In Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Register, ed. by Douglas Biber and Edward Finegan. N.Y.: Oxford U. Press, 1994: 235-276.

10

Addressee- and Topic-Influenced Style Shift: A Quantitative Sociolinguistic Study

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1. Introduction

This chapter is a study of addressee- and topic-influenced style shift in language, within the framework of quantitative or "variationist" sociolinguistics.

The first section is written from a theoretical, history-of-science perspective; we begin by contrasting the taxonomic, polydimensional approach of sociolinguists like Hymes (1972) and Halliday (1978) with the empirical, unidimensional approach of Labov (1966:90–135, 1972a:70–109), for whom styles were ordered on a single dimension, involving *attention* paid to speech. We suggest that the neglect of style within the American variationist school from the 1970s onward was due in part to methodological and theoretical difficulties with this approach. As we note, an alternative unidimensional approach, considering style as *audience* accommodation (Giles and Powesland 1975, Bell 1984), is more promising, but although several quantitative studies within this framework have been made over the past decade and a half, most of them were done outside the United States, primarily in Britain.

In the second section, we introduce some new data on addressee and topic style

This paper was prepared while the senior author was a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, at Stanford. The financial support provided by NSF grants BNS-8700864 and BNS-8913104 is gratefully acknowledged. It is a pleasure to acknowledge, too, the assistance and encouragement which we have received from Renee Blake, Daria Ilunga, Rashida Knox, Anakela Rickford and Angela Rickford, and our forbearing families. We would like to thank those who provided feedback on the first draft of this paper, regretting only that we were not always able to incorporate their suggestions or follow their advice: John Baugh, Allan Bell, Doug Biber, Ed Finegan, Nik Coupland, Greg Guy, Dennis Preston, Suzanne Romaine, Elizabeth Closs Traugott, and Malcah Yaeger-Dror. We would also like to thank others who sent relevant papers: Marianna Di Paolo, Barbara Horvath, and Keith Walters.

shift in language, drawn from our ongoing study of sociolinguistic variation in East Palo Alto (EPA), California, a multiethnic, low-income community of over eighteen thousand people, located just east of Stanford University. The data are from our two most recent interviews with Foxy Boston, an eighteen-year-old African American teenager whose vernacular language use we have been chronicling, through successive recordings, since she was thirteen.[1] The two interviews which form the empirical focus of this paper were recorded about eight months apart in 1990 and 1991 within the same setting (Foxy's home), but with different interviewers. The 1990 interview was done by Faye (coauthor of this paper), a forty-one-year-old African American lecturer at Stanford, who was familiar to Foxy as a community resident and from earlier interviews. Faye was accompanied by her sixteen-year-old daughter, Roberta (a pseudonym), a native of East Palo Alto, who served primarily as cointerviewee and peer for Foxy (see section 2.1). Since this was the third interview of Foxy, we'll refer to it as interview III. The 1991 interview (referred to as IV) was done by Beth (a pseudonym), a twenty-five-year-old European American who was a graduate student at Stanford and a stranger to Foxy. Although the latter interview was ostensibly being done for Faye, and Beth was able to trade on "inside knowledge" from Faye's earlier interviews, Foxy's language in the second interview was less vernacular and more standard than it was in the former.

We investigate Foxy's style shift across the two interview contexts by means of quantitative analyses of her usage of several variables, including zero copula, invariant *be*, plural *-s*, third singular present *-s*, and possessive *-s*. The fact that (most of) these variables *are* sensitive to style-shifting is itself of interest, since the earlier literature on African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is either ambiguous or negative on this point. The fact that the style-shifting is primarily a function of the race of the interviewer(s) is also of methodological interest, for, with only a few exceptions (Anshen 1969, Fasold 1972, Terrell et al. 1977, Edwards 1986), race-of-interviewer or -addressee effects have been neglected within sociolinguistics,[2] although they have been the focus of lively discussion in other social sciences, where the focus is on the content of interviewees' responses rather than their language (see, for instance, Schumann and Kalton 1985, Anderson et al. 1988). In fact, the effect of interviewer attributes on interviewee speech—although privately recognized as important by everyone—has received little systematic discussion in the sociolinguistics literature. The primary exceptions have been studies of the effects of addressee status or solidarity (Brown and Gilman 1960, Payne 1976, Baugh 1979, Hindle 1979, Coupland 1984), gender (Walters 1989a, b), and insider versus outsider status (Van den Broeck 1977, Bickerton 1980, Russell 1982, Rickford 1983).

We also argue that the variable rule computer program, which we use for the analysis of zero copula, allows us to disentangle the effect of audience-design from the effect of internal grammatical constraints with a precision that other approaches do not, and we recommend it as a general means of studying stylistic variation. Finally, we consider variation by topic within each interview, attempting to assess whether this can be related to audience-design, as Bell (1984:178–82) suggests, and its relative importance vis-à-vis addressee-influenced style shift.

In our conclusion, we summarize our main findings and stress the importance of encouraging quantitative sociolinguists to return to the study of stylistic variation and of encouraging students of style in spoken language to exploit the assets of the quantitative approach.

2. The Study of Style in Quantitative Sociolinguistics

Stylistic or intraspeaker variation has certainly received less attention within American sociolinguistics than has social or interspeaker variation.[3] This is less true of British sociolinguistics, where the concept of *register* (variety "according to *use*") has been as firmly established as the concept of *dialect* (variety "according to the *user*"), and where the concepts of *field* (subject-matter), *tenor* (addressee and other participant relations), and *mode* (communication channel) have encouraged attention to the subdimensions of register (Gregory and Carroll 1978:7–11, Halliday 1978:33).

Within American sociolinguistics, heuristic sociolinguistic taxonomies (for instance, Ervin-Tripp 1964, Hymes 1972, Preston 1986) have also provided for the analysis of stylistic or intraspeaker variation, via their inclusion of categories such as message content, setting, purposes, and key, alongside interspeaker categories such as speaker's age, sex, ethnicity, and region. Such taxonomies are typically wide-ranging; for instance, Hymes (1972) includes sixteen components, while Preston (1986) expands the number of potentially relevant categories to fifty.

By contrast, empirical studies within the framework of quantitative sociolinguistics, whether in Britain or the United States, have usually taken a more parsimonious approach, attempting to relate stylistic variation to one primary underlying dimension.[4] In the 1960s and early 1970s, *attention paid to speech* (Labov 1966) reflected in varying degrees of formality, was the underlying dimension on which styles ranging from casual to careful to reading and wordlists were delimited. In the late 1970s and 1980s, to the extent that stylistic variation in speech has figured in quantitative sociolinguistics, it has primarily involved the study of the effects of the *addressee*. However, as noted, most of this work was done outside the United States.

2.1 Attention Paid to Speech

It is instructive to trace the rise and fall of style as a central area of interest in American quantitative sociolinguistics, and of attention paid to speech as its principal theoretical conceptualization. Labov is clearly the major pioneer in this framework, but in his earliest (1963) study, of Martha's Vineyard, style-shifting was basically ignored, because the majority of his subjects did not show stylistic variation for the variables under investigation: "Sometimes the conversation will take a livelier tone, or a more formal aspect, but the percentage of centralized forms is not significantly affected" (Labov 1972:21).

In his subsequent (1966) study of the pronunciation of (*r*) and other variables in New York City, however, Labov found that it was critical to attend to stylistic variation, and particularly to net *casual speech*, "the everyday speech used in informal situations, where no attention is directed to language" (p. 100), for only

casual speech adequately revealed the regularity of everyday synchronic and diachronic processes—the nature of social stratification, for instance, or the direction and status of ongoing linguistic change. Although casual speech (appropriately called style A) could be easily separated from *reading* style (style C), *word-lists* (style D), and *minimal pairs* (Style D), the task of distinguishing it from *careful speech* (style B), "the type of speech which normally occurs when the subject is answering questions which are formally recognized as 'part of the interview'" (p. 92), was more difficult, and it was to this problem that Labov devoted most of his attention.

Labov's solution, well known by now, was to define certain contexts—for instance, speech with a third person (A2), speech on the topic of childhood rhymes and customs (A4), and speech on the topic of the danger of death (A5)—as *potential* casual speech contexts, and to classify speech in these contexts as *actual* examples of style A when it was accompanied by "channel cues" such as a change in tempo, pitch, volume, breathing, or laughter.

One problem, however, was that researchers usually found this method of distinguishing casual speech difficult to apply in an objective and reliable way. As Wolfram (1969:58–59) noted in discussing the Detroit dialect survey:

> An exploratory attempt to distinguish careful from casual speech based on Labov's criteria was *rejected* for several reasons. [i] In the first place, any of the paralinguistic channel cues cited as indications of casual speech can also be indications that the informant feels an increased awareness of the artificiality or formality of the interview situation. Can nervous laughter reliably be distinguished from relaxed or casual laughter? [ii] Also, the subjective interpretation of the paralinguistic cues tends to bias the interpretation of casual speech even though the channel cues are theoretically supposed to be independent of the measurement of linguistic variables. To what extent must there be a change of pitch or rhythm and how close to the actual feature being tabulated must it occur? [iii] Further, for some informants, the incidence of casual speech, based on Labov's cues, is so infrequent that it is difficult to base statistics on so few examples. [emphasis and numbering added]

Other researchers, like Trudgill (1974), avoided the indeterminacy of channel cues altogether, depending instead on earlier versus later sections of interviews or topical contexts alone to separate careful and casual speech. But most overcame the methodological problem by ignoring the distinction between these styles altogether. This was true even in the Philadelphia neighborhood studies of the Linguistic Change and Variation (LCV) project—the principal research focus of Labov and his associates from 1980 onward. As Labov (1989:11) notes, in a paper originally presented in 1982, "The main data base is the set of tense/lax ratings of all short a words in the *spontaneous speech* recorded from the 100 subjects. *This includes both 'casual' and 'careful' speech as defined in Labov 1966*" [emphasis added]. What came to define the sociolinguistic/variationist approach to language was its use of recorded corpora of *spontaneous* (real, natural, conversational) speech in the new (Labov 1989) sense. There was an unspoken consensus that while it was valuable to try to get as much *casual* speech (in the old sense) as possible, the operational difficulties of separating casual from *careful* speech made further attachment to the theoretical distinction unrealistic. In any case, even where the recordings of quantitative sociolinguists were primarily careful speech, in the old sense (Labov 1989:50), they were still able to identify regular internal and external constraints on linguistic variation and change, and to distinguish themselves theoretically from those who depended instead on "introspection—and the elicitation of others' introspections" (Labov 1989:51).

Although most quantitative sociolinguists came to ignore the casual/careful distinction—and to attend less and less to stylistic variation in general—for practical, operational reasons like these,[5] there were also empirical and theoretical arguments against studying stylistic variation principally or only in terms of attention paid to speech.[6] Many of these arguments have been summarized by Milroy (1987:172–83), but the primary ones are worth repeating. Wolfson (1976) expressed the view that the "spontaneous" speech produced in response to requests for danger of death narratives often had a "performed" quality and challenged the assumption that natural/absolute speech existed as an absolute entity. Macaulay (1977), Romaine (1978, 1980), and Milroy (1980) presented evidence which suggested that reading did not lie on the same continuum as speech, at least not in the British varieties they investigated.[7] Baugh (1979:25) noted that styles delimited according to attention paid to speech were the products of linguistic inquiry rather than social circumstance and chose to study situational style-shifting because it was likely to be closer to realistic stylistic variation in everyday conversation. Cheshire (1982), Dressler and Wodak (1982), and Finegan and Biber (1989) questioned whether "attention paid to speech" really underlay the kinds of formality Labov distinguished. In a related vein, Traugott and Romaine (1985) criticized the attention-paid-to-speech approach for its unidimensionality (see also Irvine 1979, 1985:560) and for its implicit view of the speaker as passive respondent rather than active strategist. And Bell (1984), critiquing the experimental work on monitoring by George Mahl which Labov (1966:134, 1972:97–99) had cited, and summarizing empirical evidence from other researchers, concluded that "empirical foundation for the attention variable is notably lacking" and that "attention is at most a mechanism of response intervening between a situation and a style. This explains both why it seemed a plausible correlative of style shift, and why it could never be a satisfactory explanation of style" (1984:148). By and large these critiques came from outside the main tradition of American quantitative sociolinguistics, and they came *after* most quantitativists had already begun to shy away from distinguishing styles in terms of interview contexts and channel cues, but they perhaps contributed to the decline in the study of style in terms of attention paid to speech.

