

*Contributions to the Sociology of Language*

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# Language of Inequality

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Standard and Non-Standard Language  
Attitudes in a Creole Continuum

I. Introduction

I.1: The significance of language attitudes

The study of language attitudes—how people feel about the language varieties in their speech community—may be important to the linguist from several perspectives. In language planning, it may provide indispensable data on which to base decisions about which variety to use in education or which variety to standardize for use as the official language of government (cf. Ferguson 1966). In the study of synchronic variation, it may explain patterns of style-shifting and interference (cf. Weinreich 1953). In the study of diachronic processes (change within one language, borrowing and shift from one language to another, pidginization, creolization, decreolization, language death) it may be critical for explaining the occurrence and direction of language change (cf. Labov 1963). In the study of second language acquisition, it may predict the degree of competence which is likely to be developed in the second language (cf. Lambert 1967).

I have deliberately chosen the references included in the opening paragraph to demonstrate that the significance of language attitudes has been recognized for at least twenty to thirty years (of course there are references which go back further than these). During this period, and in particular within the past fifteen to twenty years, the study of pidgin and creole languages has increased by leaps and bounds, but the systematic study of language attitudes where such languages are spoken has generally been neglected.<sup>1</sup>

This neglect has been particularly acute in the study of creole continua, where a spectrum of varieties (or mesolects) is found between the most non-standard Creole variety (the basilect) and the standard variety (the acrolect), as shown by this example of different ways of saying 'I told him' in the Guyanese Creole continuum:<sup>2</sup>

1. me tell am (basilect)
2. me tell e
3. a tell e (mesolects)

4. a tell im
5. I told him (acrolect)

While we have made progress in the technical description of variability in Creole continua, we still do not have satisfactory answers to such fundamental questions as why and how this variability continues to exist. What I will refer to as the standard view of language attitudes in Creole continua is too shallow to constitute viable explanation.

## I.2: The standard view of language attitudes in creole continua

The standard view of language attitudes in creole continua is that the standard variety is good, and the non-standard varieties (including the 'Creole') are bad. This view may be referred to as the standard one, not only because it is the orthodox one—the one usually reported in the academic literature and the local press—but also because it assumes a positive orientation toward the standard variety alone. Examples abound. Stewart (1962), summarizing attitudes to Creole varieties throughout the Caribbean, noted that they included the belief that the Creole is not a language, has no grammar, and is either a made-up form of speech, or a corruption of the lexically related standard.

As a native Guyanese, I have encountered this derogatory view countless times. One recent example is contained in a report in the Guyanese *Sunday Chronicle* newspaper of Feb. 15, 1981 (p. 4):

- (1) Home Affairs Minister Stanley Moore said that too many Guyanese used Creole so as to escape proper English: He dubbed Creolese as a vulgar, rough and ready mode of expression.

Finally, we have the particularly trenchant views expressed by Oxford, a retired chauffeur and taxi-driver, and a member of the Non-Estate or lower-middle class in Cane-Walk, Guyana. In a recent interview with me, he had this to say about Guyanese Creole:

- (2) It don't take you nowhere. It don't do good to a person . . . There is no good in it at all, whatsoever. It don't carry you nowhere. If—if one can pick up, you know, good English, you know, you see, he can spread it among his children them . . . But if you start with the different kind of Creole language on them, you know, you'll make them go out in the wrong side . . . Well, they might get, you know, the bottom job. They *will* get, you know, bottom job, but not top job! (Spontaneous Interview 30).

One of the attractions of the standard view is that it fits in naturally with the theory of decreolization by which such continua are thought to have come about (DeCamp 1971a: 29–30; Bickerton 1975: 16–17). The places which now have creole continua are usually assumed to have been essentially

bilingual situations, involving only a highly divergent Creole and a standard variety, at some earlier point in the past.<sup>3</sup> Then, with the breakdown of social barriers between Creole and standard language speakers, and with increased opportunities for socioeconomic mobility, the Creole speakers are assumed to have had increased opportunity and motivation to modify their speech in the direction of the standard variety, thus beginning the decreolization process which has continued up to the present day. Without some acknowledgement that the standard language is considered better or more useful in social advance (Weinreich's 1953: 78 definition of 'prestige') the creation of creole continua could equally be attributed to destandarization as to decreolization, and it would be difficult to explain why the general direction of change in such continua over the past century has been towards the standard language rather than the Creole.<sup>4</sup>

