



Sociolinguistics and Sociology: Current Directions, Future Partnerships

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Abstract

In this article, I discuss the past, present, and future of interdisciplinary scholarship between sociolinguists and sociologists. After detailing some of the broader history of collaboration between sociolinguists and sociologists, I examine two sub-areas of scholarship: the variationist tradition from sociolinguistics and the social stratification tradition from sociology. I contend that, given their complementary research questions and analytic traditions, these areas provide new potential for interdisciplinary research initiatives. I give suggestions for research partnerships between sociolinguists and sociologists, and close with a discussion of some practical ways in which sociolinguists and sociologists can build interdisciplinarity both pedagogically as well as professionally.

Relationships between Sociolinguistics and Sociology

Modern sociolinguistics originated in the 1960s as an interdisciplinary subfield intersecting sociology, anthropology, and linguistics. In 1963, anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote that the methodological similarity between sociology and linguistics ‘imposes a special obligation for collaboration upon them’ (32). A 1964 seminar at the LSA Summer Linguistics Institute and a 1966 session at the Ohio Valley Sociological Society’s annual meeting were each on the topic of sociolinguistics (Fishman 1997, Shuy 2003). Courses were being developed in the sociology of language/sociolinguistics, and critical works were being published.¹

Despite this early engagement, the attentions of sociologists and linguists and, to a lesser extent, anthropologists, diverged. Sociologists often lacked basic training in linguistics and generally did not see language as a source of sociological data, though they expressed interest in the social patterning of linguistic variables. And sociolinguists ‘seemed interested in broad contextualization but not necessarily in sociology’ (Shuy 2003:6). Part of the problem lay in the time required to understand both fields. A sociologist who took the time to train in linguistics ‘ran the serious risk of sacrificing other aspects of sociological knowledge required by that field’, and the same went for anthropologists and linguists (Shuy 2003:7).²

The disciplinary divide particularly between sociology and sociolinguistics remains current.³ As a result of shifts toward positivism in sociology, most of the longstanding collaborations between sociologists and sociolinguists – e.g., discourse analysis, conversation analysis, ethnomethodology, and the sociology of language – are in traditions that usually employ qualitative methods.⁴ In contrast, theoretical frameworks and quantitative approaches as developed in sociology and sociolinguistics have largely not converged. Joshua Fishman, a founder of the sociology of language, has been particularly outspoken on the disconnect in the realm of theory. Sociolinguists, he says, have ‘created their sociology as they went along’, resulting in ‘self-imposed underexposure to serious sociological stimulation’ (Fishman, 1991:130–2). Sociologists have been equally inattentive to sociolinguistics, such that ‘only a small proportion of the worldwide sociolinguistic literature is getting through to sociology’ (131) (see also Rickford 1986, Chen 1997, Myers 2002).

Sociolinguist William Labov, in turn, has noted gaps between sociologists and sociolinguistics in both theory and quantitative methods.⁵ In *The Social Stratification of English in New York City* (2006), Labov states in an annotation:

[F]orty years after the Social Science Research Council set up a Committee on Sociolinguistics, the amount of interaction between linguists and sociologists remains minimal. Despite important work on discourse and conversational analysis, very few sociologists have acquired the basic tools of linguistic analysis, and very few linguists have contributed to the thinking of sociologists . . . I hope that . . . we [sociolinguists] will take more advantage of their [sociologists'] skills in the future. (99)

Without sustained work across sociology and linguistics, sociolinguists may miss the opportunity to, as Fishman (1991) puts it, bring ‘the “socio” back in’ to their theories and analyses.

Throughout this article, I provide examples of ways that scholars of sociology and sociolinguistics – whether working together or as one person learning both fields – have produced interdisciplinary scholarship that enhances frameworks, concepts, methods, and analyses in both fields. In considering possibilities for interdisciplinary collaboration, it is important to note that ‘interdisciplinarity’ suggests an exchange between disciplines. Whether such exchanges occur with respect to theory, methods, or analysis, the concept and practice of interdisciplinarity is contingent upon sharing perspectives, with the intent of forging new paths that enrich both disciplines. Of course, talking about gaps between disciplines reifies intellectual boundaries and relies upon canonizing literature into disciplines. Yet, ‘to *do* interdisciplinarity we have to trade upon disciplinary work’ (Carlin 2002:114). Throughout this article, while I highlight avenues through which sociology and sociolinguistics can inform each other, I also recognize the inherent limitations in discussing linguistics and sociology (and anthropology, etc.) as if they were essentialized disciplines.