2.2 *Addressee and Other Audience Design Effects*

When Labov et al. (1968) turned to the study of AAVE in Harlem, they were still interested in eliciting casual or vernacular speech, for "the most systematic and regular form of language is that of basic vernacular" (p. 167). But as their primary means of achieving this goal, they adopted a new approach—recording group-

sessions, in which adolescent and preadolescent AAVE speakers were "in spontaneous interaction with each other" (p. 57).[8] To the extent that Labov et al. discuss stylistic variation in this study, it is by comparing speakers' outputs in the individual interviews with their outputs in the group sessions ("single style" versus "group style"). Theirs is actually one of the earliest empirical sociolinguistic studies of stylistic variation to use addressee rather than topic or attention as the primary variable. Anshen (1969) and Fasold (1972) also reported quantitative variation in the output of AAVE speakers according to (race of) addressee, although it was not a major theme of their work. However, for Blom and Gumperz (1972), stylistic variation among Norwegian speakers in Hemnesberget according to whether they were speaking to locals or outsiders was of central significance, leading them to introduce (pp. 424–25) the theoretical distinction between *situational* switching, primarily influenced by addressee, and *metaphorical* switching, primarily influenced by shifts in topic and role relationship while addressee and other situational features remain constant.[9]

From the late 1970s on, there have been several quantitative studies of stylistic variation in the recorded speech of individuals according to addressee. The list includes, in chronological order, Bell (1977, 1982, 1991), Van den Broeck (1977), Douglas-Cowie (1978), Baugh (1979, 1983), Payne (1976), Hindle (1979), Rickford (1979, 1983), Bickerton (1980), Coupland (1980, 1981, 1984), Trudgill (1981), Russell (1982), Thelander (1982), Purcell (1984), Lucas and Borders (1987), Walters (1989a,b), and Youssef (1991). The typical approach was to record one or more individuals speaking to someone who was a local insider or someone relatively familiar and compare this with their recorded outputs when speaking to an outsider or a stranger. The parallels with the work of Labov et al. (1968) and Blom and Gumperz (1972) are striking, but while some of the new studies (for instance, those by Baugh and Rickford) acknowledged an intellectual link with these earlier works, others (for instance, Douglas-Cowie and Bickerton) did not, almost as if their authors had independently hit upon an operationally clear-cut way of distinguishing styles which they knew from informal observation and experience to exist. Moreover, with only a few exceptions, the new studies drew on data from Great Britain and other communities outside the continental United States, and some were also outside the American variationist/Labovian tradition.[10]

One theoretical source of this approach to stylistic variation which *was* acknowledged by some of the researchers (Coupland, Russell and Trudgill, for instance) was the speech accommodation model of British social psychologist Howard Giles and his associates (Giles and Powesland 1975, Giles and Smith 1979, Thakerar et al. 1982, Giles 1984). In this model, the theoretical significance of the addressee is paramount, since speakers are seen either as converging with or diverging from their addressees depending on their relationship to them and their desire to gain social approval or achieve "communication efficiency." The speech accommodation model, recently reconceptualized in broader terms as "communication accommodation theory" (Coupland and Giles 1988:176), makes explicit links with theoretical frameworks in psychology and other behavioral sciences and has undergone several revisions and refinements over the years. It has inspired many empirical studies—see Giles, Coupland and Coupland (1991) for some of the most recent—although critiques have been made of the limited linguistic analysis in some studies and of the tendency to refer to accommodation theory post hoc.

Bell's extended (1984) discussion of style as audience design, which provided an integrative review of many of the addressee-based studies mentioned above, and has undergone some refinements of its own (see Bell 1986), has received relatively little attention at variationist conferences (like NWAVE) or in the quantitative sociolinguistics literature.[11] This neglect is unfortunate, however, for in its integration and explication of diverse strands of earlier sociolinguistic work, and in its bold hypotheses and predictions, Bell (1984) strikes us as one of the most theoretically interesting works to emerge in the study of style-shifting—and in sociolinguistics more generally—since the work of Labov in the early 1960s.

Space will not permit us to recapitulate all the ideas and data that Bell (1984) presented—and we would, in any case, encourage readers unfamiliar with the paper to read it themselves—but we summarize some of its key elements and explain how it relates to the empirical study to be presented in this paper.

A central feature of Bell's paper is its attempt to relate interspeaker (social) and intraspeaker (stylistic) variation by means of the *style axiom:* "Variation on the style dimension within the speech of a single speaker derives from and echoes the variation which exists between speakers on the "social" dimension" (p. 151). As Bell notes, this axiom explains a number of previously unexplained facts about sociolinguistic structure, including the fact that "some linguistic variables will have both social and style variation, some only social variation, but none style variation only" (p. 151); the fact that the degree of style variation never exceeds the degree of social variation (pp. 152ff.); the fact that audience effects are most strongly marked for addressees and are progressively weaker for auditors, overhearers, and eavesdroppers (pp. 162 ff.); and the fact that stylistic variation by topic and other nonaudience factors presupposes and is weaker than variation according to addressee (pp. 178 ff.). While these generalizations are shown to be tenable as "facts," on the basis of earlier studies, they also constitute working hypotheses against which all current and future work can be judged. They are therefore empirical and falsifiable claims, with theoretical import. Although it is easy to criticize an essentially monodimensional approach to style like this one for neglecting potentially relevant factors, we believe that sociolinguistics needs the integrative and predictive approach to theory testing and development which Bell's paper represents.

Before turning to the empirical East Palo Alto study which will occupy us for the rest of this paper, we should note some of the questions which Bell's paper specifically led us to pursue. Why do some variables show significant addressee-based shift between the two interviews while others do not? Can we account for this differential accommodation by appealing to the variables' role in social or *interspeaker* variation, as Bell (pp. 166–67) suggests? What is Foxy reacting to as she style shifts between one interview and the other—her interlocutors' personal characteristics (race and familiarity, for instance) or their specific linguistic usage (Bell, pp. 167–69)?[12] What of the role of *topic shifts* within each interview? Can these be viewed as proxies for audience-design, as Bell (pp. 178–82) asserts? And does

Foxy's vernacular use in our very earliest interviews (1986, 1988) square with the evidence and analyses we present from interviews III and IV? These are some of the questions we attempt to answer in the next section of this chapter.

3. Empirical Study of Style Shift in Foxy's Interviews

Following Bell (1984:146–46), we treat linguistic differences in the speech of a single speaker (*intraspeaker* variation) as stylistic, in contrast with differences between the speech of two or more speakers, which is *interspeaker* or social variation (as, for instance, in social class or ethnic dialects). Stylistic differences between Foxy Boston's speech in interviews III (EPA 55–56) and IV (EPA 114 B), taken as wholes, will be regarded as instances of addressee-influenced style shift, since the primary situational differences between the interviews are the race and familiarity of the interviewers.

Section 3.1 gives further information about the two interviews which provide the new data for this paper. Section 3.2 discusses *addressee*-influenced differences in Foxy's quantitative usage of five vernacular variables, comparing them with earlier studies of these variables in relation to race and style. Section 3.3 considers the interviewers' usage of the same variables to see whether Foxy is accommodating to the linguistic usage of her addressees, or their personal/social characteristics (Bell 1984:167). Section 3.4 explores *topic*-controlled variation in vernacular usage within Foxy's two interviews, assessing whether such nonpersonal style design can be related to and derived from interpersonal addressee design (Bell 1984:178–82). Finally, section 3.5 briefly discusses Foxy's usage in two earlier interviews with Faye and Roberta, one of which suggests that the setting, scene, and key (Hymes 1972), as well as the strategic use of style, have to be given more prominence than Bell's approach perhaps allows them.

3.1 Further Information About the Two Interviews

The two interviews described in general terms in the introduction were comparable insofar as both were conducted in Foxy's home and focused on conversing with Foxy as the primary interviewee. However, they differed with respect to logistics, tempo and key, participants, and topics. Interview III was recorded in June 1990 on a UHER 2600 stereo reel-to-reel tape-recorder; it lasted about ninety-six minutes and produced a one-and-a-half spaced transcript of eighty-eight pages. Interview IV was recorded in February 1991 on a Sony TCD-5M stereo cassette recorder; it lasted seventy-five minutes and produced a one-and-a-half spaced transcript of forty-two pages. The fact that the transcript of interview III is twice as long as that of interview IV while the recording itself was only slightly longer indicates that III was a livelier and more informal interaction, with a faster tempo and more give-and-take among the participants. This was in turn related to differences in who the participants were, their relation to Foxy, and the distribution of topics in each interview, which the next two subsections discuss.

3.1.1. INTERVIEW III

Besides Foxy (F), the primary participants in interview III were two African American females who were familiar to Foxy from the community and from previous interviews. Faye, the adult, served as the interviewer (I), introducing most of the initial topics, but she employed a bantering approach which encouraged informality and often led to laughter, for instance, from an early section of the interview (p. 2, transcript), dealing with college plans:

(1) I: What kinds of plans you have for college? Where—Where have you been thinking about going?
F: Prob—. . . I don' wanna go far away.
I: Really? You wanna hang around with mom?
F: Mm–hmm[=yes] [Laughter]
I: Are you scared to get out there on your own?
F: No! [laughter] I's jus' that . . . we just too close, I guess.

Faye's intimate knowledge of places, people, and events in the community also stimulated Foxy to talk excitedly about events and individuals which she might not have mentioned to a stranger.[13] For instance, Faye's reference to a recent gang-related killing on Xavier Street led Foxy to note (p. 15, transcript) that three of her friends had been killed similarly, including, most recently, Jimmy [name changed]:

(2) F: Oh, and then Jimmy. . . . Jimmy got killed at Shakedown's.
I: Is that that shooting they had over there? [high-pitched]
F: Yeah, that— that was my good— good friend. I was like, "WAIT A MINUTE!" . . . I was like, "Y'all lying! No! I just talked to Jimmy, the other night."

Another factor which contributed to the animated conversational quality of interview III was the presence of Roberta (R), Faye's daughter. Roberta was primarily a cointerviewee, talking about her own teenage experiences in Oakland (where she had attended high school) and often stimulating Foxy to use teenage slang spontaneously and to share aspects of their peer-group knowledge about boys and other topics, as in this extract (p. 23, transcript):

(3) F: This one [Black Student Union (BSU) convention] was in Bakersfield. And we met so many GUYYYS, from uh —ooh, now lemme tell you what high school got—got it going on.
R: Saint Mary's! Saint Joe's!
F: YES, YES! St. Mary's! [laughter]
I: Oh yeah!
F: St. Mary's is HITTIN! IT'S HITTIN!
R: [To I] St. Mary's is an all boy's school in Oakland—
F: [Overlapping with R] St. Mary's is HITTIN! They be like, "Ooh, yes. Wha's your name?" Ooh! Blah, blah, blah, this. [laughter] I be like, "Ooh, yeah — you— you come here?" I be like — Tanya was like "Wha—wha's your name? Uh, WHERE YOU GOING TO SCHOOL AT NEXT YEAR?! [laughter] . . . I'm like, "Y'all is a fool."

In this informal atmosphere, Foxy produced long stretches of excited speech, often overlapping with or interrupting other participants' turns, and bringing narrated events to life through extensive use of direct quotations and sound effects, as in the preceding quotation and in this account of repeated phone calls from an admirer (pp. 49–50, transcript):

(4) F: an' she—ma —I be on the telephone and he be going, [breathlessly and fast] "Where you went today? I— I know you wasn't at home! I called you. You wasn't at home! I left a message! You wasn't at home. Where you was at today? Uhn-uhn, Uhn-uhn, you got to get a beeper or something so I can page you. You have to call me back. Where was you?!" [laughter] And everyday— everyday, "Did you go shopping today? What you go buy? You bought this? You bought that? You like it?" And I be going, "Yep, yep, yep."
I: Mm–mm–mm–mm.
F: Okay." Then he hang up.
I: Mm–mm–mm–mm.
F: Then [pause] — THIRTY minutes later—, BRRINNNG [telephone]! "Hello." "Oh, I'm just calling to see if you in the house." My ma be like, "DANG! That boy on your TIP!"

Most of interview III was occupied by personal and/or controversial topics (see section 3.4 for further details), such as male-female relationships and drug-dealing and related violence in the community, and these succeeded in engaging the interviewee's enthusiastic participation.