Although the standard view of language attitudes in a creole continuum is theoretically useful, and obviously has some basis in reality, it is limited in at least the following respects:

- (i) In the presentation of this view, the social class and language use of the people whose attitudes are reported are typically not taken into account, and these may themselves be significant variables. If we look again at the negative attitudes reported above, we note, for instance, that they are almost all from middle-class or highly privileged sections of the community.
- (ii) This view is invariably based on anecdotal rather than systematically assembled evidence.
- (iii) This view leaves us with the irresolvable paradox: if everyone agrees that the non-standard or Creole varieties are bad and the standard language good, why hasn't more progress been seen in the elimination of the former? In Guyana, as in most Caribbean creole continua, the official language is standard English, and this is the language of government and education, and the language used most often in the media. But the everyday language of the mass of the population continues to be some variety of Creole despite this, and despite the fact that decreolization may be assumed to have been taking place for the past 150 years or more.<sup>5</sup>

## II. Matched Guise Evidence on Language Attitudes in the Guyanese Continuum

### II.1: Description of the Matched Guise test

In an effort to overcome the preceding limitations of the standard view, I used a Matched Guise experiment and other means of eliciting language attitudes in a systematic way in recent research in the Guyanese Creole continuum. The respondents in my investigation were twenty-four members

of the Cane Walk community whose speech I had sampled extensively in two prior years of fieldwork involving spontaneous interviews, peer-group recordings and participant observation—techniques designed to overcome the constraints of the recording situation and encourage the emergence of vernacular speech (Labov 1972a).<sup>6</sup> The Matched-Guise experiment was part of a controlled interview which I conducted after all the spontaneous or naturalistic, recordings had been completed.<sup>7</sup>

The respondents themselves represented equally the two major social classes in the community: the Estate Class (EC), whose members worked as cane-cutters, weeders, and in other field-work capacities on the sugar-estate around which the community was organized, and the Non-Estate class (NEC), whose members held jobs as clerks, contractors, book-keepers and shopowners.<sup>8</sup> The unifying characteristic of the NEC group is that its members have escaped the backbreaking labor, oppressive working conditions, and poor pay of the menial estate laborer role which the members of this community inherited from their forebears. (East Indians were brought to Guyana as indentured servants between 1838–1917, initially as a replacement for African slaves after emancipation). The EC/NEC distinction is an ethnographic, community-based one, involving cultural and psychological factors in addition to purely socio-economic ones, but it may be thought of in broader sociological terms as equivalent to the Working Class/Lower Middle Class distinction in Western metropolitan societies.

The Matched Guise experiment which I conducted, consisted, like its predecessors in Canada (Lambert 1967, d'Angelan and Tucker 1973), the USA (Tucker and Lambert 1969, Williams et al. 1976, Ryan and Carranza 1975) and Britain (Bourhis et al. 1975, Romaine 1980), of samples of speech from the same speaker(s) recurring in the guise of different language varieties. The respondents hearing the sample believe that they are hearing different speakers, and are asked to evaluate each 'speaker' on a number of dimensions. The different ratings which they give to each sample are then interpreted as subtle indicators of their attitudes towards the language variety represented in that sample, and/or their social perceptions of the people stereotypically associated with that language variety.<sup>9</sup>

In my Cane Walk experiment, respondents were asked to evaluate three 'speakers' via tape recorded samples of them conversing with me individually about how they had met their spouses—a question which the respondents had been asked in their own interviews and so found quite natural and familiar. In fact, the three 'speakers' were one speaker performing in the guise of basilectal, mesolectal, and acrolectal language varieties.<sup>10</sup> The *opening* lines of each narratives are reprinted here to represent the character of the different guises:

*Matched Guise Speaker 1 (Basilectal)*

... Well hear how de ting, de ting bin happen. *Me* frien dem did passin' me house wan Saturday aftanoon. Me an' me lil brudda—awe bin deh upstairs by de window. Well, dem call awe fuh come out and ta-tek wan walk wid dem ...

