested that part of this mechanism involves grouping linguistic behaviors into styles to make them easier to recognize. If this is the case, it raises the question whether stylistic packages involve all recognized traits in a given performance or subsets which may be combined with each other. If styles do have a cognitive reality, what are the relationships between a given style and the linguistic resources with which it is associated? Are these relationships the same for different variables, or are variables at, for example, different levels of conscious awareness grouped into stylistic categories differently?

Another of the central questions is how conscious speakers and listeners are of the variables or stylistic clusters of variables to which they're responding. Similarly, we don't know how conscious they are of the reasoning processes through which variation is employed and interpreted. The role of consciousness at both of these levels has yet to be established, although there are some useful things we can say at this point. It is relatively unusual in the literature to find explicit discussions of the role of conscious or rational thought in sociolinguistic calculations. It is important to remember that the social calculations performed by speakers and listeners are not

necessarily conscious. If they were, this would perhaps limit the social calculations which would be possible in real time. We know from cognitive linguistics and many other cognitive domains that people are capable of rapid and complex computations, although for the most part these are not driven by conscious, rational thought.

The data presented here show that listeners are capable of producing extremely complex social judgments in reaction to brief linguistic samples. It is possible that this complexity is entirely or partly a result of the fact that listeners were explicitly prompted to produce social judgments and were given as much time as they needed to perform the task. Certainly more evidence is needed to discover whether the patterns on covered in this study reflect those which occur in real social situations. But given the simplified social setting and task used in my study, it would be surprising if the results represented an increase rather than a decrease in social complexity as compared to real situations.

Work in other fields has also suggested that much of the social reasoning people perform on a day-to-day basis is not explicitly conscious or rational. For example, Lee (2002) demonstrated that the multiple speaker effect holds even under situations where conscious calculation should eliminate it. The multiple speaker effect is a pattern in which listeners are more likely to believe a statement if they hear it repeated by different people. Lee's work shows that this effect holds for automatically generated synthesized speech, even when listeners are explicitly instructed as to the nature of synthesized speech and are instructed to maintain that image of the artificial nature of the speech in their mind while performing the judgment task. This result suggests that at least some social calculations are performed in ways that are not related to conscious effort.

A different issue is the degree to which speakers are conscious of a given variable, such as (ING). In this case, they need not be consciously considering it as they evaluate the given performance or make their own linguistic choices, but in a larger sense they may be aware of as a linguistic trait. There is more evidence regarding this kind of consciousness than the other. (ING) falls on the more conscious end of this continuum, being a linguistic stereotype (Labov 1966), that is a linguistic variable which is culturally acknowledged to the extent of having a specific term ("dropping

one's G's") to refer to it. Given that the research here addresses only this one variable, it remains an open question how important its high level of cultural salience is to the results described here. It is possible that the impact of (ING) on listener perceptions resulted wholly or in part from its status as a linguistic stereotype. In the pilot study, (ING) impacted more ratings and with larger effect sizes then the other variable, /t/ release, a variable with less conscious cultural capital. Because these were the only two variables addressed in the pilot study, however, it is not clear whether this difference is idiosyncratic to the two of them or reflective of their relative salience.

Variables which are less consciously available may have similar effects as (ING) and differ merely in their ideological salience. On the other hand, it may be that some level of conscious awareness of social meaning is necessary for interpretation. It may be that some variables carry meaning only within the context of a larger stylistic package or through other indirect channels.

7.6 Future directions

While I hope that the work presented in this dissertation provides new understandings into the structure of socially meaningful variation, its primary goal is to open new fields of study. To this end, this final section touches on some of the many possibilities opened by this research. Some of these are topics which were necessarily neglected in this project, due to time or other resource constraints, while others are completely new projects inspired by the results. I will first discuss open questions raised regarding the structure of (ING) itself, then turn to the possibilities for asking questions about different kinds of variables or in different kinds of settings.