Complementary Research in Variationist Sociolinguistics and Social Stratification

Being unable to address each point of similarity between sociolinguistics and sociology or to describe research in every tradition that has benefited from sociolinguistic and sociological collaboration, I focus on two branches of each respective discipline: variationist sociolinguistics and social stratification research from sociology, primarily within the U.S. context. Studies in variationist sociolinguistics generally quantitatively investigate how linguistic features show patterns of variation by social and linguistic factors – hence the name ‘variationist’ (see Mesthrie et al. 2000, Bayley and Lucas 2007). In comparison, sociological research in social stratification is generally concerned with how power, wealth, prestige, and status distinctions (e.g., race, gender) divide people into hierarchical social groups (Grusky 2001, Savage 2005). In a broad sense, ‘stratification is concerned with all facets, mechanisms and processes that generate, sustain, and describe social inequalities’ (Savage 2005:250). Studies of social stratification often implicate standard language ideologies, which privilege certain language forms, as being a primary mechanism in the perpetuation of advantage and disadvantage in culturally hegemonic school and workplace reward systems (Mallinson forthcoming).

Variationist sociolinguistics and social stratification research from sociology are highly complementary in ways that may provide new potential for interdisciplinary re-engagement. Based on this premise, I examine strands of research in variationist sociolinguistics and in social stratification, suggesting where possible how scholars in these areas may capitalize on their overlapping traditions.

THEORY

One trend in sociolinguistic scholarship has been the incorporation of contemporary sociological theory, particularly regarding race, class, and gender. Drawing upon feminist theoretical innovations, sociolinguists in the 1980s moved away from notions of gender as a binary variable to investigate the co-constructed nature of talk. Recently, some work in language and sexuality has invoked feminist, psychoanalytic, and queer theory as critically relevant to theorizing the relationship between language, gender, sexuality, and identity. Linguists Bucholtz and Hall (2004a,b) theorize the place of identity within language and sexuality research, while Cameron and Kulick’s (2003) *Language and Sexuality* distinguishes research on language and sexuality from research on language and sexual identity. Sociologist C. J. Pascoe’s (2007) book *Dude, You’re a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School* provides an ethnographic account of the complex relationships between sexuality, gender, race, and class in educational settings, drawing on contemporary theories of sexuality and masculinity to frame her analysis.

In another recent theoretical connection, sociologists and sociolinguists alike have worked with feminist theories, including intersectionality theory, which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. Rooted in feminist theory, intersectionality theory holds that race, class, and gender status distinctions are multilevel: they interact to produce contextualized experiences of oppression and privilege for individuals and groups who develop identities and standpoints, and they reproduce them in interaction in ways that maintain or challenge status distinctions and hierarchies that are rooted in and support broader power relations (Chafetz 1997; Collins 2000, Browne and Misra 2003).⁶

Some sociolinguists have used black feminist and womanist frameworks to frame their research. Nelson (1990), Scott (2002), and Troutman (2002) studied how the use of lexical markers like 'girl' and 'look', along with other features of African American English, evoke solidarity among black women. According to Nelson (1990:152), black women switching into African American speaking styles can be seen as a strategy to challenge white linguistic hegemony (see also Davis 2002; Houston and Davis 2002; Morgan 1996, 2002). Bucholtz (1996) similarly examines how African American women radio panel participants use a variety of linguistic resources (e.g., backchanneling, questions, deixis, features of African American English) to mitigate a power imbalance in relation to the panel moderator. More recently, in my own work, I used a combination of variationist sociolinguistic and sociological methods to examine language used by women in the black Appalachian community of Texana, North Carolina (Mallinson 2006). Using intersectionality theory, I analyze how the women draw on daily, locally meaningful, and ideologically laden practices and symbolic markers to create and maintain social boundaries.

Another trend in sociolinguistic scholarship has been to incorporate the theory of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (e.g., Bourdieu 1984, 1991; see also Hanks 2005). In Bourdieu's theory, elites hold the power to set the cultural standard. They help institutionalize dominant culture as prestigious and other forms of culture as having low status, setting distinctions that become a basis for categorizing and excluding others. Over time, these cultural distinctions come to be seen as natural, helping organize the social world into seemingly objective social classes.