3.1.2. INTERVIEW IV

Beth's interview IV was actually modeled quite closely on interview III (to which Beth had listened beforehand), so that many of the topics and subtopics overlapped, including high school life, college and career plans, boyfriends, girlfriends, teenage pregnancies, recreation activities, race relations, boy-girl relationships, and slang terms. Both interviews naturally included distinctive topics of their own (community homicides in III, the Persian Gulf War in IV), but this was less significant than the relative time spent on related topics, Foxy's personal and emotive involvement in each, and her relation to her interlocutor as she talked. For instance, both interviews began with school life and college plans, a relatively formal and nonpersonal topic, exemplified by the following extract (p. 7, transcript interview IV):

(5) F: . . . my teacher, his name is Mr. Segal and he's like— really hard. And he's like, "You guys [??]" He teaches you— he teaches us like we're in college, and my um Biology— when I had Biology? This guy named Mr. Cross— I mean he teaches you like you're in college. He gives you — he gives you all your book and he assigns you ALL this work. It's like sooo much work . . . and it's— it's done in a week and you're like, "OH MY GOSH!"

However, this topic constituted only 7 percent of interview III but 19 percent of interview IV (see section 3.4). The next topic in IV, the Persian Gulf War and related events at school, produces the same information-giving register from Foxy

and goes on for another 13 percent of the transcript, whereas the next topics in III are drugs, murders, and thefts in the community, producing much more excitement and involvement on Foxy's part. As we'll see in a moment and explore further in section 3.4, the topic of boy-girl relationships ("wives and slamming partners") produces equally involved dialogue and vernacular usage in both interviews, but Foxy simply gives more topics this personalized, animated treatment in interview III than she does in interview IV.

This is in turn related to the fact that Foxy's interlocutor in interview IV is European American and a stranger, and the fact that she is unaccompanied by a teenager like Roberta to whom Foxy can relate as a peer-group insider. Although Beth opens the interview by saying that Faye "asked me to talk to you" and draws artfully on terms and events which Foxy had mentioned in her previous interview, her status as an outsider is clear from the fact that she doesn't know specific individuals and institutions that Foxy mentions, as in this excerpt (p. 3, transcript):

(6) F: You might know Alice [name changed]. She used to work at Stanford with Faye?
B: I haven't met her.
F: Oh. Well, she goes to Howard.

Moreover, while she is skillful at keeping up her end of the conversation and usually reacts fluidly to what Foxy says in any one segment of the interview, Beth's transitions between topics are sometimes awkward, marked by long pauses and hesitation fillers as she tries to decide what to turn to next. And sometimes, perhaps because of dialect differences, Beth's questions are misunderstood, as in this excerpt (p. 16, transcript):

(7) B: I mean, do you think they maybe talk more to girls than they—
F: Talk to girls?
B: Do you think they're like, yeah, like more open with other—with girls than they are with other guys? You see what I'm saying? Like do you think they, um—
F: Do I think, um, guys are open with—girls than guys?
B: Yeah.

These misfirings in interlocutor communications, added to their ethnic distance, help to hold interviewer and interviewee at arm's length, so to speak, for at least the first third of interview IV. Even where Foxy goes *on* about something at some length, as in her account of acquaintances who are in the Persian Gulf or scheduled to go there, she doesn't get *into* it as fully as she might, as she often does in interview III. And she sometimes deals with topics sparingly in interview IV, as in this discussion of teen pregnancies, which occupies only a few lines (p. 15, transcript):

(8) B: Do you have many friends who are pregnant?
F: Yeah, a lot of my friends do have kids—[pause] or are pregnant, yeah.
B: How do you feel about that?
F: I don't know. I was like, "They're CUTE," but then, I was like, "I'm not ready to have kids, oh my gosh."

B: Do you think they're ready—do you feel like they're ready to have kids?
F: No, but [laughter]—I 'on know. [laughter]

In interview III, by contrast, the same topic goes on for one and a half pages; Foxy's contributions to this topic are not only longer, but more personal (note her references to specific individuals), and animated with more dialogue and sound effects (p. 6, transcript):

(9) F: . . . when I be driving, it ['ll] seem like every corner I drive around— there go somebody you know pushing a baby.
I: Mm. Mm. Mm.
F: [Quoting] "Hi, F.! Beep-beep!" [Car horn; laughter]
I: Mm. Mm. Mm. Mm-hmm.
F: Me and T. and them be like, "Tha's a SHAME, huh?!" . . . Cause like, you know Elizabeth? [Name changed] I be like, "Dang, T., she in the same grade with me and SHE HAVE 3 KIDS!"
I: Oh my GOD!
R: She got three kids?!
F: She got three kids!!

Interview IV does have its animated highlights, however. The most notable one is Foxy's discussion of "wives and slamming partners," which, interestingly enough, occurs in response to Beth's question about whether these terms, which she said Faye had told her about, were still in use. Foxy's response to this display of insider knowledge is not only long (going on for five full pages) but also lively, packed with as much dialogue as in interview III, with as much copula absence, and with even more risqué lexicon (a point we return to in section 3.4), as this segment (from p. 21–22, transcript B) illustrates:

(10) F: Well, all guys have a main girl that they really like— that they really, you know, spend time with ['n] stuff, and that's the one they call—their *wife*. And it's like, the other girls, they just . . . It's just like— you know, it's just that, they don't really care about 'em, they just—they just *slam*—that's just they work. [Background laughter] *Work* just means 'sex' too. That's just they work and stuff like that. But, like—if you talking to a guy on a phone and all his friends come in, "Hey blood, blood! Who you talking to? Who's that on the phone? Who's that on the phone?" They be like, ". . . Maybe I can get my hit in." [background laughter] *Hit* means 'slam.' And then the boy be saying, "Blood, you better go on. This the wife. This the wife. I'm talking to my wife on the phone." Then they be like, "Oh for real? I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, blood, I'm sorry. I didn't know it was the wife."

3.2. Addressee-*Influenced Style Shift: Differences Between Foxy's Vernacular Usage in Interviews III and IV*

In this section we'll consider Foxy's addressee-influenced style shift between interviews III and IV, as reflected in quantitative differences in her use of the following variables.[14]

TABLE 10.1 Foxy Vernacular Usage Interviews III and IV

Variable	*Foxy: Interview III (1990, African/ American Interviewer)*	*Foxy: Interview IV 1991, European/ American Interviewer)*
Possessive *-s* absence	67% (6/9)	50% (5/10) N.S.
Plural *-s* absence	1% (4/282)	0% (0/230) N.S.
Third singular present *-s* absence	73% (83/114)	36% (45/124)*
Copule *is/are* absence	70% (197/283)	40% (70/176)*
Invariant habitual *be*	385 (= 241 per hr)	97 (= 78 per hr)*

Note: Number of tokens in parentheses; *significant by chi-square test, < .001; N.S. = Not Significant.

a. Possessive *-s* absence, as in: "the teacher'Ø clerk" [Int IV];[15]
b. Plural *-s* absence, as in: "They just our friendØ" [Int III];
c. Absence of third person singular present tense *-s*, as in: "At first it seemØ like it wasn't no drugs" [Int IV];
d. Absence of copula/auxiliary *is* and *are*, as in: "He Ø on the phone" [Int III]; "You go there when you Ø pregnant" [Int IV];[16]
e. Use of invariant habitual *be*, as in: "He always *be* coming down here" [Int III] and "I *be* tripping off of boys" [Int IV].

Table 10.1 shows the relative frequency with which Foxy used the vernacular variants of these variables in each of the two interviews, without regard to internal constraints.[17] We discuss each of the variables in turn, relating our findings concerning style-shifting to the findings of earlier researchers (including Bell 1984) and discussing the effects of internal constraints where known.

3.2.1. POSSESSIVE *-S* ABSENCE

Although Foxy's possessive *-s* absence is 17% higher in interview III than in interview IV, indicating a style shift in the hypothesized direction, the difference is not statistically significant, because of the small number of tokens on which the percentages are based.[18] This case illustrates the need to provide both the number of tokens on which relative frequencies are based and chi-square or other measures of statistical significance, information which is not always provided in variationist studies of AAVE and other dialects.

Labov et al. (1968:169–70) was the first study of AAVE to provide information about possessive *-s* absence in relation to style. Combining data from all their African American New York City peer groups (forty-four youths, excluding the "Lames"), the authors reported 72 percent (23/32) possessive *-s* absence for single style, and 57 percent (32/56) for group style. Again, the percentage gap seems relatively large, but it is statistically insignificant (chi-square = 1.89, $p > .05$).

How can we explain the absence of statistically significant style-shifting for this variable?[19] Bell (1984:167) has advanced the following strong hypothesis:

(11) A sociolinguistic variable which is differentiated by certain speaker characteristics (e.g. by class or gender or age) tends to be differentiated in speech to addressees with

> those same characteristics. That is, if an old person uses a given linguistic variable differently than a young person, then individuals will use that variable differently when speaking to an old person than to a young person . . . and mutatis mutandis, for gender, race and so on.

Since urban European American vernaculars typically show little or no absence of possessive *-s*, in contrast with urban AAVE (Ash and Myhill 1986:38–39, Labov and Harris 1986:11–12), one might expect from Bell's hypothesis that AAVE speakers would show significantly lower rates of *-s* absence when speaking to European Americans than to African Americans. The fact that Foxy does not do so, at least not to a statistically significant degree, suggests the need for a rider to Bell's hypothesis: If the variable is relatively rare in speech, its value and exploitation as a symbolic counter in style-shifting may be reduced.[20]

Another tack we might take on this problem is to interpret the evidence of Labov et al. (1968) as suggesting that possessive *-s* absence in AAVE is an *indicator*, showing social but not stylistic differentiation, instead of a *marker*, showing differentiation by social class *and* style (Labov 1972:179). As Bell notes (1984:166), features established as indicators on the basis of limited style shifting among speech, reading, and word lists will tend to show little or no addressee style shift. This argument is somewhat tautologous, however, and it also potentially contradicts the hypothesis in (11), since features that are indicators insofar as they show little differentiation in terms of more monitored or less monitored speech might still show addressee style shift if they are differentially used by a speaker's interlocutors or the ethnic/class/gender groups to which the interlocutors belong. A final reason for not allowing the evidence of earlier data sets to *define* the status of variables in new data sets (as indicators or markers) is that the evidence of previous studies might be limited or mixed, and there is always the possibility that the older and newer data sets might differ regionally, or in terms of social class and recording situation, or insofar as they represent change in the intervening time period.

Baugh (1979:215–17) in fact provides quite a different kind of evidence from Labov et al. (1968), because possessive *-s* absence among his Pacoima (Los Angeles) AAVE speakers is influenced most strongly by a situational/stylistic factor—whether the addressee is familiar to the interviewer (favoring *s*-absence) or not (disfavoring *-s* absence). We don't have the Ns on which Baugh's probability coefficients are based, but he does note that "possessive *-s* occurs less frequently than plural *-s* or third person singular *-s*" (p. 215). Whether tokens of this variable occurred *more* frequently in Baugh's study than in our study or Labov's, allowing us to attribute its stylistic significance to this, is unclear.

3.2.2. PLURAL *-S* ABSENCE

In the case of plural *-s* absence, sample size is not a problem, but the one percentage point (1 percent) difference between Foxy's usage in interviews III and II is too slight to achieve statistical significance.[21] Here we can argue, however, that we would *not* expect significant addressee shift on the basis of Bell's hypothesis (11), since AAVE usage rates on this variable tend to be low. Labov and associates' (1968:161) New York City peer-group members displayed 7 percent (75/1059)

plural *-s* absence overall in single style and 9 percent (57/648) for the same members in group style; Wolfram's (1968:150) upper- and lower-working-class Detroit teenagers had 3 percent and 7 percent plural absence, respectively; and, more germanely, AAVE speakers recorded in East Palo Alto in 1986–87 (Rickford 1992) showed frequencies of plural *-s* absence ranging from 1 percent to 13 percent.[22] This is not a major vernacular variable for AAVE speakers, and as such its insignificant role in style-shifting between European American and African American addressees in interviews III and IV is not surprising. Bell (1984:166) cites a similar case from the work of Douglas-Cowie (1978:41–42); five of her speakers rarely used the local variant of two variables, (ɔ:) and (aye), so, as Bell notes, "had little distance to shift when addressing the English outsider." However, Baugh (1979) points in a different direction; although he notes (p. 223) that "the plural marker, as has been observed in many BEV communities, is very rarely deleted," he nevertheless finds style-shifting significant for plural *-s* absence in the speech of his Pacoima (Los Angeles) AAVE speakers (p. 219).