*Matched Guise Speaker 2 (Mesolectal)*

Well, actually how uh meet me wife is like, dis. Yuh see, my modda had a good frien' who used to come an' visit she regular. An' *my* modda used to go around by de, you know, by de odda one steady too. Dey was frien's from long, you know ...

*Matched Guise Speaker 3 (Acrolectal)*

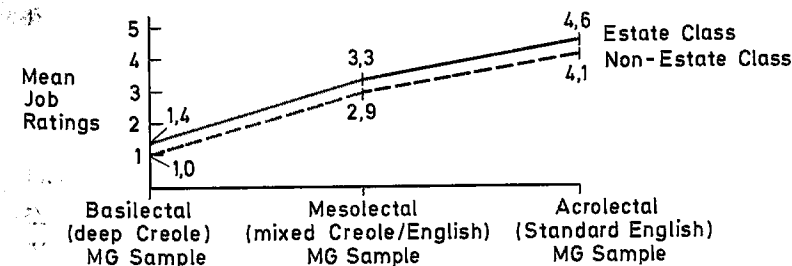
... I'm a pretty shy type by nature, and I never had much to do with girls. But one day, my friends invited me to go with them to a party, and I went along, you know, just for the fun of it ...

After hearing each of the samples in its entirety, each respondent was asked to rate the speaker in terms of the kind of job he probably held, and how likely he would be to fit in with the respondent's own circle of friends.

## II.2: Results on the job scale

The results on the job scale are indicated in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1  
MEAN RATINGS OF THE MATCHED GUISE (MG) SAMPLES, JOB SCALE



Note: 5 = Field Manager/Headmaster; 4 = Field Foreman/Book-keeper; 3 = Shop-owner; 2 = Security Guard; 1 = Cane-cutter. (Highest to lowest socioeconomic status.)

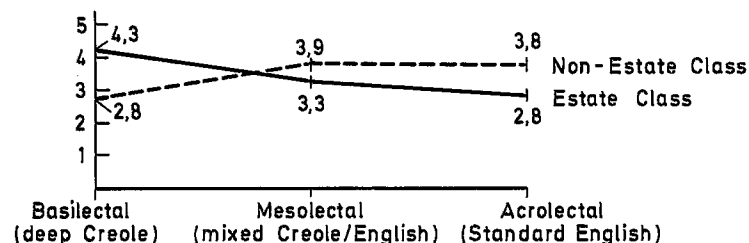
Two points are particularly noteworthy: the fact that the EC and NEC ratings run parallel to each other even though there is a slight consistent difference between them, and the fact that the relative prestige of the jobs with which each sample is associated is directly proportional to the relative standardness of the speech in that sample. EC and NEC respondents agree in

associating basilectal speech with the lowest jobs in the prestige hierarchy, acrolectal speech with the highest, and mesolectal speech in-between, just as the standard view of language attitudes in a creole continuum would have predicted. These results also point in the same direction as earlier reports of language attitudes in almost every community where prestige and non-prestige varieties have been compared.

### II.3: Results on the friend scale

When we turn to the results of our Matched Guise experiment on the *friend* scale, as shown in Figure 2, we get a very different picture, however, and one which requires more extensive interpretation.

FIGURE 2  
MEAN RATINGS OF THE MATCHED GUISE (MG) SAMPLES, FRIEND SCALE



Here the NEC respondents appear to be behaving in accord with the standard view again, at least insofar as they rate the basilectal 'speaker' most negatively (least likely to fit in with their circle of friends) and the mesolectal and acrolectal 'speakers' more positively. The ratings of the EC respondents, however, are no longer *parallel* to those of the NEC, but almost diametrically *opposed*. On this scale, it is the basilectal 'speaker' who is rated most favorably by the EC, and the mesolectal and acrolectal speakers less so – quite contrary to what the standard view of language attitudes in creole continuum would have predicted.