Language is viewed as integral to creating status distinctions that center on cultural capital, which Bourdieu (1984) defined as tools legitimated and valued by the dominant culture. In keeping with Bourdieu's theory, sociolinguists and sociologists have explored the relationship between language standards and social inequality. In linguistics, Bonfiglio (2002) reveals how standard language ideologies that developed in the United States are tinged with xenophobia and racism, while Lippi-Green (1997) examines how ideologies about language surface in U.S. social institutions. In sociology, Collins (1998) similarly discusses how language standards can exclude outsiders from communities of power, such as the academy.

Some sociolinguists have also used more classical sociological theories in their work. Dodsworth (2008) applies the theory of sociologist C. Wright Mills, which centers on the idea of ‘public issues’ and ‘private troubles’ (Mills 1959), to analyze how affluent Ohio suburbanites’ ‘sociological consciousness’ correlates with the way they pronounce certain vowels. When residents were aware of their social structural position, their language tended to reflect it. With these findings, Dodsworth refines how sociolinguists conceptualize the interrelationship among individual style, group linguistic norms, and social institutions and ideologies.

METHODS

Some sociolinguists and sociologists have worked with each other’s methods and data. Several early variationist sociolinguists looked to sociologists for methodological and measurement help. To study language and stratification among white New Yorkers and African American Detroiters, respectively, Labov (1966) and Wolfram (1969) selected large, geographically defined, urban speech communities and used sociological methods to sample speakers and measure their demographic characteristics (e.g., race, gender, education, income). To measure social class, Labov (1966) assigned an individual speaker a score on a socioeconomic index constructed as part of a separate sociological survey that accounted for the person’s years of education, the occupation of the family breadwinner, and family income. Similarly, Wolfram (1969) used Duncan’s (1961) socioeconomic index from sociology. Scores on these indices, other demographic information, and quantitative data on speakers’ use of linguistic variables were all then correlated and tested statistically to reveal how language, used in various communities, patterns along the lines of age, race, class, gender, and more.

As Wolfram (personal communication 2006) explains, early sociolinguists employed sociological methods and measures ‘to be credible *sociolinguists*’. But they also intended for variationist data to relate to quantitative sociology. Labov (1972) suggests that his data would be relevant to sociologists who are ‘interested in the more systematic, quantitative aspects of class stratification’. More generally, language is a form of social behavior and thus, he contends, should naturally be of sociological interest: ‘[The] malleability of language underlies its great utility as an indicator of social change’ (110–1).

Since their early use by Labov and Wolfram, socioeconomic indices have found considerable utility in variationist sociolinguistic research, particularly in variationist sociolinguistic studies that have centered on social class and social stratification (for a review, see Ash 2002, Kerswill 2007, Dodsworth forthcoming a, Mallinson forthcoming). Other sociolinguists have developed different indices, such as the ‘Linguistic Market index’, devised by Sankoff and Laberge (1978) and used in combination with a six-point socioeconomic index (Thibault and Vincent 1990; see also

Sankoff and Cedergren 1971, Sankoff and Laberge 1978, Sankoff et al. 1989). Yet many sociolinguists are increasingly questioning the use of socioeconomic indices to determine speakers' class backgrounds, just as many sociologists have done. Some of these critiques center on the posited male and Eurocentric biases of socioeconomic indices, the validity of socioeconomic indices, and variability in locating people within class categories (see Albright 2008, Grusky 2001, Mallinson 2007). Given shared concerns over the importance of and challenges related to studying social class, future collaboration around class analysis could be fruitful for sociolinguists and sociologists (Mallinson and Dodsworth forthcoming, Dodsworth forthcoming b).