3.2.3. THIRD SINGULAR *-S* ABSENCE

Unlike the preceding two variants, this variable and its vernacular variant occur frequently enough to allow us to consider its internal conditioning, a potentially significant factor which many quantitative studies of style (for instance, those by Douglas-Cowie, Bickerton, Coupland, Russell, and Thelander referred to earlier) unfortunately do not take into account. The omission is unfortunate because a shift in a speaker's usage from one situation to the next might have little relation to addressee or other differences, and more to the effect of internal constraints, differentially distributed in the two situations. Without systematic data on internal constraints, it is difficult to know for sure.[23] Without such data, it is also impossible to test the "status" extension of Bell's "style" hypothesis, in which Preston (1991:36) proposes, "Variation on the 'status' dimension derives from and echoes [and will be less than/contained within] the variation which exists within the 'linguistic' dimension."

Table 10.2 shows the percentage of third singular *-s* absence in Foxy's two interviews in relation to the primary internal factor which seems to affect this variable locally (cf. Rickford 1992): verb type. The percentage of *-s* absence is higher in interview III than interview IV in every case except *say*, and the relative

TABLE 10.2 Foxy's Third Person Singular Present *-s* Absence by Verb Type

Verb Type	*Interview III*	*Interview IV*
Regular verbs (*walk*)	67% (57/85)	31% (27/87)
Have	75% (3/4)	11% (1/9)
Do	60% (3/5)	40% (2/5)
Don't	100% (15/15)	50% (8/16)
Say	100% (5/5)	100% (7/7)
TOTAL, all verbs	73% (83/114)	36% (46/124)

effect of verb type is similar in both interviews, with *don't* (versus *doesn't*) and *say* favoring *-s* absence more than regular verbs and *have* (versus *has*) do. Furthermore, the distributions of verb types within each interview are comparable—the verbs less favorable to *-s* absence (regular verbs and *have*) constitute 78 percent (89/114) and 77 percent (96/124) of the total set of third singular present stems in interviews III and IV, respectively, and the stems more favorable to *-s* absence (*don't* and *say*) account for 18 percent of the total in interview III (20/114) and 19 percent in interview IV (23/124). Clearly, the tendency for Foxy to omit third singular *-s* more often in interview III than interview IV remains true when the effect of verb type is taken into account; we can conclude that the overall percentages of *-s* absence in interviews III and IV are robust indicators of a fundamental style shift between the interviews.

Given what we know about the very limited third singular *-s* absence in European American Vernacular English (Ash and Myhill 1986:38–39), a marked style shift of this type is again consistent with Bell's "differential accommodation" hypothesis (see [11] above). But what do earlier studies indicate about AAVE style-shifting in relation to this variable?

The most directly comparable study is Fasold (1978:214), which reports race-of-interviewer effects on the speech of forty-seven working-class AAVE interviewees from Washington, D.C. Those who were interviewed by African Americans exhibited higher rates of third singular *-s* absence (68 percent) than those who were interviewed by European Americans (63.8 percent), but the difference was not statistically significant.[24] The fact that Fasold's African American interviewers were mostly "middle-class, standard English speaking young women (a few were conducted by a working class black man)" may have had something to do with this unexpected result, especially if they failed to establish the kind of insider's rapport which Faye and Roberta had with Foxy Boston.

Although Baugh (1979) does not provide data on the effects of African American versus European interviewers—an African American, he interviewed all his Pacoima speakers himself—his important study of style-shifting in AAVE also includes data on third person *-s*. Styles in Baugh's study were delimited along the intersections of two dimensions. The first was the relative *familiarity* (or solidarity) of interviewer and interviewee, ranging from his outsider status during the first year of his fieldwork to his insider status in the third or fourth year, when he was living in the community itself, had "gained access to a number of social domains," and had become "active in the day to day lives" (p. 30) of community members.[25] The second, related to the first, was whether the speech events that were being manifested in the presence of the interviewer were primarily vernacular or nonvernacular. Baugh found significant stylistic variation for suffix *-s*, especially third singular present *-s* (pp. 212–15). Baugh's variable rule probability coefficients for stylistic factors for third person *-s* absence (see Table 10.3) in fact outweigh and contain those for internal linguistic factors (the variation space or range for style is .184, compared with .092 for following phonological environment and .158 for preceding phonological environment), contrary to Preston's (1991:36–37) predictions that the scope of the latter would outstrip that of the former. After noting that stylistic factors are also significant for postvocalic *r*-deletion, but not for copula absence or

TABLE 10.3 Constraints on Third Singular *s*-Absence, Pacoima

Situation/Style	*Foll. Phon. Env.*	*Prec. Phon. Env.*
Familiar Vernacular: .601	—Consonant: .546	Nasal—: .490
Unfamiliar Vernacular: .443	—Vowel: .454	Voiced Consonant—: .567
Familiar Non-Vernacular: .538		Voicless Consonant—: .427
Unfamiliar Non-Vernacular: .417		ts-cluster—: .430
		Vowel—: .585

From: Baugh (1979:215).

t, d deletion, Baugh suggests (p. 225) that *r*'s "lack of grammatical function" allows it to be used as a stylistic device, since "little if any confusion results from post vocalic /r/loss." The argument with respect to suffix *-s* is similar, though not made as directly (pp. 225–27): Discourse context can usually provide the grammatical information provided by suffix *-s*, so it is free to be variably absent in accord with situational or stylistic factors. This is reminiscent of Hymes' (1974:160) observation that strong versus weak aspiration of an initial stop in English has stylistic but not referential meaning—in fact, it is free to have the former because it lacks the latter. However, nothing in Bell's theory would predict the general argument, and since it isn't confirmed by our results (third singular *-s* absence, copula absence, and invariant *be* all show significant style-shifting although they are bearers of potentially significant grammatical information), we do not pursue this interesting hypothesis any further.

However, it is worth noting that, contrary to his expectations, Baugh found more significant style-shifting for *-s* absence according to whether he was familiar or nonfamiliar to his interlocutors than whether he used AAVE or not (p. 235).[26] As we will see later, Faye used some of the AAVE variants, but nowhere near as often as Foxy did, and Foxy's differential vernacular usage in interviews III and IV must be taken as a combined accommodation to the race and familiarity of her interviewers. Since Beth is both non–African American and a stranger, it's difficult to say which feature Foxy is primarily responding to, but Baugh's study reminds us that familiarity can be a significant addressee variable in and of itself.

Another study which reports style-shifting data for third singular *-s* absence in AAVE is Wolfram (1969), which reported (p. 147) a significant style shift effect among his working-class Detroit speakers, who had much higher third person *-s* absence rates in spoken interview style (61.3 percent) than in reading style (15.6 percent). Of course, since the text of his reading passage was fixed and did not deliberately exclude instances of third person *-s*, the scope for stylistic variability was limited, and this method does not in any case provide direct information on style as *audience design*. However, Wolfram's results are of interest because they led him to exactly the opposite conclusion from Baugh (1979). After noting (p. 177) that zero copula also shows significant style-shifting among his working-class speakers, Wolfram comments, "For other grammatical features, the working class showed significant stylistic shift between the interview and reading styles but in the phonological variables there is generally slight variation between interview and reading style." Since our study did not look at phonological variables, we're in no

position to arbitrate on this issue, but it's an interesting one which deserves further research. As Wolfram (1969:204) notes, grammatical variables generally show sharp stratification while phonological variables show gradient stratification. If Bell's hypothesis ([11]) is right, the former would therefore be more likely to show marked style shift.

The final study of relevance is Labov et al. (1968), who, discussing third person present *-s* absence in the speech of their New York City adolescent peer groups, observe (p. 164), "There is no stylistic shift observable in moving from group style to single sessions." This statement is corroborated by combined data from the T-Birds, Aces, Cobras, Jets, and Oscar Bros, across both preconsonantal and prevocalic environments, which show a third singular *-s* absence rate of 66 percent (208/316) in group style, compared with 69% (384/560) in single interview style (p. 161). The absence of style-shifting for this variable runs counter to the findings of the present study as well as to the results of Baugh and Wolfram reported earlier, but it may be related to Labov et al.'s claim, based on a high overall percentage of third singular present *-s* absence and the irregular effects of following phonological segments, that "there is no underlying third singular *-s* in AAVE" (p. 164).

3.2.4. ABSENCE OF COPULA/AUXILIARY *is* AND *are*

In the case of copula absence, the set of internal factors which could affect the distribution of the variable is too large to keep track of with percentages and one-dimensional tables.[27] So we turned instead to the variable rule program (Gregory Guy's MACVARB, based on David Sankoff's VARBRUL 2S), which, on the basis of inputted information about observed frequencies of copula absence in different environments, estimates the independent contribution of each factor to rule application, expressed as a probability coefficient (see Sankoff 1988).[28]

Table 10.4 shows the outputs of three analyses of Foxy's copula absence data using the variable rule program.[29] The first two runs are for interviews III and IV considered separately; they show us first of all that Foxy's copula absence is similarly affected by internal constraints in both interviews; the same factor groups are selected as significant by the regression routine of the program, and the ordering of factors within each group is comparable, with second person and plural *are*, for instance, much more likely to be absent (.74, .67) than third singular *is* (.26, .33).[30] But what is even more significant are the input probabilities (corrected means), shown in the first row of this table: .49 for interview III and .20 for interview IV.[31] These represent "the probability that the rule will apply regardless of environment" (Guy 1975:60) and indicate that there remain big differences between interviews III and IV even when the cross-cutting effect of internal factors is taken into account. The final column of Table 10.4 provides a similar indication, in a different way—by pooling the data from both interviews and contrasting interviews III and IV as factors in a new INTERVIEW factor group. The effect of this external constraint is shown to be as pronounced as the effect of the PERSON/NUMBER factor group, with interview III much more favorable to copula absence (.72) than interview IV (.28).[32]

Given the much higher frequencies of copula absence in AAVE than in European American Vernacular English (Wolfram 1974, Ash and Myhill 1986:38–39,

TABLE 10.4 Probability Coefficients for Foxy's Copula Absence, Interviews III and IV Separately and Combined

Factor Group Constraints		*Interview III*	*Interview IV*	*Interview III + IV*
Input probability		.49	.20	.33
Following grammatical	Gonna	[100%]	.79	.90
	Verb-*ing*	.59	.66	.59
	Locative	.87	.52	.61
	Adjective	.39	.29	.29
	Noun phrase	.24	.32	.21
	Miscellaneous	.34	.40	.31
Subject	Personal pronoun	.81	.81	.83
	Other pronouns	.27		.26
	Noun phrase	.39	.19	.37
Person/number	Second person plural	.74	.67	.71
	Third person singular	.26	.33	.29
Interview	III (African American interviewer)			.72
	IV (European American interviewer)			.28
Overall %'s (Ns)		70% (283)	40% (176)	58% (459)

McElhinny, in press), we would of course expect higher rates in speech to African Americans than European Americans, given Bell's hypothesis (11), and Foxy's behavior in interviews III and IV conforms perfectly to this prediction. However, earlier studies are quite mixed with regard to the significance of style-shifting for copula absence in AAVE more generally. As noted, Baugh (1979:183–91) found that situational factors were of minimal importance for this variable as used by his Pacoima interviewees, less influential than the internal linguistic constraints, and less influential than in the case of suffix *-s* absence. By contrast, Wolfram (1969: 177) found a sharp decline in copula absence among his working-class Detroit interviewees between their spoken interview style (41.8 percent) and reading style (7.9 percent).

Labov et al. (1968:191), who considered only absence of *is*, not *are*, suggested that "stylistic shifts are minor effects among the [NYC] pre-adolescent and adolescent peer-groups, and only begin to assume importance with the older adolescents and adults." This appears to be generally true of their data in Table 10.5, although

TABLE 10.5 % *IS* Absence, by Style, Central Harlem, New York

Peer-group	*T-Birds (9–13 yrs)*	*Cobras (11–17 yrs)*	*Jets (12–16 yrs)*	*Oscar Bros (15–19 yrs)*	*Adults (20+ yrs)*
Single style	36%	44%	27%	31%	11%
Group style	41%	42%	45%	44%	17%
Style effect	5%	2%*	18%	13%	6%

Adapted from Table 3.12, Labov et al. (1968:192).

*Instance in which group style shows less copula absence than single style, rather than more.