The most obvious set of questions left unanswered by this work are those deliberately set aside in the process of developing the methodology. Of these, the one of perhaps greatest concern to linguists is that of internal constraints. As mentioned in Chapter 3, when creating the stimuli for the experiments described here, I neglected internal constraints and other aspects of linguistic structure. Although a great deal of work has been done on (ING) from a sociolinguistic point of view, there is not a

great deal of knowledge about the phonetic differences between the two (or occasionally three) variants. This makes it difficult to account for such potential differences when constructing perception tasks. Both perception and production studies could investigate the distribution of vowel qualities across the variants. Given that different communities may have slightly different distributions of vowels with each variant, it is possible that some of the social baggage connected to (ING) in the large-scale is tied up with the pronunciation of each variant, particularly the vowels involved. It would be interesting to repeat a study of this kind, including more examples of each variant to discover if and how the phonetic attributes of a given token influence its meaning. Such work obviously should not be limited only to (ING). Interest in socio-phonetic work has been peaking in recent years and such a close study of the relationship between small phonetic cues and larger, more familiar variables would be fascinating.

Another question centering around the phonetic attributes of individual tokens is the role of the suprasegmental cues such as length, also discussed in Chapter 3. The social meaning associated with each variant leads each to appear more often in slightly different kinds of speech. In my data, tokens of *-in* tended to be somewhat shorter than those of *-ing*. Because this was not the focus of my study, I did not discover whether this was a constraint on the variants themselves or whether it was a result of *-in* appearing in faster speech. These two explanations are not mutually exclusive but likely to each support the other. This makes it difficult to establish exactly what would constitute a minimal pair for this variable. Because lengths of individual tokens may vary in any case, depending on a variety of contextual factors, there is no standard length that is appropriate to create two paired examples. Another interesting study would compare tokens of *-in* and *-ing* (or, obviously, variants of another variable) with different lengths, to determine how length affects percepts of both variants. Not every variable will have length as a particularly salient feature (although many will). But other continuous characteristics such as intensity and pitch are also likely to be worth exploring.

Moving to a slightly larger scale, another next step would be similar experiments using speech produced in different settings. Although the participants in my study

did not always identify the speech setting as an interview, they consistently described the recordings as speakers talking to someone whom they knew, but not well. The recordings strongly predicted the general conversational frame. This may have made it difficult for (ING) (or any other manipulation one might make) to influence listener interpretations of the context. There are two tactics needed to address this limitation. One is to carry out similar studies but with speech from a range of contexts. It would also be useful to study speech samples which are less marked for particular speech activities or speaker/addressee relationships. One possibility is to collect large quantities of naturally-occurring speech, then select set phrases such as "How are you feeling?" and other conventional politenesses. By using commonly-occurring preset phrases, we restrict the speech act of each example to a quickly identifiable one but may open the door regarding speech settings. Another advantage to using preset phrases is that it would allow us to examine the effects of different presentations of the same words by collecting naturally occurring tokens which are lexically identical or similar.

Even if the situational constraints were expanded significantly, the task of judging an unfamiliar speaker is likely to place much of the emphasis on the character of the speaker and to deemphasize the context of speaking. It is tempting to consider how to construct studies which move the field past this first social interaction. This is a challenge, since it would be difficult to obtain a sufficient number of people familiar with a speaker to perform adequate statistics on. One possibility would be to collect judgments regarding speakers which listeners have come to know, but not well. Listeners could be exposed to information about a given speaker and examples of their behavior on a variety of occasions. If sufficiently skillful actors were used, short vignettes or even a longer movie may be possible. After such exposure and "character development", listeners might have developed enough of a linguistic and social model for the given character to be able to shift their social calculations from those of a stranger to something further on in a social interaction. A different approach might be to use manipulated stimuli from speakers that are already known to the listeners. In this case, it would be easiest to use examples drawn from relative celebrities, either at a local (community leader) or global level (politicians, famous actors, etc.). Using

this latter approach, it is likely to be difficult to enlist the aid of a given speaker in constructing stimuli. Depending on the specific variables under investigation, it could be possible to manipulate publicly available clips. In this case, of course, listeners would not be reacting on the basis of intimate knowledge of the speaker, but on a general publicly available face. Nonetheless, this represents a different social activity from that generally investigated and one which potentially offers rich results. It would of course be possible to collect speech from an individual, not public figure, alter them and collect responses from the person's friends and acquaintances. In this case, the listener pool is not likely to be large enough for a full-scale survey and statistically reliable results but still might offer useful insight.