In attempting to make sense of this striking reversal of the expected situation, it seems appropriate to begin by considering the results of Labov et al. (1968)—one of the only other studies to have elicited respondent ratings on *both* a job scale *and* a friend scale. Labov and his colleagues reported very similar results: agreement among respondents of all social levels in rating the standard language speaker higher than the vernacular speaker on the job scale,

but a difference between one group of Northern Black adults and the other respondents insofar as the Northern Black group rated the vernacular speaker most likely to become a friend. The authors suggested that the differences between the ratings of the respondents on the two scales might be attributed to the fact that the job scale elicited overt social norms about language and the social order while the friend scale elicited more covert attitudes having to do with values of identity, solidarity, and community.

This analysis receives support from other Matched Guise studies which, utilizing a variety of other scales, indicate that: (i) language attitudes frequently have a multidimensional character (Ryan 1979), and (ii) standard language varieties tend to be favourably evaluated along the status or power dimension, and non-standard varieties along the solidarity or friendship dimension.<sup>11</sup> Cheyne (1970), for instance, reported 'accent loyalty' among Scottish respondents who rated Scottish speakers as more generous, friendly, likeable, and attractive in other social/personality respects than English speakers.

The distinction between status-related and solidarity-related language attitudes will certainly help to explain the friend-scale results of the EC (if not those of the NEC) represented in figure 2. But we can go beyond the analysis of Labov et al (1968) and the Matched Guise studies cited above in two respects: (i) relating the language attitudes which are revealed in the Matched Guise test to the *actual linguistic usage* of our respondents, and (ii) attending to attitudes about language and the social order which emerged from other questions and on other occasions over the two-year fieldwork period. Both of these reflect the advantage of conducting Matched Guise studies with respondents who are well-known from independent fieldwork rather than with respondents who are encountered for the first (and last) time when they take the Matched Guise test.

#### II.3.1: Language of respondents in relation to friend-scale ratings

With respect to the language of the respondents, Table 1 uses evidence from their usage in two pronoun subcategories in the spontaneous recordings to illustrate what could be shown from almost any other area of their linguistic behavior: that the everyday speech of the EC respondents is more basilectal (including a mix of basilectal and mesolectal elements), while that of the NEC respondents is upper mesolectal (including a mix of mesolectal and acrolectal elements).<sup>12</sup>

Table 1: Relative frequencies of pronoun variants in the speech of Case Walk respondents by pronoun subcategory and social class.

SOC. CLASS	N	FIRST SING. SUBJECT		N	THIRD SINGULAR FEMIN. POSSESSIVE		
		Bas.	Ac.		Bas.	Mes.	Ac.
		'me'	'I'		'he'	'she'	'her'
EC	(2309)	.89	.11	(120)	.46	.53	.01
NEC	(3012)	.11	.89	(142)	.04	.38	.58

Note: Numbers in parentheses represent total number of pronoun tokens or occurrences considered in each category.

If we compare Table 1 now with Table 2, which shows the relative frequencies of the pronouns in these very two subcategories in the Matched Guise samples, the sense in which the friend scale elicits values of solidarity or identity can be made clearer: *The respondents in each group are essentially warming to the Matched Guise 'speaker' who sounds most like themselves.*

This is as true for the EC respondents, who favour the basilectal MG1, as it is for the NEC, who favour the upper mesolectal MG2 (whose usage matches theirs more closely than any of the other Matched Guise 'speakers' does).<sup>13</sup>

Table 2: Relative frequencies of pronoun variants in the matched guise samples.

MG SAMPLE	N	FIRST SING. SUBJECT		N	THIRD SINGULAR FEMIN. POSSESSIVE		
		Bas.	Ac.		Bas.	Mcs.	Ac.
		'me'	'I'		'he'	'she'	'her'
MG 1	(31)	.90	.10	(3)	.33	.67	.00
MG 2	(22)	.00	1.00	(3)	.00	.33	.67
MG 3	(15)	.00	1.00	(3)	.00	.00	1.00

Note: As in table 1, numbers in parentheses represent total number of tokens or occurrences per subcategory.

This principle is implicit in the solidarity results reported in Labov et al. (1968), Cheyne (1970), Milroy and McCleanaghan (1977), and Romaine (1980). But because we have access to the actual language usage of our respondents, the principle can be stated and validated more explicitly here.