TABLE 10.6 % *Is* Absence, by Subject and Style, Central Harlem, New York

	T-Birds		*Cobras*		*Jets*		*OscarBr*		*Adults*	
Peer-group	*NP*	*Pro*	*NP*	*Pro*	*NP*	*Pro*	*NP*	*Pro*	*NP*	*Pro*
Single style	12%	51	18	67	18	61	04	15	08	16
Group style	42%	60	36	77	27	58	26	64	14	27
Style effect	30%	09	18	10	09	03*	22	49	06	11

Adapted from Table 3.12a, Labov et al. (1968:194).

*Instance in which group style shows less copula absence than single style, rather than more.

the adults show less style-shifting than they'd lead us to expect,[33] and it is certainly true from other evidence in their study that internal linguistic constraints have a greater effect on variability in copula absence than external factors do (as in Baugh's study).

Note, however, that when the effect of a noun phrase versus pronoun subject is controlled for, as in Table 10.6, the style effects generally *increase:*[34]

This supports our general point that it is critical to control for the effects of internal constraints when considering style-shifting. Since we don't have a variable rule analysis of the New York City data which includes style as a constraint (Labov 1972 and Cedergren and Sankoff 1974 consider internal factors only), we can't tell for sure whether it would remain significant when all the cross-cutting internal constraints are controlled for, but Table 10.6 at least suggests that it might have been more important than Labov et al. (1968) originally suggested, and more in line with what Bell's differential accommodation hypothesis would lead us to expect.

3.2.5. INVARIANT HABITUAL *be*

The first thing that must be said about Foxy's use of invariant habitual *be* in these interviews is that it exceeds anything reported in the literature to date. For instance, Labov et al. (1968:236) recorded a total of 95 *be* tokens from 18 members of the Thunderbirds gang in New York City; Wolfram (1969:198) recorded 94 from his sample of 48 speakers in Detroit (most were from younger, working-class speakers); and, more recently, Bailey and Maynor (1987:457) reported a total of 119 from their sample of 20 twelve- and thirteen-year-old children in the Brazos Valley, Texas. Foxy had singlehandedly surpassed these group totals since Faye's first interview with her in 1986, producing 146 tokens of invariant habitual *be* on that occasion. Her *be* frequency of 385 in her most recent reinterview with Faye (interview III) surpasses even this earlier high-water mark, and her 97 tokens with Beth (in interview IV), although representative of a style shift away from AAVE, is still higher than reported for African American individuals in other studies.

As first noted by Wolfram (1969:196), invariant *be* "presents special problems" if one attempts to quantify its occurrences in relative terms, that is, "on the basis of actual and potential realizations of particular variants of a variable." Bailey and Maynor (1987) quantify it as a percentage of all present tense forms of *be*, including *is, are,* and zero copula, but this ignores the fact that *be* is a variant of noncopula

forms as well, in particular, the English present tense (Richardson 1988, Rickford 1989). Until the relationship of *be* to the full set of its potential alternants is better understood, it is best to report its occurrence in absolute terms.

Because we have absolute rather than relative data on this variable, we cannot analyze the effect of internal constraints on its occurrence as we did for third singular present *-s* of copula absence. But the statistical significance of Foxy's per hour rate of invariant *be* usage (230 in interview III versus 78 in interview IV) is, in any case, so massive as to make it unlikely that it would be due entirely to any internal factors.

Although they shed no light on style-shifting per se, two correlates of Foxy's *be* usage in these interviews are worth noting briefly for their potential interest to other researchers. One is that, as in earlier studies by Labov et al. (1968:234) and Bailey and Maynor (1987:453–54), Foxy's *be* in both interviews is most frequent with second person and plural subjects, next with first person singular subjects, and least with third person singular subjects. Second, in terms of following grammatical environments, Foxy uses *be* in both interviews much more often with a following verb + *ing* than with a following noun phrase, locative, or adjective. This much is consistent with earlier findings (see Bailey and Maynor 1987:457–59). However, what is new is that many of those verb + *ing* forms are *going* and *saying,* used as quotative introducers, as in

(12) My mother jus *be* going, "You—tha's a shame." (III, line 56–481.5b)
(13) They *be* saying, "If I can't be with you . . ." (IV, line 876)

And there is a huge set of invariant *be* tokens before *like* (44 percent interview III, 54 percent interview IV), used as a quotative introducer, as in[35]

(14) He be like, "What you talking bout?" (III:56–028d)
(15) I be like, "FOR REAL?!" (IV, line 852)

This latter feature was not characteristic of Foxy's *be* use when she was first interviewed.

With the exception of speakers over seventy-five years old from east Louisiana and Mississippi whose dialect atlas data are discussed in Bailey and Bassett (1986), European Americans generally do *not* use invariant habitual *be* (Labov et al. 1968:235, Wolfram 1974, Sommer 1986, Nichols 1991). On the basis of this fact, together with Bell's (1984) differential accommodation hypothesis ([11]), we would expect the decreased use of the form between interview III and IV which Foxy displays. But do earlier studies similarly indicate that this feature is sensitive to style shift?

Labov et al. (1968:235) report some style shift for invariant habitual *be* (called be_2) use in New York City, but it is the opposite of what we'd expect from a vernacular feature, with "very little use of be_2 in the group sessions" and more in single style, as Table 10.7 shows. The authors conclude that, for the peer group members, "be_2 is an emphatic form used in deliberate speech." Whether or not this analysis was valid for New York City peer groups at the time (it is certainly not valid for Foxy and her peers today), one possible explanation for the unexpected result may simply have been the fact that Labov and his colleagues may have had more

TABLE 10.7 Invariant Habitual *be*, Central Harlem, New York

Peer-group	*T-Birds (9–13 yrs)*	*Cobras (11–17 yrs)*	*Jets (12–16 yrs)*	*Oscar Bros (15–19 yrs)*	*Adults (Over 20 yrs)*
Single style	83	95	100	18	00
Group style	12	6	29	09	00

From: Labov et al. (1968:236).

data from individual interviews than group sessions, producing more opportunities for tokens of *be* to occur. With an absolute rather than relative frequency count, the relative length of the interviews can make a critical difference. Given the magnitude of the single versus group style distributions in Table 10.7, this clearly cannot be the only explanation, but it is worth considering.

A more significant factor is that invariant *be* use has simply increased by leaps and bounds since the 1960s (either that, or we have better data), and its increased frequency and salience (Butters 1989:15, Bailey and Maynor 1987) may make it available as a counter in strategic style shifting to an extent that was simply not possible in the 1960s. This hypothesis receives some support from the studies by Fasold (1972) and Baugh (1979) reported on below, which show increased use of *be* with African American and familiar addressees, although the extent of the style shift is less dramatic than in the case of Foxy Boston. To the extent that this hypothesis receives further support, it would of course complement and strengthen the related hypothesis which we suggested in relation to possessive *-s*—that a variable which is relatively rare in speech will tend to be exploited less frequently and regularly in strategic style-shifting.

Wolfram (1969), who depended on spoken versus reading contexts for his analysis of style, had nothing to report about invariant *be* in relation to style, because "no instances of invariant *be* occur in the reading passages" (pp. 199–200). Fasold (1972:214), whose Washington, D.C., data were most similar to ours insofar as they used both African American and European American interviewers, noted that

> a higher percentage of speakers who were interviewed by white interviewers used *be* than those who were interviewed by black interviewers—67.7 percent, as against 62.5 percent. However, *the speakers who used* be *at least once were somewhat freer in their use of the form when talking to a black interviewer. Those interviewed by black interviewers averaged 4.7 instances per speaker; those who talked with a white interviewer had an average of 3.4.* [emphasis added]

The italicized portion of this quotation certainly agrees with our data on Foxy Boston, although the extent of the difference in *be* use was much weaker in Fasold's data than in ours. Baugh's (1979:144) comment that invariant *be* "occurs with much greater frequency in colloquial contexts where all interactants are aware of the nonstandard form" also matches Foxy's behavior in interviews III and IV. Overall, we can take Fasold's and Baugh's studies as evidence of a trend which reaches its high point in Foxy's 1990s data—for *be* to function more systematically as a vernacular style marker as its frequency of use increases.

3.3. Interviewers' Usage: What Is Foxy Accommodating to?

We have seen from section 3.2 that Foxy's vernacular usage is significantly lower in interview IV than it is in interview III, for three of the variables we considered: third person present *-s*, *is/are* (copula) absence, and invariant habitual *be*. We attribute this intraspeaker or stylistic variation, plausibly enough, to Foxy's accommodation to the different addressees whom she faces in each interview. But Bell's (1984:167) question then arises: "What is it in the addressee (or other audience members) that the speaker is responding to?" Bell (1984:167) suggests three "increasingly specific" possibilities:

(16) 1. Speakers assess the personal characteristics of their addressees and design their style to suit.
2. Speakers assess the general level of their addressees' speech and shift relative to it.
3. Speakers assess their addressees' levels for specific linguistic variables and shift relative to these levels.

As Bell notes (p. 168), it is difficult to distinguish between possibilities 2 and 3, "since the general speech impression of level (2) largely derives from the combined assessment of many individual variables." Operationally, we will consider level 3 to be satisfied to the extent that we can show that there is specific matching between interviewer and interviewee speech with respect to the variables under investigation, even while admitting that the influence could have been, in theory and to some extent, bidirectional.

Table 10.8, showing the vernacular usage of Foxy's addressees in interviews III and IV,[36] suggests that the third possibility is not tenable in our case. Although Beth essentially follows Standard English grammar for the variables in question, while Faye and Roberta use the AAVE variants to some extent, their levels are considerably lower than those of Foxy in the same interview. One might still maintain that Foxy was shifting *relative* to her addressees' levels (about 30 percent to 40 percent higher, for third person *-s* and copula absence, in each case), but the absolute differences are so great, especially for invariant *be*, that possibility 2 is more likely.[37]

Possibility 2 and possibility 1 seem to represent the more valid general statement in the light of Fasold's (1972:214) finding that African American interviewees from Washington, D.C., used vernacular variants more frequently with African Ameri-

TABLE 10.8 Interviewers' Vernacular Usage, Interviews III and IV

	Third Person Present -s	is + are *Absence*	*Invariant* be
Foxy: Interview III	73% (83/114)	70% (197/283)	385
Faye: Interview III	30% (13/43)	22% (29/130)	5
Roberta: Interview III	12% (2/17)	30% (14/46)	12
Foxy: Interview IV	36% (45/124)	40% (70/176)	97
Beth: Interview IV	0% (0/17)	1% (1/81)	0

can interviewers than with European American interviewers (significantly so in the case of past tense [*d*]-deletion). This was so, Fasold noted, "despite the fact that most of the black interviewers were middle-class, standard English speaking young men (a few were conducted by a working-class black man)."

But although it may be the personal characteristics of her addressees that Foxy is responding to, it is impossible to say without further interviews and experiments how much of Foxy's vernacular use should be attributed to the various distinctive aspects of her addressees. Their race and relative familiarity seem significant enough, from this study and from the earlier work of Anshen (1969), Fasold (1972), and Baugh (1979), but how *much* to attribute to race and how much to familiarity is difficult to say, and the contributory effects of residential community membership, personality, and age are even harder to assess (see Bell 1984:168–69 on this point).

3.4. Topic-*Influenced Style Shift in Foxy's Vernacular Usage, Interviews III and IV*

Although Bell (1984) suggests that the nature of the addressee and other audience members is the primary factor in a speaker's style shift, he does acknowledge that "nonpersonal" factors such as topic and setting also have some influence. However, he argues that "the direction and strength of style shift caused by these factors originate in their derivation from audience-designed shift" (p. 178). This general argument leads him to these three specific hypotheses which can be tested against Foxy's data:

(17) 1. Variation according to topic . . . presupposes variation according to addressee. (p. 179)
2. The degree of topic-designed shift will not exceed that of audience-designed shift. (p. 180)
3. Speakers associate classes of topics or settings with classes of persons. They therefore shift style when talking on those topics or in those settings as if they were talking to addressees whom they associate with the topic or setting.

Hypothesis 17.1 is trivially correct. Since we know from section 3.2 that Foxy does show addressee style shift, the presupposition which the hypothesis embodies is satisfied, and any variation by topic which we find in her data would be consistent with it.