Beyond measurement issues, some sociolinguists and sociologists have become involved with each other's surveys. Bailey et al. (1996) piggybacked their survey, the Grammatical Investigation of Texas Speech (GRITS), onto the Texas Poll. By adding questions to the Poll that were designed to elicit phonological features from respondents, the sociolinguists analyzed how demographic characteristics correlated with phonological variation. Maynor (2000) also describes how sociolinguists have tracked the spread of *you-all*, *y'all*, and *you-guys* by using data from the Southern Focus Poll. In the past, both the Gallup Poll and the Southern Focus Poll have asked some sociolinguistic-oriented questions, such as where people say they like to hear certain types of accents (Reed 1982, 1993). At the 2008 New Ways of Analyzing Variation Conference, sociologist Stephen Klineberg also discussed the sociolinguistic relevance of the 'Houston Area Survey', which has tracked demographic patterns, attitudes, and experiences among Houston residents for 27 years. Sociolinguists have also developed their own large-scale telephone surveys, such as The Telsur Project (http://www.ling.upenn.edu/phono_atlas/home.html). Although it has not been common for sociologists and sociolinguists to conduct collaborative research using data from large-scale surveys, future teams might explore how demographic shifts relate to language change.

EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY

Many sociolinguists and sociologists are deeply concerned with educational inequality. As sociolinguistics began to develop in the United States, considerable attention was directed toward solving language-related educational problems (Hazen 2007). Many studies were funded by the U.S. Department of Education and other policy-oriented organizations (e.g., Labov et al. 1968; Wolfram, Shiels and Fasold 1971; Wolfram and Christian 1976). Quantitative data from these studies supported the claim that dialects spoken by socially disfavored groups are not 'broken' forms of English (a popular ideology) but rather are patterned and systematic varieties (see also Labov 1966, 1972; Wolfram 1969, 1972). Other sociolinguistic studies of educational inequality have focused on language, culture, and

literacy. Heath's (1983) *Ways with Words*, a study of literacy in two communities, and Purcell-Gates' (1995) *Other People's Words*, a study of literacy and educational attainment among white, urban Appalachian children, are well-known works in this tradition (see also Gee 1996).

Sociologists are also concerned with the relationships between race, class, gender, language, and education. Lovaglia et al. (1998) found that psychological factors can affect minority students' motivation and their achievement on culturally and linguistically biased standardized tests. Fischer et al. (1996) and Roscigno (1998) show how the disproportionate allocation of wealth in U.S. society to whites allows elite parents to send their children to better schools. Farkas (1996) reveals how teachers judge students on non-cognitive traits that may or may not be related to cognitive performance, such as homework neatness, disruptiveness, and facility in standardized forms of English. Other studies have similarly revealed how social and cultural capital impact higher education (Brooks 2008).

On the students' side, similar conflicts arise between identity practices, language use, literacy, and educational and occupational attainment. For example, Willis (1977) found that the discourse practice of 'having a laff' (similar to 'signifying' in African American culture) was a discourse practice used by the 'lads', working-class British boys, to reject the middle-class world and its educational system. Similarly, MacLeod (1995) found that potential employers devalued the cultural capital of black youth, including their clothing choices and speech styles. Bettie (2003) studied white and Mexican American high school girls, finding that their everyday habits and social practices, including their discourse, reflected and constructed race and class differences at school. Other relevant sociological works include *Unequal Childhoods* (Lareau 2003), *Race in the Schoolyard* (Lewis 2003), and *Keepin' It Real* (Carter 2007).

Sociological and sociolinguistic research on language and education also converges in the study of 'acting white'. The term, popularized by Fordham and Ogbu (1986), refers to a perception among African American youth that school success entails adopting the norms and values of the mainstream white society and betraying their black heritage. Scholars on this topic include Fordham and Ogbu (1986), Fordham (1996), Ferguson (2001), Neal-Barnett (2001), Ogbu (2003), Smitherman (2000), Carter (2007) and Lacy (2007). Speaking standardized forms of English, taking advanced placement classes, and wearing 'preppy' clothes are some of the cultural practices and activities that these scholars contend may be viewed by black adolescents as signaling an affiliation with white culture. Yet, sociologists Tyson, Darity, and Castellino (2005) dispute the 'acting white' hypothesis. In their 18-month ethnographic study at 11 schools in North Carolina, they found only a few cases of ridiculing of high-achieving black students, finding instead that many standard-speaking, upwardly mobile, working-class *white* students were disparaged for acting 'above their raisings'. Future research in this area is compelling for sociolinguists and sociologists.

URBANITY AND RURALITY

Sociolinguistics and sociology also overlap in the study of urbanity and rurality. Currently about one of every four or five U.S. Americans lives in rural areas – an all-time high of 64 million (Cromartie 2003). Yet, for the first time in known history, the global population is more urban than rural (Wimberley, Morris, and Fulkerson, 2007).