The pattern of the NEC responses on the friend scale is particularly significant because, on closer examination, it is adequately explained *neither* by the standard view of language attitudes in a creole continuum *nor* by the

assumption that 'the vernacular' always elicits favourable solidarity reactions. The problem with the standard view is that, if more standard speech were always evaluated more positively, it is the speaker in the MG3 sample who should have been rated *most* likely to fit in with the NEC respondents' circle of friends. Instead, MG3 is rated on the *same* level as MG2 (in fact, *lower* than the latter by a decimal point). For the fact of the matter is that, although many of the NEC respondents aspire to be like the headmasters and the field managers above them in social status, they are not yet in that class, and their speech is actually more like that of MG2 than MG3. The problem with the vernacular principle is that it is frequently interpreted to refer to a *single* uniform variety, typically the one most deviant from the standard. In our case, this would be the basilect, as spoken by MG1, who is the *least* positively evaluated by the NEC, rather than the most. What we need instead is a principle which can allow for vernaculars rather than a monolithic vernacular—the notion vernacular varying across social groups to refer to the variety which each group speaks most naturally and most fluently, its 'primary mode of interaction' (Hymes 1971).<sup>14</sup> This principle works perfectly for both groups of respondents in this study, as Tables 1 and 2 together illustrate.

### II.3.2.: Friend-scale ratings in relation to perception of language and the social order.

There is more to it than this, however. The principle that covert solidarity values attach to vernacular varieties is only part of the explanation for the EC respondents' highly 'non-standard' language attitudes as these are revealed on the friend scale. For some of the EC members, the endorsement of the basilect or deep Creole variety on this scale is part of a more general reaction against the dominant society, an assertion that it is the society which must change to accommodate them rather than vice-versa.

The first evidence we might consider on this point is the response to an interview question about whether speaking 'good English' (a common term for the acrolect in Guyana) would help one to get a better job and get ahead. Eleven of the twelve NEC respondents (92 percent) said yes, but only five of the twelve EC respondents (42 percent) agreed. This might seem paradoxical at first in view of the evidence of the job-scale responses that both groups agree in associating occupational status and level of language use. On closer examination, it is clear that what they disagree on is the *nature* of this association, with the NEC members seeing more acrolectal usage as *contributing* to more prestigious occupational and social class status, while the EC members see language use as merely *reflecting* socioeconomic status.

Both groups are right from their own perspectives. For the NEC members, the next step on the socioeconomic ladder is that of the teachers, managers,

and senior civil servants in the capital city of Georgetown, whose positions seem to demand command of the acrolectal or English end of the continuum. Increasing one's command and use of this end of the continuum is therefore seen as a means of preparing for future socioeconomic mobility, in much the same way that fraternizing with these higher status outsiders (and their children) is. For the EC members, however, possibilities for socioeconomic mobility—insofar as they exist—may involve learning a trade like carpentry or getting a job in a shop, and there are examples of skilled tradesmen and shopowners in the community who appear to have achieved financial success *without* speaking 'proper English'.

More to the point is that the opportunities for socioeconomic mobility are extremely limited for the EC members. Seymour, an NEC member, once described the sugar-workers as "marking time . . . One spot, and they can't move."<sup>15</sup> And in an even more expressive vein, Mani, herself a sugar-worker, exclaimed:

(3) Yuh a throw down yuhself a de bank an' yuh seh, "Lawd, a when dis cutlass a go come out a me han?!" (Spontaneous Int. 13)

You throw down yourself on the bank and you say, "Lord, when will this cutlass (machete) come out of my hand?!"