Despite the need to ultimately move the study of listener perceptions beyond the moment the first meeting, it is likely that much of the field will remain at that social moment for a while longer. Indeed, there is still much to explore about the process of evaluating a new interlocutor. Many speaker attributes, including basic demographics, were controlled in this study and are worthy of serious investigation. As mentioned in both Chapter 2 and 4, (ING) seems to have different patterns of use by Black and White speakers. Interactions between the race of the speaker and that of the listener are likely to be particularly revealing both regarding the variable itself and the larger social processes involved in understanding variation. Similarly, both the production literature and the work presented here revealed important connections between (ING) and class. Both the speakers and listeners used here came from a very limited slice of society in terms of class, education and age, although the listeners in my study did not always perceive the speakers as such. Sampling other populations for both speakers and listeners is another step towards a fuller understanding of (ING) in particular and variation in general.

Much of the results from the current study emphasized the regional divide between the American South and the rest of the U.S.. Interrogating that divide more specifically would be interesting, as would expanding the regional divisions at play. In particular, the notion of accent has emerged as an important one. Because the Southern speakers in my study are the only clear representatives of accent as such, Southernness and accented speech were confounded. Including other forms of marked

speech would help to explore this terrain more thoroughly. Given the alignment of Southern accented speech with the country, stigmatized urban accents would be particularly interesting, for example those from Boston and New York.

Apart from changing the actual characteristics of the speakers, another option would be to change the information given to listeners regarding the speakers and the speaking situation. This information may help to structure the interpretations they give. By changing it, we may learn about the role of contextual information in much more detail than by merely attempting to track the contextual information that listeners construct for themselves. Listeners could be provided with fictional biographies for specific speakers giving them high or low competence overall or in the topic at hand. Similarly, recordings could be presented as excerpted from formal or informal speech situations, lecture or conversation among colleagues.

These are only a handful of the open avenues suggested by the techniques and results described here. In addition to these more specific uses, the real strength of this approach will come when combining it with other methodologies in multi-pronged studies.

7.7 Summary

This chapter has considered the theoretical implications of the work presented in this dissertation. It has argued that style is a crucial construct for understanding how speakers and listeners use linguistic variation to conduct their social business. In addition, I have identified a set of insights into style and described the much larger set of open questions remaining. Finally, I have described some of the many ways in which the work presented here could be expanded upon.

This study has examined the ways in which a single variable, the English variable (ING), influences listener social perceptions of speakers. It has shown that this influence differs depending on qualities of the speaker, the content of their message, the speaking situation and the listener. Not only do speakers and listeners construct their relative standing, identities and social activities between them, but by using linguistic variation in this endeavor, they create and maintain socially meaningful links

to variation as well. Finally, this work has demonstrated that the notion of style, defined as a clustering of resources identified as a socially coherent set, is a central tool to listeners understanding linguistic variation.

Appendix A

Transcripts of recordings

Bonnie

Classes: Uh, right now I'm taking a relational communication class. It's basically talking about the system- the relationship systems and how we communicate with people that we have relationships with. *(13 seconds)*

Questionnaire: They're trying to develop a questionnaire that's not culturally biased. And so we're asking, um, focus groups that ar- consist of African-American, European American and Lumbee. Um, so we can try to at least cov- cover three areas. *(18 seconds)*

Seniors: But I think a lot of the older girls, especially the seniors, are not really interested in mixing with the guys. So. I'm trying to get, like, the president to say that, ah, we should mix with the girls a little more. *(13 seconds)*

Coaching: I played volleyball in high school. And when I was in high school we started playing junior olympic volleyball. And uh, would travel around the state every other weekend in tournaments and stuff. I really enjoy it. I enjoy, like, working with the other girls on the team. *(17 seconds)*

Tricia

Work-school: I decided I was going to work and go to school and that was hard cause I did have a lot of, you know, my harder English classes last semester: a lot of reading, a lot of papers. But I did work at a law firm. And- just was filing

paperwork, nothing- nobody knew my name. That's ok though (laughter). *(18 seconds)*

Everybody: But- cause you get everybody in there. From six years old stealing a sandwich cause they're hungry to, you know, fifteen years old stealing a car or something like that. But um, it was very interesting and definitely one of those experiences you have that you remember for a while. So. *(18 seconds)*