Much sociological research centers on the conditions, causes, and outcomes of urban life, particularly the phenomenon of residential segregation (see Adelman and Gocker 2007). Sociologists Massey and Denton (1993) are famous for their work on residential segregation and the concentration of poverty. Their use of residential segregation and isolation indices can help link social and structural conditions like isolation and poverty to key sociolinguistic concerns; Labov (2008), for example, links residential segregation, the use of African American Vernacular English, and the inadequate instruction of children who live in inner cities in the United States. According to projections released by the U.S. Census Bureau in August 2008, by the year 2050, non-white youth are expected to make up 54 percent of the general U.S. population and 62 percent of the U.S. youth population. The growth in numbers of these students, who disproportionately attend functionally segregated schools where resources are sparse, mean that issues surrounding language, race and ethnicity, and educational inequality in the United States will likely become even more pressing in the future. Future research related to residential segregation might also delve more deeply into the phenomenon known as ‘linguistic profiling’ (Baugh 2007). Linguistic prejudice can perpetuate racially-based housing discrimination, which affects residential segregation, a finding that is critically important to variationist sociolinguists and sociologists (Massey and Lundy, 2001).

Sociolinguists also have a stake in understanding rural, in relation to urban, life. For example, early dialectologists sought ‘NORMs’, non-mobile, old, rural, male speakers, who were thought to exhibit highly vernacular speech, while later scholars sought young, urban, male adolescents for the same reason (see Mesthrie et al. 2000.) Furthermore, in many parts of the world, linguistic and educational inequality is particularly high in rural areas and for women. Future sociologists and sociolinguists could collaboratively investigate the complex relationships among location of residence, population density, rural and urban culture, social networks, and language change, with scholars bringing their own disciplinary strengths to the table.

Bridging Sociolinguistics and Sociology in Pedagogical Settings

Newell and Green contend that ‘interdisciplinary studies encourage breadth of vision and develop the skills of integration and synthesis’ (1982:23). For students, interdisciplinary study builds deductive reasoning, reasoning by

analogy, synthetic thinking, and creativity (29). Seasoned scholars may also benefit from interdisciplinary partnerships through networking, learning new methods, and participating in innovative teaching and research endeavors. For example, York University's Centre for Advanced Studies in Language and Communication (<http://www.york.ac.uk/res/caslc>) houses interdisciplinary research initiatives, offers postgraduate opportunities, and provides training in conversation analysis.

At the same time, serious challenges offset the benefits of interdisciplinary training, making it both high reward and high risk. One challenge is the time investment required to become familiar with the literature and methodological techniques of another discipline. Related challenges include potential publication losses from time spent in overcoming steep interdisciplinary learning curves and from investing time in interdisciplinary research partnerships that may not be as productive as expected. Acknowledging both these benefits and challenges, I consider two relatively low-risk possibilities for integrating sociolinguistic and sociological knowledge into academic training: through course readings and in seminars.

Interdisciplinary Course Readings. Material from sociolinguistics can be integrated into sociology courses, and vice versa, through supplemental reading. For sociolinguists, *The Contexts Reader* (Goodwin and Jasper, 2007) is a collection of nearly 70 short, lay-oriented articles about sociological theory and research. The journal *Teaching Sociology* is also an excellent resource. Halasz and Kaufman (2008) teach Bourdieu's theories on cultural capital and symbolic violence by discussing how schools enforce standardized language and de-legitimizing vernaculars. Similarly, Dundes and Spence (2007) discuss a sociological exercise on the relationship between cultural capital and African American English.

For sociologists looking to incorporate sociolinguistic material into introductory courses, Chapter 3, 'Culture', in Doob's (2000) *Sociology: An Introduction* discusses how language can set and maintain social boundaries (e.g., the use of terms like 'un-American') or to signal social alignment or affiliation (e.g., the strategic use of accent to signal solidarity with an audience). These concepts have been explored in much sociolinguistic and sociological research, including Goffman's (1959, 1961) work on labeling theory and symbolic interactionism and Mead's (1934) early work in social psychology. More advanced sociology courses might include sections on racialized and/or gendered language. Chapter 9 of Doob's text discusses such English linguistic inequalities as non-parallel terms of address (e.g., *Mr.* versus *Miss*, *Ms.*, and *Mrs.*). Similarly, linguist Deborah Tannen's (1994) chapter 'Marked: Women in the Workplace' reveals how language 'marks' women as being non-normative in relation to men; see also Janet Holmes' (2008) article, 'Gendered Discourse at Work'. Also relevant is sociologist Sherryl Kleinman's (2007) article, 'Why Sexist Language Matters', which locates terms like 'you guys' within the gender order. Other classroom-suitable articles from sociology and sociolinguistics that reveal

how people use language to make meaning out of their gendered experiences include Lyman (1987), Scully and Marolla (1984), and Cameron (1997).