In this situation, society's cards are perceived as being too firmly stacked against the sugar-worker for individual efforts at self-improvement to succeed, whether these involve using 'good English', or trying to secure a Non-Estate job. It is the *social order* itself which is perceived as in need of change, and it is instructive to note that the cane-cutters in our EC sample frequently serve as workers' representatives in labour disputes with the sugar-estate management (these often involving strikes, go-slows and other forms of industrial protest in support demands for better pay and working conditions).<sup>16</sup>

One final point requires making. The skepticism which the majority of the EC respondents express about the value of speaking 'good English' does *not* appear to be simply a defense mechanism, a way of compensating for the fact that they are themselves limited to the deep Creole or basilectal level. This may be true for some of the respondents, but not for most of them, as the results of a formal Creole to English correction test which we conducted in this community demonstrated. In this test, we presented each individual with tape-recorded Creole sentences like the following one:

(4) E thief me book

and asked how they would say it in 'good English'. Restricting our attention to the possessive pronoun in this sentence, note that nine of the eleven EC individuals who responded produced the correct acrolectal equivalent, 'my', even though three of the nine had *never* used a single 'my' in their

spontaneous recordings, and even though the overall frequency of 'my' in the EC recordings prior to this had only been *1 percent* (only 7 'my') tokens contrasted with 496 'me' tokens in this subcategory).

A particularly striking example in this regard was Irene, a vigorous and hard-working member of the weeding-gang. In hours and hours of spontaneous recordings, she had not produced a single token of first possessive 'my' (over 82 subcategory tokens), a single first subject 'I' (over 395 tokens), a single 'him', 'his' or 'her' (over 114 occurrences of the relevant third-person subcategories). But any impression we might have had that she was confined to the basilectal or deep Creole level was dispelled by the fact that she rattled off all of the previously unattested forms where required in the correction test.<sup>17</sup> For her, the use of basilectal Creole in everyday life appears to be a language choice in and of itself, a matter of choice rather than necessity.

And so too for Reefer, leader of a tight and militant cane-cutters' group, who suggested that language use was imbricated in a larger process of sociocultural re-evaluation and revolution:

(5) . . . yuh gat to larn fuh larn yuh, yuh own language, yuh know . . . Abee na waan dem Englishman teachin an ting da no mo, man. Dem ting da mus' done . . . Yuh see, dem a write dem own book fuh suit dem own self, and abee mus' larn from dem and *subdue* under dem! (Spontaneous Int. 44)

. . . you have to learn to learn your, your own language, you know . . . We don't want those English people's teaching and so on any more, man. Those things must end . . . You see, they write their own books to suit themselves, and we learn from them and *be subdued* under them!

### III. Conclusion

To summarize: although previous reports of language attitudes in Creole continua emphasize the positiveness of orientations towards the standard variety and the negativeness of orientations toward the non-standard "Creole" varieties, the situation in Cane Walk is more complex. One intervening variable is the *dimension* on which the language attitudes are tapped—the dimension of occupational stratification and socioeconomic prestige appearing to elicit the standard view, and the dimension of friendship, identity, or solidarity eliciting 'non-standard' responses to the extent that the vernacular of the respondents is itself non-standard. Another intervening variable is *social class*: the NEC members appearing to have accepted the Georgetown middle-class assertion that 'good English' helps to guarantee upward socioeconomic mobility, while the EC members are more skeptical about the nature and value of this association.

Although we have to recognize social class as a significant variable, however, it would be insufficient to say that there are two types of language

attitude now, each linked to a different social class. Although Chauffeur expresses the view in (2) that there is no good in the Creole whatsoever, and although Reefer sees the English language and culture as instruments of subjugation (see (5) above), the attitudes of the average member of each class are less dogmatic and more ambiguous. We have already noted that the NEC members see equal value in their mesolectal Creole variety where solidarity and friendship are concerned, and when we asked when it was appropriate to talk 'good English', only two out of ten NEC respondents suggested that it *always* was. Similarly, although we have noted that the EC members display a more positive orientation toward basilectal Creole with respect to friendship or solidarity, only three out of eleven EC respondents, in answer to the preceding question, suggested that 'good English' *never* was appropriate. Regardless of class, respondents seemed to agree that appropriateness of language choice depended to some extent on who the addressee was, English being more appropriate with interlocutors who usually spoke English and didn't understand Creole ('dem correct person who educated'), and Creole with those who usually spoke in Creole ("There are times when you ought to break down into Creole, like when you're with people who speak Creolese all the time"). There is a shared recognition, then, that there is place for standard and Creole varieties.