Hiking: You know, we spend a lot of time in the mountains hiking, camping and whatnot. And- there- a river so you can go kayaking or paddling. You know, you're there at a mountain so you can go hiking and then even in the area here we have a lot of hiking trails and, um, lakes that you can go camp around. *(17 seconds)*

Cucumber: So I go outside one day and I'm picking. So the cucumbers start crossing with the squash and the watermelon and the jalapena peppers. We were making cucumber everything. Make cucumber salsa and cucumber this and cucumber that. After a while, we were just having to chunk 'em. *(18 seconds)*

Ivan

Tickets: It's, you know, selling tickets, being aware of the game day operations, activities, your sponsorships. You know, your fan base, and advertising, marketing. All that stuff. So, *(14 seconds)*

Crucial: Even though, you know, the players a lot of times don't realize that what you do behind the scenes, um, is, you know, crucial to the fans being there and whatever. You know, I want to know that my success at work is helping the success on the court. *(16 seconds)*

Water: I tried to go water- I guess, not water ski- wakeboarding. That didn't- That didn't- That didn't go well. No. Definitely was- broke a lot of stuff. I don't know. I just- I like being in the water. You know. I like jet skiing, cause you don't have to do anything. *(19 seconds)*

Movies: I lo- I love movies! But. I just never put my time into getting up, sitting in a theater for two hours, and then leaving, I don't know. (laughter) It's a- it's a ton of work just getting up, all by- all by itself. *(16 seconds)*

Robert

Data: But a lot of people have manipulated the, ah, data with statistics. With a bunch of different companies and they forget to look at the business itself that they're investing in. Which is common sense, I mean, you're investing in a business. *(13 seconds)*

Small-farm: I've got extended family that's still farming but, I mean, that's only a certain amount of the population that farms now because the small farmer just simply can't exist unless they farm for these niche markets for like, you know, grazing pork. But I don't think that's really a huge market right now. *(17 seconds)*

Eluding: We- we had a lot of fun actually, you know, kinda eluding the faculty at, you know, at high school. Like, sneaking out, going down the fire escapes, you know, after they checked us in at night. *(16 seconds)*

Tailgate: The people that have been cooking the pig have been drinking whiskey all morning. So it's pretty- it's a- it's a party. And for, ah, you know, football games, like in the falltime, ah, you know, people out there tailgate all day long because they've had the pig out there cooking all day. *(18 seconds)*

Elizabeth

Hair: Everybody was just tearing their hair out about this new system. And- and I had literally, I mean, librarians breaking down in tears in front of me about how awful this was. So I was like, this is bad. You know, there's got to be some better way to make changes in technology that affect the work people do. *(14 seconds)*

Discussion: And I don't think a lot of the people who were sort of at this lower level who were doing the data entry and who were actually ordering the things got involved in the discussions of what kind of effect this new system would have on the work and how the system could be structured to redesign the work. *(14 seconds)*

Family: And, um, one of the things is that growing up, our- my- my family was kind of of the "we have to do everything together". And we sort of fall back into that mode, so it's like "OK! We're all going to the mall right now! We're all going to the grocery store right now!" *(15 seconds)*

Theme-park: And you go there and you might ride one ride and then you sit somewhere and you have a nice restaurant meal. And they're, you know, they're the family and this is the one time they're ever going to make it there and they're trying to bulldoze through the park and stand in line and dash around. And you're just kind of sitting there watching it all go by. *(16 seconds)*

Valerie

Field: So we kind of think about is he doing that for the kids? Because he's been there so long. A lot of people get burned out in that field. You're working with homeless youth, um, juvenile deliquents, you're in there for a year and a half and you're dead. Um, so he's been there for a long time. *(17 seconds)*

History: To get a major in history you have to have taken classes from all different time periods, all different areas, everything like that. Um, and that means you're getting breadth. You're basically starting from the beginning every time. You know, you move to a different part of the world you're starting from scratch. *(17 seconds)*

Backpacking: This past summer, um, I went backpacking through Norway with my dad. So that was kin- That's the travel I really want to end up doing, where I put on a backpack and head off for a year, and just hike around co- you know, hike around the world. Um, that's kind of what I'm eventually gonna do, but haven't really done yet. *(19 seconds)*