Interdisciplinary Seminars. Interdisciplinary seminars, especially on ‘applied topics which overflow disciplinary bounds’, can also expose students to the content and methods of different disciplines (Newell and Green 1982:30). In an example from my own teaching, I designed a graduate course called ‘Language in the City’, which was cross-listed between the Language, Literacy, and Culture Program (my home department) and the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. Students read quantitative and qualitative studies from urban sociolinguistics (Labov 1966, Zentella 1997, Modan 2007) and urban sociology/anthropology (Bourgois 1995), as well as articles on issues including residential segregation, street harassment, and language policy. Final course papers addressed urban graffiti, tourism websites, tobacco and cigarette advertisements in U.S. cities, and educational programs for urban Appalachians.

Interdisciplinary seminars can also be team-taught to maximize instructors’ different backgrounds and draw students from different departments. For example, the seminar ‘Sociocultural Linguistics: Doing Difference/Using Difference,’ which integrated sociocultural linguistics and conversation analysis, was taught at the University of California, Santa Barbara by linguist Mary Bucholtz and sociologist Gene Lerner. Courses in communications departments – such as at UC Santa Barbara, New York University, the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Southern California, Purdue University, and Stanford University – may also appeal to those interested in language and society.

Finally, courses that intersect linguistics and sociology are also prevalent in graduate programs that are designed to be interdisciplinary. In the United States, models for such programs include the Language, Literacy, and Culture Program at UMBC (<http://www.umbc.edu/lc>), the Language, Interaction, and Social Organization (LISO) unit at UC Santa Barbara (<http://www.liso.ucsb.edu>), and the Center for Language, Interaction, and Culture (CLIC) at the University of California, Los Angeles (<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/clic/>).⁷ In the UK, Bangor University’s MA programme in Sociology and Social Research trains students in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (http://www.bangor.ac.uk/so/listcourses_pg.php.en?view=course&prospectustype=postgraduate&courseid=193&subjectarea=37). Internships, seminars, and research opportunities are also offered by research centers, such as the Centers for Urban Ethnography at the University of Pennsylvania (<http://www.gse.upenn.edu/cue/>) and the University of California, Berkeley (<http://cue.berkeley.edu/>).

Bridging Sociolinguistics and Sociology in Professional Settings

Sociological and sociolinguistic partnerships may also be formed through professional networking. In the United States, the American Sociological Association (ASA) (<http://asanet.org>) and the Linguistic Society of America

(LSA) (<http://lsadc.org>) are central to each discipline. The LSA covers many linguistic subfields (<http://lsadc.org/info/ling-fields.cfm>) and holds an annual conference, at which various other associations, including the American Dialect Society (www.americandialect.org), a haven for socio-linguistic research, meet concurrently.

The ASA breaks down its membership into 'sections' (<http://asanet.org>), three of which relate most directly to language: 'Communication and Information Technologies', 'Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis (EMCA)', and 'Sociology of Culture', which includes a subsidiary network on 'Language and Culture'. The EMCA section, proposed in 2000, is perhaps most in line with a sociolinguistic perspective. The annual ASA conference included a session on 'Conversation Analysis and Sociolinguistics' in 2005 and sessions on 'Conversation Analysis' and 'Ethnomethodology' in 2007. In 2006, the EMCA section began publishing a newsletter called the *EMCA News*, and the website 'Ethno/CA News' (<http://www.paultenhav.nl/EMCA.htm>) lists upcoming conferences.