If we look closely in the literature, too, we can detect some traces of the positive attitude to Creole which is usually overshadowed in the standard view. Thus despite its definition as 'bad' or 'brokop' language, Reisman (1970: 40) notes that in Antigua:

- (6) Creole occurs in contexts of relaxation, expressiveness, involvement, letting go . . . .  
Creole is intrinsically felt to be the code of the genuine.

Hall (1966: 133—quoted in Hymes 1971: 87) reports the identical sentiment

- (7) For the normal, unpretentious Haitian, use of Creole is the symbol of truth and reality, and French is the language of bluff and mystification and duplicity. . .

In conclusion, what we have to recognize is the existence of language attitudes which are multidimensional, and more complex and ambiguous than earlier assumed. The ambiguities extend to other cultural elements too—like the 'Creole' tomato, considered less attractive in Guyana than the 'English' tomato, in terms of symmetry of shape and general appearance, but also considered sweeter, and more resistant to wilt and other garden diseases. Or the Creole egg, ranker in smell than the English egg, but also tastier, and richer in vitamins and minerals. Or the association between Creole and 'making noise' in Antiguan arguments, which violates 'English' standards of "order, decorum, quietness, and authority", but in which people in fact "take great joy" (Reisman, 1970: 141).

Reisman's paper on linguistic and cultural ambiguity in Antigua (op. cit.) is in fact one of the best existing works on the duality which pervades Caribbean societies, and creole communities more generally.<sup>18</sup> We have some distance to go in terms of trying to specify the nature and intensity of the factors which impel speakers in these communities forward toward the acrolect and backwards toward the basilect in a seemingly endless dialectic. Social class has to be taken into account, and occasion, and relevant dimension, and undoubtedly even other factors. But it seems clear that only an approach to linguistic and cultural attitudes which is infinitely more sensitive than the 'standard' view is can serve to explain the unsettled and dynamic character of creole continua. It will also be undoubtedly relevant to the many other situations where standard and non-standard varieties coexist, and where these are associated with social inequalities and differences.

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1. Agheyisi and Fishman (1970) list only one reference (Samarin 1966) on language attitudes for 'Creoles, Pidgins, and Trade languages', and note that this was one of two substantive areas which "provide the major gaps in the systematic study of language attitudes" (p. 144).
2. This example is based on the nine ways of saying 'I told him' in Allsopp (1958).
3. See Alleyne (1980) for the claim that most of the intermediate varieties in Creole continua may have existed from the beginning of European/African contact. And see Rickford (1983) for models of decreolization which take both possibilities into account.
4. The evidence for this is the fact that texts from earlier periods contain basilectal forms which are rare or non-existent today.
5. This figure takes us back to the approximate date on which the slaves were emancipated in several Caribbean territories. This may well have been a significant factor in the weakening of rigid class barriers which DeCamp (1971b) lists as one of the prerequisites for decreolization.
6. Cane Walk is a pseudonym for a village on the East Coast, Demerera, within half an hour's drive of Georgetown, the capital. Its population is almost entirely East Indian—the descendants of indentured labourers from India.
7. The data collection methods mentioned in this paragraph are discussed in detail in Labov (1972a, 1972b), but will be briefly explained here. In *spontaneous interviews* topics like the danger of death and childhood games are introduced to involve the speaker intensely and encourage spontaneous or casual speech. *Peer-group recordings* aim for the same end, but use different means: here it is not the topic, but the influence of the participants (everyday peers) which encourages the emergence of casual speech despite the presence of an outside observer. In *participant observation*, the linguist participates in the ongoing activity of the individual or group, and informally observes their language use at the same time, but tape-recordings are not normally employed (see Rickford 1975). Finally, *controlled/formal interviews* have a