Camping: It's like, that's the day, the sa- we know exactly which sites we want. It's a- it's a major, um, process. But, so we just hang out there and, you know, you hike and you float down the river and stuff. So, it's camping. It's being outdoors all the time. But it's not necessarily hard core. *(14 seconds)*

Jason

Clocks: So I was just at the Sharper Image yesterday, looking at their crazy alarm clocks with like, like, three different temperature displays and, like, eight different time zones and, like, it's- it's sort of ridiculous. We're not going towards that in our des- in our design approach. We're going to do something that's a little bit more simple. Effective, but nice-looking. *(18 seconds)*

Math: And you take like twenty units of math, eighteen units of science. I mean, just like, a- that's a lot, you know? And, um, coming from being, like an art

major, like I didn't have to do any of that, really. But here, I like came here and they were like "well, twenty units of math now." So, *(16 seconds)*

Shopping: I can't afford most of the stuff there, but it's really nice. And like, I'm- I really- I love going shopping. I need to restrain myself more but. I- I always go there and I can't leave there without buying something nice and too expensive. *(16 seconds)*

Finding: I love driving around, too. And finding new places. And. Yeah, I feel like you're- I'm- I'm more- I'm more likely to find a cool place if I'm in the city or something like that. *(13 seconds)*

Sam

Planning: I imagine that I'll end up going to some sort of grad school or law school or something. I don't know. But, um, definitely planning on not doing that right away. I'm thinking it might be fun to teach for a while. *(13 seconds)*

Opera: They're always having to f- to sort of fight, er, find money and stuff like that. It's sort of a never-ending process. But, um, it was really interesting, just seeing how the whole opera company was run. *(13 seconds)*

Skateboard: It's fun. I like to go, um, to parking structures late at night when there are no cars around and I jus- just skate down the hills and it's sort of- it's like snowboarding or skiing or something just going down the hill. *(11 seconds)*

Physical: I guess I just sort of liked also getting the physical activity. I think that doing stuff like that sort of helps me focus when I need to get stuff done, if I can sort of get my energy out, um, through exercise or something. So. *(15 seconds)*