Smaller professional associations also provide opportunities for conference networking (and, like the LSA and ASA, opportunities for publishing as well). The Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) holds an annual conference and publishes *Social Problems*, which in 2005 released a special issue on 'Language, Interaction, and Social Problems' (volume 52, issue 4). There are also regional sociology and linguistics conferences, such as the Southern Sociological Society (SSS) (www.southernsociologicalsociety.org), comparable to the SouthEastern Conference on Linguistics (SECOL) (www.secol.org).

The New Ways of Analyzing Variation (NWAV) conference is a place to present variationist sociolinguistic research, but two recent NWAVs have been oriented around interdisciplinary themes. In 2005, NWAV 34 brought together linguists, anthropologists, sociologists, and education specialists around the theme of 'the city' (<http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/lingu/events/nwav34/>). In 2008, NWAV 37 was organized around 'communities' and included scholars from other disciplines, including sociology (<http://nwav37.rice.edu/>).

Sociolinguists and sociologists can present at conferences on anthropology, applied linguistics, intercultural communication, culture studies, education, ethnic studies, and more. Annual conferences held by the American Anthropological Association, the American Association of Applied Linguistics, the American Educational Research Association, and the National Council of Teachers of English all are appropriate places to present research on language, literacy, education, culture, and inequality. The 2009 online conference 'Breaking Down Barriers', sponsored by Blackwell *Compass* (http://www.blackwell-compass.com/home_conference) is organized around interdisciplinary sub-themes, including 'communication.'

Conferences oriented toward graduate students can be supportive places to present interdisciplinary research. The biennial LSA Summer Meeting

is primarily for graduate students (<http://www.lsadc.org/info/meet-summer08.cfm>); on alternate years, the LSA Summer Linguistics Institute is open to graduate students and faculty (<http://www.lsadc.org/info/inst-index.cfm>). The Symposium about Language and Society (SALSA) (<http://studentorgs.utexas.edu/salsa/>), held at the University of Texas, focuses on conversation analysis. Another interdisciplinary conference, the Conference on Language, Interaction, and Culture (CLIC), is organized annually by the Center for Language, Interaction and Culture at UCLA and the Language, Interaction, and Social Organization unit at UC Santa Barbara.

The Future of Sociolinguistic and Sociological Collaboration

Brainstorming about potential interdisciplinary avenues that can connect sociolinguists and sociologists inevitably raises more questions than answers. Yet, in the face of increasingly complex and diverse global realities, sociolinguists and sociologists can gain greater insight into micro- and macro-level processes of social interaction, social stratification, and social change by jointly investigating who talks to whom, why, where, when, and how. Some key avenues to explore, mentioned in this article, include class stratification and social status, literacy acquisition and educational achievement, the relevance of conversation in bringing about social cohesion and social exclusion, and the significance of conversation styles in processes of prejudice and discrimination.

I have suggested that variationist sociolinguists and sociologists working in social stratification have particular expertise to be shared when working on these research agendas. At the same time, any scholars who cross the disciplinary boundaries of linguistics, sociology, anthropology, and other fields of study, whether in the areas of research, teaching, or professional association, are well positioned to incorporate interdisciplinary knowledge that will advance a deeper understanding of the multiple and complex intersections between language and the individual, group, and society.

Short Biography

Christine Mallinson is assistant professor at the Language, Literacy, and Culture Program and affiliate assistant professor in the Gender and Women's Studies Program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Her current interests center on the interface between sociolinguistics and social theory, the scholarship of teaching and learning in sociolinguistics, and variation in African American English and Southern English. Mallinson has published articles on language variation and change in journals including *Discourse & Society*, *Language in Society*, *American Speech*, *English World-Wide*, and *Gender & Language*, as well as in several edited book collections. She also currently serves as the associate editor of the 'Teaching American Speech' section of the journal *American Speech*. Mallinson received a BA

in Sociology and German from the UNC-Chapel Hill, an MA in English with a concentration in sociolinguistics from North Carolina State University, and a Ph.D. in Sociology and Anthropology, with concentrations in sociolinguistics and social inequality, from North Carolina State in 2006.

Endnotes

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¹ At that time, 'sociology of language' and 'sociolinguistics' referred to 'the same phenomenon, the study of the intersection and interaction of language and society, and these two terms were used interchangeably' (Paulston and Tucker 2003: 1).