- different *aim* from the preceding interviews: they are designed to tap the careful end of the stylistic continuum, and achieve this in part by focusing directly on language.
8. The term 'Estate Class' follows the term 'Estate people' (sometimes 'field worker' or 'sugar worker') which occurs natively. There is no single native term for the people who are not members of this class: the term 'Non-Estate Class' captures their most salient characteristics. The social/psychological reality of this division is increased by the fact that it parallels the distinction between 'labourers' and 'junior staff' in the traditional occupational hierarchy of the sugar estate. The estate has a third category – 'senior staff' – for the top-level managers and technical personnel who are housed in a fenced compound near to the factory, away from the housing schemes in which the other workers live. Cane Walk was developed originally as an estate housing scheme, and does not include representatives of the 'senior staff', nor – in more general terms – of the upper middle class.
  9. The advantage of Matched Guise tests over alternative methods in which *different* speakers are used for each sample on the test tape is that the effect of individual voice quality is controlled. See Hudson (1980: 204).
  10. In preparing the test tape, I was able to benefit from the linguistic and dramatic virtuosity of a Guyanese amateur actor, who like the respondents, was East Indian. I prepared the three Matched Guise samples myself, controlling the forms carefully to represent basilectal, mesolectal, and acrolectal levels of usage. The actor's 'script' as we sat about making the test tape was these three passages; but he 'read' them as if involved in a live interview/conversation, with appropriate interlocuter vocalizations and responses provided by me throughout.
  11. The distinction between power and solidarity as key dimensions affecting linguistic usage received its earliest and most extensive examination within the sociolinguistics literature in Brown and Gilman's (1960) analysis of the variation between T and V pronouns (e.g. French *tu* and *vous*) in several languages.
  12. In the third feminine possessive, as in other pronoun subcategories with a basilectal, mesolectal, and acrolectal variant, speakers tend to use either the former two or the latter two, but rarely all three. This datum lends some support to the position sometimes expressed by native speakers that there are only two systems involved: Creole (sometimes referred to as 'Patois' and by other names) and English. For speakers using the basilectal and mesolectal forms, the former is Creole and the latter is English; for speakers using the mesolectal and acrolectal forms, the former is Creole and the latter English. (See Rickford 1979 for more discussion.) The existence of this pattern makes it possible for a hearer to make certain deductions about a speaker even on the basis of a single basilectal or acrolectal token in this subcategory (a single basilectal token suggesting that the speaker is basically basilectal/lower mesolectal, a single acrolectal token suggesting that he or she is acrolectal/upper mesolectal). This is what allows the feminine possessive pronouns in the Matched Guise samples to have significance even though they occur only three times in each sample (see Table 2).
  13. The status of the second Matched Guise sample as upper mesolectal rather than acrolectal is not obvious in the first singular subject subcategory, but it is clear from the three-variant subcategories (like the third feminine possessive), and from other areas of the grammar.
  14. In this view, the vernacular is not the property of any single social group, but something which (in different forms) every social group possesses. Note the classification of RP ('Received Pronunciation') as the vernacular of the British elite in Labov (1980), contradicting the assumption that 'vernaculars' are ipso facto 'non-standard'.
  15. Seymour narrated a telling anecdote about the son of a sugar worker who had passed the high school entrance examination but could not take up the opportunity because of his family's poor financial straits: "And the parent could not send the boy, because they were not seeing their way to send the boy to school. That boy now, today, he's married, and he's working in the fields" (Emphasis added).  
*fields.* (Emphasis added.)

16. Raj gave this example of the way in which he usually talks to estate management on these occasions, suggesting that effective articulation of the workers' cause might depend more on appropriate content and rhetorical style than on the use of 'good English': "Yuh a cry out, 'Man look, well me na know wuh go happen today. Yesterday me barely get lil daal an rice an lil mango curry fuh eat. Well me na know wuh go happen to morrow . . . Allyuh *do* wid me wife and pickney, man!'" ("You would cry out, 'Man, look, well I don't know what will happen today. Yesterday I barely got a lil dhal and rice and a little mango curry to eat. Well I don't know what will happen tomorrow . . . You have done bad things to my wife and children, man!'")
17. There was only one exception to this: in one of three sentences where 'him' was the correct acrolectal form. Irene gave 'he' instead. In the other sentences she used the correct forms, including 'her' and 'his' where appropriate.
18. Reisman in turn pays tribute to earlier discussions of the duality in Caribbean and Afro-American communities in Herskovits (1941) and other sources. For a recent reference to conflicting 'push-pull' pressures experienced by Black Americans in relation to White American language and culture, see Smitherman (1977).

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