As Tables 10.9 and 10.10 show, Foxy does display variation by topic in both interviews III and IV, and the data they contain allow us to address hypothesis 17.2. This hypothesis does not fare as well as the first, however, since the amounts of zero copula shift caused by addressee differences (calculated by subtracting the percentages in the Total row of Table 10.10 from their counterparts in Table 10.9) range from 22 percent (zero *is*) to 30 percent (zero *is* + *are*), while the amounts caused by topic changes within each interview are much higher: for instance, 75 percent for zero *is* in Table 10.9 (from 0 percent for topic I to 75 percent for topic G) and 73 percent for zero *is* + *are* in Table 10.10 (from 9 percent for topic G to 82 percent, topic F).[38]

One of the speakers in Douglas-Cowie's (1978:41, 42, 45) study similarly

TABLE 10.9 Foxy's Zero Copula and Invariant *be* Use by Topic, Interview III, with Faye and Roberta

Topic	*Zero* is	*Zero* are	*Zero* is + are	be_2
A: School, including teen pregnancies (6 & ½ pages, 7% transcript)	60% (5)	50% (4)	56% (9)	7
B: Drugs, thefts, murders, EPA (11 pages, 12% transcript)	10% (10)	96% (26)	72% (36)	12
C: Skating, meeting boys, slang (7 & ½ pages, 9% transcript)	25% (4)	100% (4)	63% (8)	19
D: School, including teachers and drugs (3 & ½ pages, 4% transcript)	40% (10)	100% (5)	60% (15)	1
E: Graduation, college/career (5 pages, 6% transcript)	33% (6)	100% (1)	43% (7)	0
F: Wives, slamming partners (10 & ½ pages, 12% transcript)	54% (13)	90% (20)	76% (33)	53
G: Boy-girl conflicts and relations (7 & ½ pages, 9% transcript)	75% (16)	95% (21)	86% (37)	78
H: Foxy's friends: girls, guys (9 pages, 10% transcript)	31% (26)	96% (28)	65% (54)	61
I: Vietnamese/foreign friends (4 pages, 5% transcript)	0% (3)	100% (7)	70% (10)	10
J: Boys, and how to treat them (9 pages, 10% transcript)	30% (10)	69% (16)	54% (26)	61
K: Race relations at school (9 pages, 10% transcript)	44% (9)	88% (24)	76% (33)	48
L: Fun at school (5 pages, 6% transcript)	3% (6)	100% (9)	73% (15)	37
Total, all topics (87 & ½ pages, 100% transcript)	39% (118)	91% (165)	70% (283)	387

showed more topic shift than addressee shift, and Bell (1984:180), commenting on this exception, suggested that the expected ratios were more likely to hold for grouped data, as in Coupland (1981). To the extent that this means that cells with low token counts can be expected to show random variability, Bell is right, and we might note that the categorical cells in Tables 10.9 and 10.10—the ones with values of 0 percent and 100 percent which could be interpreted as indicators of extreme topic shift—all contain ten or fewer tokens (one cell has twelve). But individuals with sufficient data should be expected to exemplify the expected ratios as well as groups. If we followed Guy (1980:26) and accepted thirty tokens per factor as the cut-off point for reliability, hypothesis 17.2 would be sustained; Table 10.10 has only one such cell for zero *is*/*are* (topic F), and the five qualifying *is*/*are* cells in Table 10.9 (topics B, F, G, H, K) between them show a maximum topic-influenced shift of only 21 percent (from 65 percent for topic H to 86 percent for topic G)—less than the 30 percent addressee-influenced shift in *is*/*are* absence which separates

TABLE 10.10 Foxy's Zero Copula and Invariant *be* Use by Topic, Interview IV, with Beth

Topic	*Zero* is	*Zero* are	*Zero* is + are	be_2
A: School, college/career plans (8 pages, 19% transcript)	9% (11)	23% (13)	17% (24)	0
B: The Persian Gulf War (5 & ½ pages, 13% transcript)	11% (9)	10% (10)	11% (19)	0
C: Foxy's boyfriend, gir!friends (2 pages, 5% transcript)	0% (3)	33% (6)	22% (9)	1
D: Boy-girl differences (3 pages, 7% transcript)	0% (0)	14% (7)	14% (7)	2
E: Slang terms (2 & ½ pages, 6% transcript)	0% (3)	100% (12)	80% (15)	13
F: Wives, slamming partners (5 pages, 12% transcript)	60% (15)	96% (24)	82% (39)	46
G: Recreation, F as role model (2 pages, 5% transcript)	10% (8)	33% (3)	9% (11)	16
H: AIDS, other teen problems (3 & ½ pages, 8% transcript)	17% (12)	29% (7)	21% (19)	0
I: Races, other groups at school (7 pages, 17% transcript)	10% (6)	58% (12)	39% (18)	16
J: Popular music and dances (3 & ½ pages, 8% transcript)	0% (8)	71% (7)	31% (15)	3
Total, all topics (42 pages, 100% transcript)	17% (75)	56% (101)	40% (176)	97

interviews III and IV. However, if we also accepted the evidence of cells just slightly below Guy's cut-off point—specifically, the cells with twenty-six and twenty-four tokens in the zero *is/are* columns of Tables 10.9 and 10.10—hypothesis 17.2 would *not* be sustained, since the maximum topic shift in Table 10.9 would be 32 percent (from 54 percent for topic J to 86 percent for topic G), and the maximum topic shift in Table 10.10 would be 65 percent (from 17 percent for topic A to 82 percent for topic F), both higher (the former admittedly just slightly higher) than the addressee shift of 30 percent between interviews III and IV. We feel that the evidence of such cells should be accepted. In the case of the twenty-four-token cell in Table 10.10 (interview IV) at least, an additional six tokens would not alter the picture, whatever their realization, and zero copula fluctuations in this table accord with the very strong impression we get from listening to the tape (and attending to other variables) that Foxy makes some remarkable topic shifts within interview IV.

In the rest of this section, we concentrate on Foxy's shift between topics A and F in interview IV, using it to consider hypothesis 17.3, and comparing it with a smaller but related shift in interview III.

Elaborating on 17.3, which he offers as an *explanation* for the direction of topic style shifts rather than as a *hypothesis*, Bell (1984:181) suggests, "Topics such as occupation or education . . . cause shifts to a style suitable to address an employer

or teacher. Similarly, intimate topics . . . elicit speech appropriate for intimate addressees—family or friends." Foxy's shift between topics A and F in interview IV corresponds perfectly to Bell's hypothetical example, since A deals with school, college, and career plans and is predictably more standard, while F deals with "wives and slamming partners" (see quotation [10]), the kind of topic one is most likely to discuss with friends, and one which predictably elicits the most vernacular speech. Foxy's shift in interview III between topics A and E, which deal with her academic progress and plans, and topic F, which deals with "wives and slamming partners," is comparable, although the shift is quantitatively smaller, since Foxy's baseline vernacular use with Faye and Roberta in this interview is higher.

But while the direction of shift which Foxy displays in both interviews fits Bell's predictions, it doesn't really show that Foxy style shifts when talking on various topics *as if talking to addressees associated with the topic*. If we had data on Foxy's actually talking to her teachers and closest friends, and those data matched her language use on academic versus "slamming partners" topics in our two interviews, that would provide some support for hypothesis 17.3, although Bell is careful to note (p. 182) that the association between addressee and topic shift is relatively abstract; speakers need not be "conscious of an associated addressee when style shifting for a particular topic."

One relevant difference between Foxy's language in the college/career and "wives/slammin partner" sections of both interviews is the absence of direct quotes in the former and their prevalence in the latter. The absence of quotes, the absence of invariant habitual *be*, and the low zero copula rates in the college and career sections are all manifestations of a relatively detached information-presenting style, the kind that one might use when talking to a teacher or a stranger:

(18) F: Miss R. *is* the one that—[laughter] Miss R Ø the one help me get into this program, and my—and this guy name Mr O at our school, he'*s* Chinese. [interview III, with Faye and Roberta]

(19) F: M., she goes to DeAnza's nursing school. And R. and T., they'*re* going to, um, CSM, and my friend A, she'*s* going to be going with me when I go. . . . [interview IV, with Beth]

By contrast, in the "wives and slamming partner" sections (F) of both interviews, Foxy is extremely animated and involved, frequently quoting the remarks of real and hypothetical teenagers, as in extracts (4) and (10) above. Significantly enough, both sections contain high frequencies of invariant habitual *be* (fifty-three in interview III, forty-six in interview IV), and most of these (60 percent in interview III, 72 percent in interview IV) precede quotative introducers, as in

(20) F: I *be* like, "for real?" I *be* going, "Tramp, you're stuuupid. You Ø just DUMB! Uhhh! Get away from me! You Ø stupid!" [C]

(21) F: You be in your car with your friends and they *be* like, "Hey, F, ain't that that girl they—um—B slammed the other night?" You *be* like, "Yeah, that IS her." [D]

In the sections in which Foxy's vernacular language use reaches its peak, therefore, Foxy is not just behaving *as if* speaking to teenagers; she is, through extensive quotations, dramatically reenacting the speaking *of* teenagers.[39]

Many of the copula tokens in the "slamming partners" (topic F) sections of both interviews in fact occur within quotations. And, in interview III, copula tokens within quotations show a higher *is/are* absence rate (13/15 = 87 percent) than those not in quotations (12/18 = 67 percent), although this is not true for interview IV: 7/9 (78 percent) zero *is/are* within quotations, versus 25/30 (83 percent) zero *is/are* outside quotations. In any event, it seems reasonable to interpret the heavy use of quotations in these sections of the interviews as providing some support for Bell's hypothesis 17.3; to attribute Foxy's high zero copula and *be* use frequencies in these sections to her speaking as if speaking to (and on behalf of) her teenage friends and peers.

Whether it is theoretically *necessary* to do so is another matter. One could alternatively appeal to differences in one or more of Finegan and Biber's (1989) situational parameters (for instance, an informational communication purpose for the academic topic versus an interpersonal, affective purpose for the slamming partner topic) to characterize the topic-influenced variation which Foxy displays in these interviews. But it must be admitted that there are theoretical benefits to Bell's approach (the linking of previously unconnected social and stylistic variation), and that it squares with the empirical evidence.

One point which remains to be made before we leave this issue is that whatever vicarious identification with typical but absent addressees various topics might involve, the effect of the actual and present addressees remains stronger. (What we're doing here is essentially returning to 17.2 from a different perspective.) This is evident in the fact that although the race and familiarity of Faye and Roberta elicit more vernacular grammar, Faye's role as an adult and mother appears to lead Foxy to refer to sex allusively and indirectly in interview III (you just *do everything with 'em except that*), while using four-letter words (in quotation) with the younger Beth in interview IV:[40] Note that topic does not override addressee. For all that Foxy talks animatedly about sex and boy-girl relations in interview III, she never uses obscenities with Faye. Contrariwise, even when playing a profane rap song and discussing music and dances with Beth at the end of interview IV, Foxy's zero *is/are* and *be* rates remain low.[41]

3.5 *Foxy's Earlier Interviews (1986, 1988)*

We have now explored the salient aspects of Foxy's stylistic variation, as influenced by addressee and topic, in interviews III and IV. One could obviously attempt to squeeze other insights from these interviews—by considering phonological variables, for instance, or alternative influences on style shift—but it's more theoretically fruitful to look briefly at Foxy's style levels in her two earlier interviews with Faye and Roberta, as reflected in copula absence and invariant *be* use, the main variables explored in this paper.

The very first interview, which we'll refer to as interview I (= EPA 7, 8), was recorded in 1986, when Foxy was thirteen. Up to this point, she had been schooled entirely in East Palo Alto, in schools with exclusively or primarily African American populations, and her vernacular usage was at a peak. Interview I lasted about an hour and a half, and in it Foxy used 146 tokens of invariant *be* and exhibited

whopping copula absence rates: 79 percent (N = 72) for zero *is*, 99 percent (N = 82) for zero *are*, and 90 percent for zero *is* and *are* combined (N = 154). Although these rates differ somewhat from those in interview III, it is possible to attribute the latter to change over time, especially since the intervening four years represents the teenage years—a period in which, as Eckert (1988) shows, major readjustments in an individual's social identity and linguistic usage can take place. Moreover, interview I, when contrasted with interview IV, still shows significantly higher rates of vernacular usage, and we could attribute the stylistic contrast between them to differences in the race and familiarity of the addressees, as we did in contrasting interviews III and IV above.

However, the second interview, which we'll refer to as interview II (= EPA 42, 43), is another story. This interview, recorded in 1988, when Foxy was fifteen, was shorter than the other interviews (fifty-five minutes), and in it Foxy used eighty-one tokens of invariant *be* (= eighty-eight per hour) and exhibited relatively low copula absence rates: 18 percent (N = 48) for zero *is*, 48 percent (N = 46) for zero *are*, and 34 percent (N = 94) for zero *is* and *are* combined. These rates are not significantly different from those in interview IV, when Foxy was addressing Beth, a European American stranger, and they therefore require some explanation.