² Throughout this article, I draw on my own experiences in obtaining interdisciplinary graduate training and pursuing an interdisciplinary academic career. In 2002, I obtained a master's degree in English with a specialization in sociolinguistics at North Carolina State University, under the mentorship of linguist Walt Wolfram. In 2006, I received my Ph.D. in sociology and anthropology at North Carolina State, where I specialized in race, class, and gender inequality and in sociolinguistics. I benefited greatly from the combination of coursework in sociolinguistics and sociology. In particular, classes on the sociology of gender, social stratification, race and ethnic relations, and rural sociology enhanced my understanding of the social dynamics that condition language variation and change. Beyond research, my interdisciplinary training also allowed me to form networks with sociologists, in addition to those I had formed with sociolinguists. Some of my most productive scholarly discussions were held with other graduate students in my program, who were intrigued by the study of language as a critical social behavior. Three of my former graduate colleagues – Kris Macomber, Sarah Rusche, and Kevin Stainback – read this paper, and their sociological insights are reflected throughout this manuscript. In 2006, I was fortunate to obtain one of those scarce but growing number of academic jobs that are interdisciplinary in nature, when I was hired into the Language, Literacy, and Culture Program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. As part of the LLC Program, I joined an interdisciplinary faculty comprised of scholars from seven different departments and programs at UMBC – African Studies; American Studies; Education; English; Gender and Women's Studies; Modern Languages, Linguistics, and Intercultural Communication; and Sociology and Anthropology – and I have benefited tremendously from working in this rich and engaging interdisciplinary atmosphere.

³ The greater contribution from anthropology to linguistics is no doubt grounded at least in part in the fact that one of the four original sub-areas of anthropology is linguistic anthropology – which is, in many ways, indistinguishable from sociolinguistics. Works by scholars including Otto Santa Ana, Mary Bucholtz, Norma Mendoza-Denton, Charles Goodwin, Marjorie Harness Goodwin, Dell Hymes, Jane Hill, Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, Marcyliena Morgan, Elinor Ochs, Bambi Schieffelin, and Ana Celia Zentella are often 'claimed' as being sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropological in nature. While not every linguistic anthropologist would necessarily want to identify as a sociolinguist and vice versa, the overlap exemplifies that there is little theoretical or practical justification for distinguishing the areas.

⁴ A few recent collections of work in these traditions include *The Social History of Language and Social Interaction Research* (Leeds-Hurwitz 2008), which describes how language and social interaction research developed at various universities and among interdisciplinary scholars. *Conversation Analysis*, by sociologists Paul Drew and John Heritage (2006), and *Conversation Analysis: Studies from the First Generation*, by sociologist Gene Lerner (2004), include contributions by sociologists and linguists. *Language Loyalty, Continuity, and Change* (García et al. 2006) and

An Introduction to Language Policy: Theories and Method (Ricento 2006) review work in international sociolinguistics, language policy, and language shift.

⁵ Yet, Labov has been inconsistent with regard to the extent to which he views a need or desire for variationist sociolinguists to engage with sociologists. Labov (1972), chapter 8, advocates separating sociology of language (which, as he sees it, deals with large scale social factors) from sociolinguistics, which he says should just be called 'linguistics' (p. 183). Labov (1966/2006) also writes, 'In the past few years, there has been considerable programmatic discussion of sociolinguistics at various meetings and symposia. If this term refers to the use of data from the speech community to solve problems of linguistic theory, then I would agree that it applies to the research described here. But sociolinguistics is more frequently used to suggest a new interdisciplinary field – the comprehensive description of the relations of language and society. This seems to me an unfortunate notion, foreshadowing a long series of purely descriptive studies with little bearing on the central theoretical problems of linguistics or sociology' (viii).

⁶ Critiques of intersectionality theory should also be acknowledged. One critique is that, despite the rhetoric of 'race, class, and gender' that has come to characterize the intersectionality approach, the intersectionality literature most often focuses on race and gender. Similarly, there is the critique that few intersectional studies are comparative and/or focus on more than just women of color's situations and experience. Third, opinions differ as to whether race, class, gender (etc.) always intersect and whether disadvantage, when experienced along multiple social axes, is cumulative or qualitatively different. Finally, sociologists may not agree over what constitutes social science evidence for intersectionality.

⁷ Other interdisciplinary graduate programs, such as the new Applied Linguistics doctoral program at Arizona State University, include faculty from many departments related to culture studies, though not specifically sociology [<http://appliedlinguistics.asu.edu/>].

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