Appendix B

Survey materials

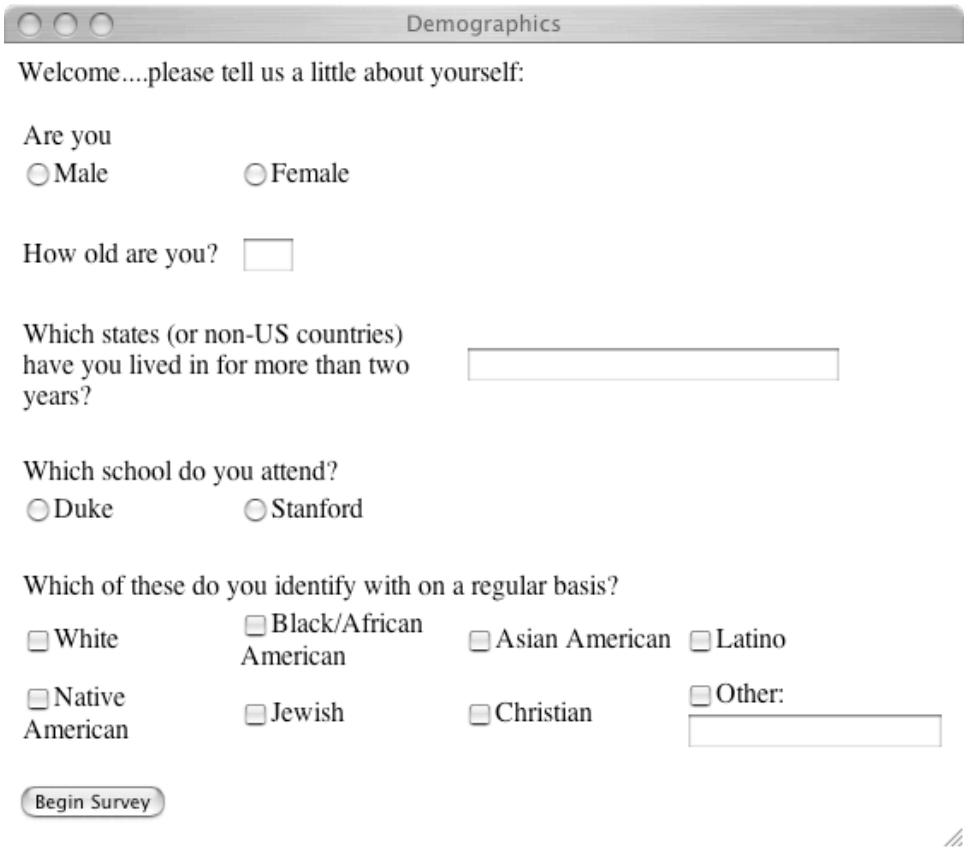

Figure B.1: Demographics page

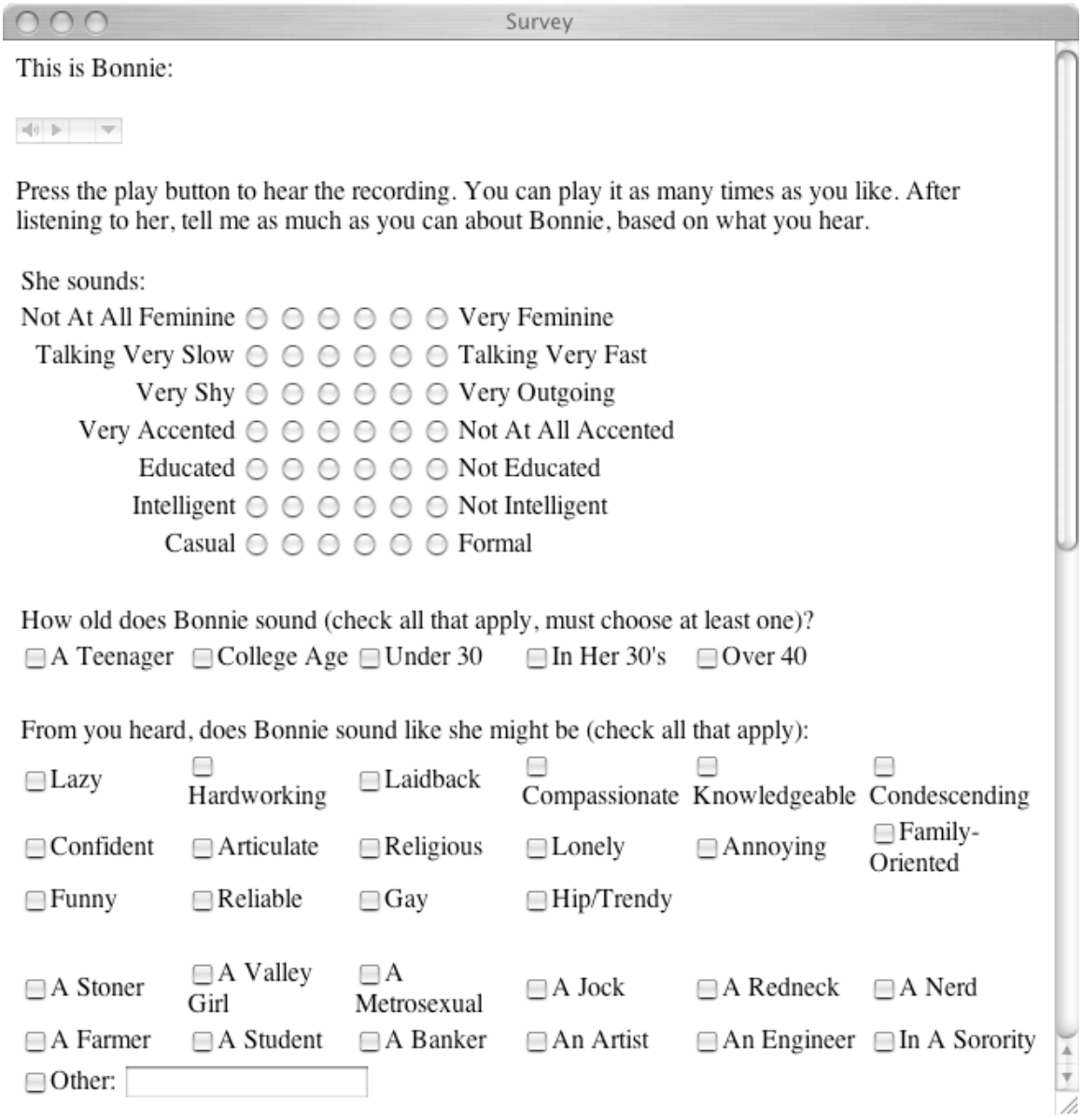