There are several potential explanations for Foxy's reduced AAVE use in interview II. At this point she had completed her first year at a predominantly European American high school outside the EPA community. She had also taken part in a live-in summer Upward Bound program at Stanford and had been involved in several tutorial, college motivational, and preprofessional programs (Higher Horizons, MESA, TOPS, SASI) which exposed her to consistent Standard English models. We wouldn't want to overestimate the influence of these factors on her language development, but Foxy mentions in interview II that African American students at school are beginning to say that she sounds "like a white person." She does not believe that she does, but she concedes that the extensive contact she's been having with European Americans outside EPA may have had some effect.[42] For all her attempts to rebuff it, Foxy may also have been affected by the apparent prejudice she encountered at her school against her race and community; she talks of schoolmates who say they are forbidden to go to East Palo Alto because "the black people's gonna get us!" and of the school's spirit squad rejecting *all* the African American girls who try out for it. One response to such prejudice might have been a temporary diminution in her distinctively African American language and behavior.[43] By the time Foxy is interviewed again, in 1990, she seems much more secure about her background and identity; she is president of the BSU, has won respect from teachers and students on her own terms, and has seen her African American friend T. crowned as homecoming queen ("We was all happy. . . . All of us was cryin"—interview III). And her language has returned close to the vernacular levels of her early adolescent years.

There are also a number of factors within the interview situation which may have produced the reduced vernacular usage which Foxy exhibits in interview II. For one thing the setting was different. This was the only interview conducted in Faye's home, and neither Faye nor Foxy appears to relax as much as in the interviews conducted at Foxy's. Faye's status as mother and authority figure comes

across much more clearly as she attends to household matters, and her role as interview director is much more sharply delineated, as she deploys more prefabricated questions than usual ("If you could pass a message on to a fifteen-year-old in Nigeria about life in America, what would you tell her to look out for?") and switches abruptly from one topic to another when they fail to elicit much interest ("I see I ain't gettin no information outta y'all 'bout the boys, so I'ma drop that subject"). Foxy does get more excited about some topics—sexuality, teen pregnancies, and teen slang predictably lead to elevated copula absence and invariant *be* rates—but in general she is more subdued and detached than she is in her other interviews with Faye and Roberta, and her reduced AAVE use is very much in keeping with that.

One way of accounting for Foxy's reduced vernacular usage within interview II is to consider it *initiative* style design, which, instead of occurring "in response to a change in the extralinguistic situation . . . itself initiates a change in the situation" (Bell 1984:182). As in the cases of metaphorical switching discussed by Blom and Gumperz (1972), Foxy's more standard usage might be seen "as a claim to intellectual authority" (Bell 1984) or as a reflection of the fact that, because of her exposure to Stanford and the motivational programs referred to previously, she is now responding to Faye more in terms of her association with this institution than in terms of her race or community membership. It might even be argued that her initiative style shift in this case is partly an instance of "outgroup referee design" (Bell 1984:188–89)—that she is now more conscious of absent Stanford people who might listen to the interview than she was in interviews I and III. To the extent that Foxy's stylistic level in interview II represents initiative style shift, the most we can do is attempt to interpret it after the fact (cf. Bell 1984:185).

Despite our extensive discussion of this issue, our purpose is *not* to explain away the unusualness of interview II or to view it as aberrant. Whatever the stage-of-life, intrainterview, or other factors which made it happen in interview II, Foxy has as much "right" to shift away from the vernacular with familiar African Americans like Faye and Roberta as she does with unfamiliar European Americans like Beth. We can't say that Foxy has one fixed register for African Americans and another for European Americans, or that she has one register for familiars and another for nonfamiliars, any more than we might expect anyone *always* to talk to a spouse or workmate in the same way. While these addressee variables do set up some valid expectations about the kind of language that Foxy (or anyone else) might use, we have to allow for the use of style as a resource and strategy, as an interactive and dynamic process (Coupland 1984, Traugott and Romaine 1985) which can vary between different situations, and for the intersecting effects of setting, scene, key, and the other multidimensional factors that Hymes (1972) and others have identified. This recognition may help us account for the fluctuating views of their intersection with style which earlier studies of AAVE variables have yielded (see sec. 3.2). It's not enough to say that groups A and B differ significantly with respect to a specific feature and *therefore* we should always expect the feature to display significant style-shifting when addressees from groups A versus B are involved. The features of a dialect are a resource which individuals and groups have some freedom

to use as their mood and inclination dictate, although Bell's addressee-based principles do help us to predict in general ways what they are likely to do.

4. Summary and Conclusion

We have documented and attempted to explain the decline of intraspeaker or stylistic variation as a focus of research in quantitative sociolinguistics. We suggested that a primary reason for this decline was the fact that investigators found it difficult to separate "careful" from "casual" speech in reliable and objective ways, and that they also found it possible to continue doing quantitative "sociolinguistics" (identifying internal and external constraints on linguistic variation, for instance, or studying ongoing linguistic change) *without* attending to this operationally difficult distinction.

Whether other quantitative sociolinguists will agree with the explanation or not, it is clear that style is too central to the methodological and theoretical concerns of our subfield for us to neglect it any longer. For one thing, Labov's original assertions that the most informal or peer group–influenced speech offers the clearest view of social differentiation and linguistic change have never been refuted, and in a subfield where recorded corpora are the primary means of studying such phenomena, the styles represented in such corpora can hardly be ignored. If, for instance, we had used Foxy's copula and third singular *-s* absence rates in interview IV (40 percent and 36 percent, respectively) to assess the nature of current adolescent usage of African American Vernacular English in East Palo Alto, we would have had a very different picture than if we had used her corresponding rates in interview II (70 percent and 73 percent, respectively), leading us to radically different inferences about the nature of regional differences in the dialect and its convergence with or divergence from other ethnic vernaculars.[44] Douglas-Cowie's (1978:39) motivation for studying addressee-influenced style shifts among villagers in the Northern Irish village of Articlave was also rooted in a methodological concern—"to reveal the possible linguistic limitations of being a well-educated English investigator in a Northern Ireland rural community." Quantitative sociolinguists simply do not discuss these issues these days. We have become almost as bad as generative syntacticians in avoiding critical discussions about our data, making us perhaps as vulnerable to the charge of developing strong theories with weak foundations (cf. Labov 1975).

With respect to theory development, stylistic variation seems to offer more potential for the integration of past findings and the establishment of productive research agendas than virtually any other area in sociolinguistics. This is because of its ubiquity (maybe even universality) and its relation to other central topics within our field, including social or status variation and internal linguistic conditioning, as explored in recent articles by Bell (1984), Finegan and Biber (1989), and Preston (1991). By the same token, quantitative sociolinguistics offers a precision to the study of style shift and accommodation that is unmatched by other approaches (cf. Coupland 1984:53), and a means of disentangling the effects of internal and external

constraints, via the variable rule program, that other approaches could fruitfully adopt. We hope that these benefits have been exemplified in our discussion of Foxy's style-shifting, particularly with respect to copula and third singular *-s* absence.

If quantitative sociolinguistics is to return to the study of style, as we urge, an approach based on the re-recording of speakers with different addressees (Rickford 1987) seems most promising, especially if coupled with the theoretical conceptualization of style as audience design which Bell (1984) offers. Several of Bell's hypotheses and predictions about addressee design were confirmed by the data on Foxy's style-shifting examined in this chapter. His predictions about differential accommodation (which variables might be expected to show significant style shift with different classes of addressees and which might not) were generally confirmed, once riders about absolute and relative frequencies of occurrence were added: that low rates (as with possessive and plural *-s* absence) reduce the probability that a variable will figure significantly in style shift, and high rates (as with *be* use in the 1990s) increase that probability. Preston's "status" axiom was also confirmed, along with Bell's "style" axiom.

Bell's hypotheses about the primacy of addressee over topic shift were also confirmed, more or less; more if thirty tokens per cell (Guy 1980) was accepted as a minimum cut-off point, less if cells with slightly fewer tokens were also considered. We were impressed by the dramatic topic shift (17 percent to 72 percent copula absence) which Foxy displayed when talking about "school and career" versus "wives and slamming partners" with Beth in interview IV (recorded in 1991), but we were convinced about the primacy of addressee by the fact that she generally used higher frequencies on each topic when talking to Faye and Roberta in interview III (recorded in 1990).

Bell's hypothesis that speakers shift style when talking on particular topics *as if* talking to addressees whom they associate with that topic was more difficult to investigate empirically, but it seemed to receive some support from the fact that Foxy's most vigorous vernacular usage in both interviews occurred where she was quoting extensively from teenage friends and peer group members, dramatically re-enacting their actual and hypothetical conversations. Whether it was theoretically necessary to appeal to Bell's hypothesis to explain the increased vernacular usage in such sections was, however, less clear.

The single greatest challenge to Bell's audience design approach came from consideration of interviews I and II, which Faye and Roberta recorded with Foxy in 1986 and 1988. The former was no problem, since Foxy's style remained closer to the AAVE vernacular than it did in interview IV, as Bell's hypotheses would predict for an African American versus European American addressee. However, Foxy's stylistic level in interview II was *not* significantly closer to the vernacular than in interview IV, and this ran counter to Bell's predictions about responsive addressee style shift. We proposed several possible explanations for this unexpected result, including appeals to Bell's notion of "initiative" style shift (cf. Blom and Gumperz's "metaphorical switching") and consideration of components such as setting, scene, and key (Hymes 1972), which we had previously ignored. However persuasive our arguments, we were clearly engaging in post hoc interpretation by this stage and

moving away from the powerful predictions which lie at the heart of Bell's (1984) approach. This may be acceptable, even necessary, for some kinds of stylistic variation, as Bell himself (1984:185) suggests. But we would urge in closing that sociolinguists who return to or enter into the study of style attempt to push the predictive parts of Bell's model as far as possible, testing them against other data sets, and revising and refining them where necessary. Sociolinguistics needs fewer laissez-faire generalizations and more falsifiable predictions if it is to answer to recent calls for more explicit theory building (Cheshire 1987:257, Finegan and Biber 1989:3), and style is one area in which we have already begun to make good progress toward this goal.

Notes

1. Foxy's father, who does not live with the family, is a construction worker. Her mother, a single parent household head, is a construction planner at a Bay Area aeronautical corporation. "Foxy Boston" is a pseudonym.

2. Dubois and Horvath (1991) approach the issue from another direction, varying not the race of the interviewer, but the race of the interviewee. The questioning strategies of their Anglo interviewers in Sydney, Australia, turned out to be significantly different with Greek, Italian, and Anglo/Celtic interviewees. Their conclusion that "the negotiation of tension is most easily achieved when both members of the interview come from the same culture" (ms., p. 11) parallels the finding of Terrell et al. (1977:381) that "speaking to one's own ethnic group has a facilitating effect on both the total number of words used and the complexity of the sentences used." These experimental results do not of course imply that same-race interviewers will always have a facilitating effect nor that different-race interviewers will never have a facilitating effect.

3. Of course several individual sociolinguists—Labov (1972), Baugh (1979), Irvine (1979, 1985), Biber (1988), to name only a few—have provided important theoretical or empirical studies of stylistic or intraspeaker variation, but the major focus of attention in the United States has been on intergroup variation—by socioeconomic class, ethnicity, sex/gender, and age. In this respect, one might say that the (partial) roots of American sociolinguistics in dialect geography have remained evident, with social groups replacing geographical regions as the primary external variable.

4. See, however, Biber (1988), who emphasizes that a multidimensional perspective is essential to adequate analyses of register (or style) variation.

5. The diminution in American quantitativist studies of stylistic variation had started since the mid-1970s, but as shown by the published proceedings of recent NWAVE conferences (for instance, Denning et al. 1987, Ferrara et al. 1988), or the new variationist journal, *Language Variation and Change*, it is really marked over the past half decade, since variationist papers in these publications contain little or no reference to style.

6. However, some researchers—for instance, Tarone (1985), Di Paolo (1992), and Yaeger-Dror (1991)—have continued to make productive use of a Labovian-like distinction between relatively monitored and unmonitored or prescriptive and vernacular styles, involving attention paid to speech. Yaeger-Dror (1991) distinguishes terminologically between "attention-related 'style' and target-related 'register'."

7. Nikolas Coupland (personal communication) notes additional evidence in this regard, from recent research in Wales conducted by one of his students, Penny Rowlands, on stylistic variation in young children's speech, especially in relation to addressee effects over different

ages: "One point to emerge very clearly in her work is that 'reading aloud' does have truly generic characteristics in that kids quickly learn prosodic and, it seems, segmental phonological conventions for doing it."

8. Labov has noted (personal communication) that his decision to use group recordings in Harlem was directly influenced by the successful use which Gumperz had made of this technique in Hemnesberget, Norway, as reported in Gumperz (1964) and elsewhere.

9. The distinction between situational and metaphorical switching—although in practice often involving change of addressee and topic, respectively—is theoretically more complex. The former "involves clear changes in the participants' definition of each other's rights and obligation," while the latter does not involve "any significant change in definition of participants' mutual rights and obligations," but usually occurs in situations which "allow for the enactment of two or more different relationships among the same set of individuals" (Blom and Gumperz 1972:424–25). Dennis Preston (personal communication) restates it as follows: "Situational shifting occurs when a change exploits the range of options predicted by the linguistic, status, and style boundaries of an interaction. Metaphoric shift occurs when such shift occurs outside this predictability . . . it is an exploitation of the unexpected."

10. This was not true of the studies by Baugh, Hindle, Payne, and Rickford, whose dissertations were supervised by Labov.

11. Exceptions include Milroy (1987), Wilson (1987), Finegan and Biber (1989), and Preston (1991). Bell himself (personal communication) offers the following comment: "I guess if I am disappointed in anything about the lack of follow-up on audience design it is the lack of theoretical building on or critique of it rather than of empirical studies within the framework (although the two are probably linked)."

12. Bell notes (personal communication) that the question of whether speakers style shift in reaction to the general persona of their interlocutors or in relation to their specific linguistic performance was first raised by Coupland (1981, 1984) before he picked it up. For a subsequent and more detailed analysis of the motivations for code-switching, see Coupland (1985).

13. As Labov (Ms. 52) notes, in discussing the importance of the feedback principle, the more an interviewer knows when talking about a topic, the more interviewees are likely to tell you: "Once he [the investigator] has entered far enough into the subject to ask an 'insider's question,' he will obtain richer results." Gossip, of course, exemplifies the principle perfectly.

14. All variables were tabulated in accordance with Labov's (1969:738, 1972:72) accountability principle, which requires the observer to report the actual occurrences of a variant against the total of all the possible cases in which it might have occurred, excluding categorical or indeterminate contexts (see notes 15 and 16).

15. In the case of possessive, plural, and third person singular *-s* absence, tokens followed by a word beginning with *s* (as in "John's son") were not counted, since these make it difficult to tell whether the inflectional *-s* is present or not.

16. The list of "don't count" cases excluded from consideration in the analysis of copula absence is quite large (see Labov et al. 1968, Wolfram 1969, Blake 1992, Rickford et al. 1991), but they include the following cases in which the variable is either categorical or indeterminate: clause-finals; tokens under primary stress; instances of "what's," "that's," or "it's"; negatives; tokens of *is* preceded or followed by *s;* tokens of *are* followed by *r.*

17. In the case of invariant *be,* for which we have absolute rather than relative frequency data (see section 3.2.3), significance was calculated on the per hour rate of *be* use.

18. As noted by Rickford (1992), the relative rarity of nominal possessives in speech has been a problem for most studies of AAVE.

19. In response to this point, Suzanne Romaine (personal communication) has raised some interesting questions about the differences between production and perception and

between statistical and other kinds of significance. We do not as yet have definitive answers but think her remarks on this issue are worth quoting in full: "This point raises a question that hasn't been addressed in the literature on style shifting: How much of a difference is significant in terms of *perception* by the listener? One needs to know this to determine if the variable is being used symbolically in a successful way. Tests of statistical significance only indicate *production*-related differences."

20. Of course, we also know that even a single occurrence of a stereotyped, salient (Trudgill 1986), or strongly marked feature can be enough to register a style shift, or to mark its user as speaking in a special (preferred or dispreferred) style. See Gumperz's (1983) discussion of the student who said "Ahma git me a gig," and note the following quote from Reggie, an African American teenager (cited in Rickford 1992): "Over at my school, if they—first time they catch you talkin' white, they'll never let it go. Even if you just quit talking like that, they'll never let it go!" (EPA50:A530–532). Finally, Allan Bell (personal communication) notes that in his analyses of initiative style shift in media language, "rare variants are all the more valuable just because of their rarity. Just one token can act as a marker of identity." Together these "counterexamples" to the proposed frequency rider indicate that one task for a theory of style is to determine in a principled and predictable way the difference between rare but stylistically salient variables and rare and nonsalient ones.

21. However, it could be argued that the difference is, in this case, *qualitatively* interesting, insofar as Foxy *never* omits plural *-s* in interview IV.

22. Foxy's plural absence rate, when she was first interviewed in 1986, was 13 percent (14/107), so she has become more standard in the interim. This is also true of her copula absence rate; see section 3.5.

23. LePage and Tabouret-Keller's (1985) "Acts of Identity" model, which treats linguistic behavior "as a series of acts of identity in which people reveal both their personal identity and their search for social roles" (p. 14), is admirable in several respects, but it tends to slight or ignore internal constraints in favor of external or sociopsychological ones.

24. The difference *was* significant for percentage of [*d*]-deletion but not for cluster simplification, the other variables discussed with respect to race-of-interviewer effects (ibid.).

25. As Baugh notes (1979:106–8), the familiarization process does not proceed uniformly for all individuals; some, like David W., became familiar with the interviewer and used vernacular styles relatively rapidly; others, like James D., remained suspicious for a longer period and took correspondingly longer to begin using his vernacular.

26. Baugh (1979) states it more generally: "The adults under analysis therefore consistently altered their speech toward SE in the presence of people with whom they were newly acquainted, regardless of their race." But since Baugh was the principal interviewer in each case, and non–African Americans were only present in peripheral roles in some of his interviews, the statement should not be taken to imply that variation by race of *addressee* is unimportant.

27. In addition to the factor groups in Table 10.4, we also considered the effect of the preceding and following phonological environment, but these turned out to be nonsignificant.

28. The particular model we used is the logistic model (ibid.), in which "values above .500 favor the rule, values of less than .500 disfavor the rule and a value of .500 means a constraint has no effect" (Fasold 1978:93).

29. In Table 10.4, as in Table 10.1, copula absence is calculated as "straight deletion"—the proportion of zero copulas against the total of all zero, contracted, and full forms, excluding "don't count" cases (see note 16). See Rickford et al. (1991) for further discussion of "straight deletion" and for comparison with "Labov deletion," which calculates the proportion of zero copulas against the total of zero and contracted forms only, for reasons outlined in

Labov (1969). Although space prevents us from presenting all the results, we have in fact made "Labov deletion" runs for interviews III and IV; these modify the significance and ordering of some of the internal factors but do not affect the external factor (addressee-based style shift) under consideration. Interviews III and IV have input probabilities of .73 and .44 in separate "Labov deletion" runs; in the pooled (III + IV) interview run, they remain sharply differentiated as factors within a factor group, with associated factor weights of .74 and .26, respectively.

30. The only differences are in the following grammatical factor group, where minor differences from the usual ordering and from each other are shown.

31. The percentage and raw frequency data at the bottom of Table 10.4 are based on the copula absence data prior to the removal of knockout (categorical) factors. The coefficients are taken from the variable rule runs containing only the significant factor groups.

32. Note that the data in the "Interview III + IV" column of Table 10.4 confirm Preston's (1991:36) prediction, since the range and limits of two of the three internal factors (FOLLOWING GRAMMATICAL = .21–.90, SUBJECT = .26–.83) exceed the range and limits of the single external variable (INTERVIEW = .28–.72). Dennis Preston (personal communication) has made the following additional observation about these data: "Foxy's data here shows that her stylistic performance (.28–.72) . . . is contained within the variation space for age within her speech community (.22–.83, as presented in Rickford et al. 1991:117, table 6; and cited in Preston 1991:40, table 5). This suggests that Foxy's 'models' for speech behavior, although perhaps triggered by audience factors, need not have been derived from the audience of interview IV since her own speech community (namely older speakers) provide a score (.22) which could predict her performance in setting IV (.28)."

33. To make it consistent with the data of Table 10.4, Tables 10.5 and 10.6 consider the ratio of deleted forms to full, contracted, and deleted forms (=Rickford et al.'s 1992 "straight deletion"). Although Labov et al. claim (p. 191) that "the feature which is correlated with style shift from single to group sessions is the ratio of deleted to originally contracted forms—that is, D/D + C" ["Labov deletion" in our terms], these alternative computations do not significantly affect their argument. The "straight deletion" data in fact support their claims about older/younger style-shifting differences better than the "Labov deletion" data do.

34. It should be noted that the data in Tables 10.5 and 10.6 are not completely comparable because the number of forms and subjects represented in each group sometimes changes from one table to the other. For instance, the single style figure for the Cobras in Table 10.5 is based on 230 tokens from eleven subjects, while the single style figure for the Cobras in Table 10.6 is based on 141 tokens from nine subjects.

35. For analysis of constraints on variation between *say, go,* and *be like* as quotative introducers in American English, see Blyth et al. 1990.

36. For shorthand we say "interviewers' usage" in the Table 10.8 title but Roberta was of course a cointerviewee rather than an interviewer in interviews I, II, and III.

37. Of course, there's a certain amount of mutual accommodation—Roberta and Faye's accommodating to Foxy, and vice versa (cf. Coupland 1984:54)—but in the absence of independent data on Roberta and Faye's (or Beth's) speech in other contexts, we can't measure the extent of *their* accommodation, and our focus is, in any case, on *Foxy's* style shifts.

38. Since the invariant habitual *be* data are absolute rather than relative, they have no bearing on this issue; the overall "addressee" difference between interviews III and IV (290 tokens) will always exceed the maximum topic shift within either interview.

39. As Bell (personal communication) notes: "This is very much what I would regard as an initiative use of language: Deliberate declaring of an ingroup identity."

40. At the end of interview IV, Foxy also plays a rap song called "Bitches" for Beth, which, by Foxy's own admission, is extremely "profane."

41. One could also point to the fact that when Foxy's copula absence for equivalent topics in interviews III and IV is compared, it is higher in interview III than in interview IV (e.g., 76 percent versus 39 percent for race relations), but the status of these comparisons is questionable insofar as none of them passes the minimum thirty-token requirement in both interviews.

42. Foxy returns to this theme in 1991 in interview IV, observing that "When I get home, I use slang and everything; when I'm at school, I talk different," and that friends still accuse her of "talking like a white girl." It appears that the latter impression might derive primarily from her phonology, from her adoption of some of the distinctive characteristics of European American pronunciation in the area.

43. And an interview with Beth or any other European American, at the time, might have shown even lower rates of vernacular usage than Faye and Roberta elicited, posing no problem for Bell's hypothesis ([11]).

44. There is every reason to believe that the problem would remain whether we used individual or group data, as long as we did not measure and take into account the addressee/interviewer effect.

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11

Situational Variation in Children's Language Revisited

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1. Introduction

When I reviewed research on situational variation in children's language more than twenty years ago (Cazden 1970), I was not just contributing to a gap in scholarly attention; I was also deliberately intervening in a continuing debate about valid descriptions of how children's communicative competence varies with differences in their cultural background and/or social class. In a still earlier article (Cazden 1966), I had argued against the adequacy of then prevailing "deficit" explanations of lower-class children's vocabulary and syntax, and for more serious attention to "differences" in language use that were beginning to be studied in the then very young fields of sociolinguistics and ethnography of communication. In 1970, this contrast was termed the "less language" explanation versus the "different language" explanation, and both were judged inadequate:

> The inadequacy of both the "less language" and the "different language" characterizations is two-fold. First, both refer only to patterns of structural form and ignore patterns of use in actual speech events. Second, they assume that the child learns only one way to speak which is reflected in the same fashion and to the same extent at all times. On both theoretical and practical grounds, we can no longer accept such limitations. We must attend not only to the abilities of individuals and how they develop, but to qualities of the situation, or temporary environment, in which those abilities are activated. (Cazden 1970:40–41)

In the intervening decades, we have accumulated more studies of situational variation in children's language, and even several research reviews. Romaine (1984) reviews the development of children's stylistic variation, primarily in phonological features. Warren-Leubecker and Bohannon (1989) divide register variation into two dimensions—adaptations to listener knowledge and to listener status—and review children's development of those adaptations in both production and judgments. Andersen (1990) adds an updated research review to the publication of her impor-