Figure B.2: Beginning of survey page

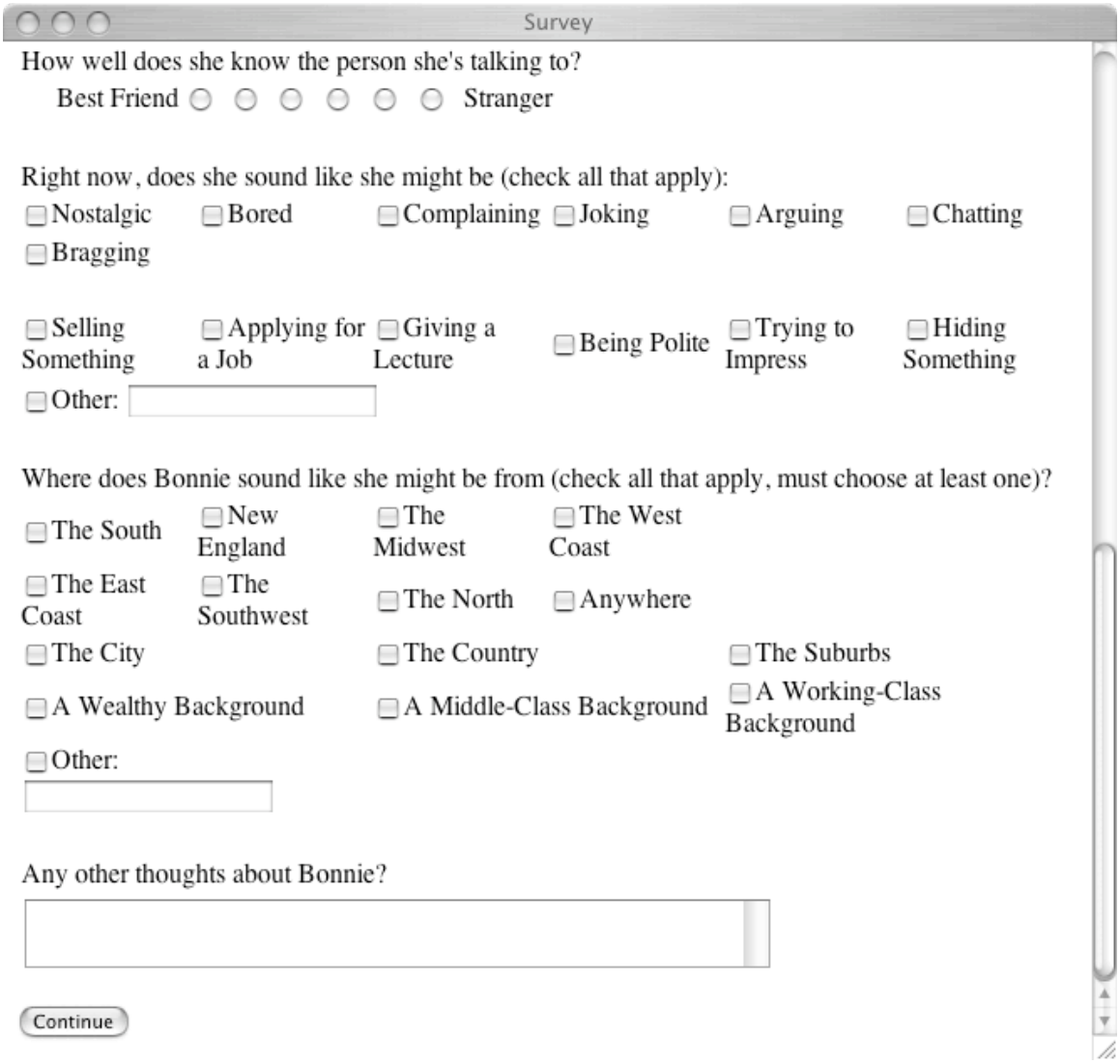

Figure B.3: Survey page, cont.

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